

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION WARNING

**Informational Hearing – Online via Zoom and at 145 Maple Street
Tuesday, March 25, at 6:30 PM**

Available options to watch or join the meeting:

- **WATCH:** the meeting will be live-streamed on Town Meeting TV.
- **JOIN ONLINE:** Join via [Zoom](#).
- **JOIN CALLING:** (toll free, audio only) 1(888) 788-0099, Meeting ID: 944 6429 7825; Passcode: 635787
- **MODERATOR:** All instructions for conduct of the meeting will be guided by the Moderator.

If you have difficulty accessing the hearing, please call or email admin@essexjunction.org.

Under the City of Essex Junction Charter, voting in the Annual City Meeting is entirely by Australian ballot. A public informational hearing on the Articles to be voted on at Annual Meeting will be held according to 17 V.S.A. § 2680. **No voting will take place during this hearing.** If you wish to make a public comment but do not have the ability to comment remotely during the meeting, please email your comment(s) to the City Manager at admin@essexjunction.org.

AGENDA will include:

- Discussion of Article I – Adopting the budget
- Discussion of Article 2 – Bond for Pump Stations
- Announcement of offices up for election in Article 3
- Public to be heard (to be moderated)

Annual Meeting - Australian Ballot

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 – 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM

The legal voters of the City of Essex Junction are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Champlain Valley Exposition in the Blue Ribbon Pavilion, 105 Pearl Street in the City of Essex Junction on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 to transact the following business by Australian ballot. Said voting by Australian ballot to begin at 7:00 AM and close at 7:00 PM.


ARTICLE 1. Shall the voters approve an annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$12,419,241 for fiscal year July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026, \$11,405,931 of which is to be levied in taxes against the City Grand List?


ARTICLE 2. Shall general obligation bonds or notes of the City of Essex Junction in an amount not to exceed three million eight hundred thousand Dollars (\$3,800,000.00), subject to available grants-in-aid, if any, be issued to finance the cost of retrofitting the three pump stations located on West Street, Maple Street and River Street?

ARTICLE 3. To elect City officers required by law including: one City Council member (three-year term), one Library Trustee (five-year term), and one Champlain Water District Commissioner (three-year term)?


Dated this 26th day of February, 2025 by the Essex Junction City Council.


Raj Chawla, President


Amber Thibault, Vice President


Tim Miller, Clerk


Marcus Carta


Elaine Haney



2 Lincoln St.
Essex Junction, VT 05452-3154
802.878.6944
www.essexjunction.org

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To view the full 2024 City of Essex Junction Annual Report visit the City's website at www.essexjunction.org/departments/finance/annual-reports. You can also request to receive a printed copy by emailing admin@essexjunction.org or by calling 802-878-6944.

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Raj Chawla, City Council

It's hard to believe another year has passed, and it has been a busy one for the City. The renovation of 2 Lincoln, our City Hall, is underway and will be completed in 2025. Staff have been working in the adjacent Senior Center space and working remotely. Council and committee meetings have been held at the Essex Police

Department and the Brownell Library; and the Senior Center has found a temporary home at the Holy Family Church. Thank you to these organizations for being gracious hosts.

The Crescent Connector, now Railroad Street, was completed in October and minor updates and tweaks to traffic light cycles continue. The Main Street pocket park is moving forward, as is the Amtrak Station renovation project, though very slowly.

The Strategic Action Plan work is complete, and the City has begun implementing the community priorities gleaned from that effort. City departments have created annual work plans and mapped those plans to those community priorities. I'm hopeful that we'll be able to report annually on progress and eventually tie in those metrics to our department budgets.

The Connect the Junction project complements the strategic planning effort, with a focus on the City center, Pearl Street Corridor, and Park Street areas. The project's objective is to establish walkable communities centered around transportation hubs, enabling individuals to walk, bike, and use transit to reach work and leisure destinations. This initiative builds upon previous planning efforts that envisioned Essex Junction's thoughtful growth, incorporating diverse housing options, thriving businesses, and promoting multi-modal transportation.

We've had fantastic community involvement in both efforts and we're anxiously awaiting the results of the Connect the Junction project. This will help the community and the Council discuss next steps for development in Essex Junction.

One of the highlights of the past year has been the number of people who are applying to volunteer for committee positions and how many new faces we're seeing participating in the projects mentioned above. Many have recently moved to Essex Junction and are eager to build community and give their time. I appreciate the energy and infusion of new voices and diverse vision into these conversations.

We are dealing with some significant challenges at the local and state level. A lack of affordable housing, looming public transportation cuts, financial pressure on our municipal, school, and other public organizations from health insurance increases, and of course, inflation. We're trying to determine how changes at the federal level will impact ongoing and future budgets, development planning, and projects such as the Amtrak Station rehabilitation. I'm confident our staff, City Manager, and Council will navigate this period and ask that folks stay involved and informed.

In April, the community will vote on the FY26 budget for July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. The City Council is asking voters to approve an annual budget of \$12,419,241, with \$11,405,931 to be levied in taxes. This represents a 2.6% increase on the tax rate. Voting takes place from 7 am to 7 pm at the Champlain Valley Expo, Blue Ribbon Pavilion. Registered voters should have received a post card asking them to opt-in to mail ballots for 2025. Voters can also request a ballot by contacting the City Clerk's office.

Finally, I'd like to thank the community for their support over the last six years. It has been an honor to serve this community as a trustee and councilor, and I look forward to hearing new approaches and voices on the Council.

ARTICLES EXPLAINED

Article 1: You are being asked whether to approve or not approve a General Fund budget of \$12,419,241, of which \$11,405,931 will be levied in taxes.

