

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2013
7:30 PM**

AGENDA

**Joint Meeting with Essex Selectboard
on Shared Manager Concept**

This meeting will be held in the conference room at the Essex Town Offices, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT.

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
MINUTES OF SPECIAL JOINT MEETING/WORK SESSION
JUNE 6, 2012**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: George Tyler (President), Dan Kerin (Vice President), Lori Houghton, Elaine Sopchak and Andrew Brown.

ESSEX SELECTBOARD: Linda Myers (Chair), Max Levy (Vice Chair), Irene Wrenner, David Rogerson and Brad Luck.

ADMINISTRATION: David Crawford, Village Manager
Darby Brazoski, Management Assistant
Pat Scheidel, Town Manager
Trevor Lashua, Assistant Town Manager

GUESTS: Rep. Rebecca Ellis (D-Waterbury), Vice Chair, Waterbury Selectboard
Nick and Bridget Meyer, Pleasant Street
Diane Clemens, Williams Street
Polly McEwing, Doubleday Lane
Mary Jo Engel, Gaines Court
Eric Chittenden, Waterbury Center

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The work session was held in the Blue Ribbon Pavilion at the Champlain Valley Exposition. Village President, George Tyler, called the Village Trustees meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. Selectboard Chair Linda Myers subsequently called the Selectboard meeting to order immediately after.

II. SUMMARY OF MEETING PURPOSE

George Tyler began the meeting by thanking Rebecca Ellis for coming to talk to the two boards. He stated that it was important to remember that everyone at this table should be considered equals, and that all have thought about the problem before. Working and brainstorming together can have positive outcomes. He mentioned that while he was working at the Essex Reporter, he experienced all of the three previous merger attempts. He also mentioned that there have been over twenty-two attempts to change the governance structure of Essex prior to this and all failed. This shows that there is the need to simplify and look at things in a different light in order to succeed. He suggested looking at the structure of the CCSU administration, as they are able to provide support for three separate districts and Boards. He also stated that he believes that these discussions about service combinations are best to be had at the managerial level first, before considering combining other departments.

III. OVERVIEW OF WATERBURY TOWN AND VILLAGE MODEL

Rebecca Ellis introduced herself as the Vice-Chair of the Waterbury Selectboard, as well as a state representative. She was been on the Waterbury Selectboard for 7 years, and has also served on the Planning Commission.

She began the discussion by reviewing a timeline of Waterbury's history. Waterbury was established in 1882, and there is only a charter for the Village, not the town. In 1986, the Town and Village Planning Commissions merged. The Town Selectboard made the official appointment to the Planning Commission, however; the Trustees were able to give recommendations, but not vote. There is no formal agreement that the Trustees should sit in on these interviews, however; it is tradition that they do this. Many people in the community were not happy that the Trustees did not have voting power over these appointments. In 2011, a joint Development Review Board was created.

In 1995, the highway departments were combined, and in 2009 the fire departments merged. This was done because a new fire station was needed, and neither the town nor village could pay for it on their own.

Currently, the village has its own police force and water/sewer department. The clerk/treasurer, municipal manager, planner, zoning administrator, and all other administrative staff are shared. There is an inter-municipal payment system so to equalize the costs of staff. About 70% of the staff's time is spent on town issues, and 30% on village issues.

While the village Trustees and town Selectboard can meet separately, all of their meetings have been joint since Tropical Storm Irene. It is possible that this trend will continue.

There was then a period of questions for Rebecca regarding the situation in Waterbury:

- David: What was the impetus for these changes?
- Rebecca: I was not living there at the time so cannot speak from personal experience. No one that I talked to was able to remember.
- Dan: How is the budget between the town and village determined?
- Rebecca: Municipal staff estimate how much time they spend on village and town work, respectively. The inter-municipal payments are adjusted year by year based on current situations. No one has really looked over the situation to determine who is getting the better deal; there are gives and takes on both the part of the village and the town.
- Lori: Is there anything that you would like to change about Waterbury's current structure?

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- Rebecca: I would like to see everything completely combined, as there is a considerable amount of the manager's time spent in meetings. Numerous boards can also slow down the decision making process.
 - Elaine: Did the way that Waterbury town and village residents pay taxes change over time?
 - Rebecca: Yes, it has become more equal with the combination of services. The tax rates have