- FY26 City General Fund (GF) budget of \$12,419,241 is a 3% or \$415,117 increase over the FY25 budget of \$12,004,124.
- The proposed budget would result in an estimated City General Fund property tax rate of \$1.0120 compared to \$0.9861 in FY25, which is a 2.6% increase.
- The projected City tax cost for a \$280,000 property in FY26 is an increase of \$73 over FY25.

Article 2: You are being asked whether to approve or not approve the City obtaining a bond of up to \$3,800,000 to finance the cost of retrofitting the three pump stations located on West Street, Maple Street and River Street.

- Pump stations are part of the wastewater collection system, pumping wastewater uphill from the collection lines to the wastewater treatment facility. These stations have exceeded their expected lifespan, increasing the risk of failures and costly repairs. Upgrades will enhance energy efficiency, meet future demands, and improve community safety.
- The three pump station retrofit project includes:
 - West Street Pump Station: One of the City's largest, installed in 1968 with the last major upgrade in 1983. It currently lacks emergency storage. Proposed upgrades include a larger wet well, a new recessed package pump station, a new control panel, connections to the collection system, a flow meter, and an emergency generator.
 - River Street Pump Station: Established in 1973, with minimal upgrades since. Proposed improvements involve a new wet well structure with two submersible pumps, a valve vault, and related controls.
 - Maple Street Pump Station: Also installed in 1973 with few upgrades. Similar proposed enhancements as River Street, including a new wet well and controls.
- The Sanitation Capital Fund lacks sufficient funds for these projects, necessitating a bond for financing. Payments will come from the Sanitation Capital Fund for River Street, Maple Street, and the city's share of the West Street upgrades, which will be cost-shared with the Town of Essex (70% Town, 30% City). This ratio may change over the debt's life.

Article 3: You are being asked to elect City officers required by law, including one City Council member (three-year term), one Library Trustee (five-year term), and one Champlain Water District Commissioner (three-year term).

- The Champlain Water District Commissioner is an elected position for residents to vote on for the first time. The Champlain Water District (CWD) supplies drinking water and fire protection to 12 municipal systems, with each member Town/City electing one Commissioner for a three-year term. Previously, the former Village of Essex Junction was part of the Town of Essex and shared one CWD Commissioner. Now that Essex Junction is a separate municipality and the current joint Commissioner's term is ending, it will have its own representative on the CWD Board of Water Commissioners.

FY 26 GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY

	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	\$ Change	% Change
Revenues								
Property Taxes	3,890,397	3,838,114	10,420,986	10,433,476	11,110,346	11,405,931	295,585	3%
General	753,961	742,708	3,456,044	3,507,965	632,664	721,705	89,041	14%
Administration	50,000	50,000	-	-	-	-	-	n/a
Clerk	-	78,159	105,008	76,404	71,464	78,035	6,571	9%
Information Technology	-	-	14,000	114,000	-	-	-	n/a
Community Development	39,000	43,529	79,158	76,720	47,000	75,000	28,000	60%
Economic Development	-	3,750	4,000	-	-	-	-	n/a
Fire	20	-	10	10	-	-	-	n/a
Streets	1,469,044	1,467,739	153,500	168,729	132,500	127,500	(5,000)	-4%
Stormwater	78,018	78,018	-	-	-	-	-	n/a
Brownell Library	15,500	15,888	500	21,948	650	900	250	38%
Recreation	12,000	11,074	12,479	9,267	11,000	10,170	(830)	-8%
Buildings	2,075	1,822	-	-	-	-	-	n/a
Total Revenues	6,310,015	6,330,802	14,245,685	14,408,518	12,005,624	12,419,241	413,617	3%

Expenditures								
Administration	722,102	650,577	611,570	627,915	688,830	735,309	46,479	7%
Legislative	-	-	83,333	48,646	102,244	99,150	(3,093)	-3%
Clerk	-	-	306,750	262,588	256,470	268,921	12,451	5%
Finance	334,415	397,127	504,300	482,589	589,118	621,777	32,660	6%
Information Technology	-	-	153,650	259,205	228,611	211,551	(17,060)	-7%
Assessing	-	-	77,810	79,310	89,568	96,075	6,507	7%
Community Development	267,977	266,785	482,813	320,506	396,078	425,610	29,533	7%
Economic Development	49,250	23,363	40,000	6,005	-	-	-	n/a
Fire	482,738	480,139	545,484	537,675	530,292	543,037	12,745	2%
Health and Human Services	-	-	2,977,293	2,973,733	3,057,361	3,235,493	178,132	6%
County/Regional Functions	-	-	346,883	316,733	354,376	445,901	91,525	26%
Streets	1,465,044	1,553,853	1,566,556	1,572,099	1,552,923	1,583,502	30,579	2%
Stormwater	90,018	26,691	167,484	163,921	230,850	-	(230,850)	-100%
Brownell Library	871,455	837,311	964,134	915,181	1,016,569	1,047,704	31,135	3%
Recreation	847,138	935,806	1,100,479	1,065,014	1,131,553	1,135,776	4,223	0%
Buildings	285,200	304,962	3,215,263	375,786	350,655	362,720	12,065	3%
Debt	195,550	195,624	402,528	394,916	392,053	375,943	(16,110)	-4%
Transfers and Misc.	699,128	724,079	699,356	3,456,126	1,036,574	1,230,770	194,196	19%
Total Expenditures	6,310,015	6,396,316	14,245,685	13,857,948	12,004,124	12,419,241	415,117	3%



To view the full proposed FY 26 General Fund Budget visit the City's website at www.essexjunction.org/departments/finance/budget.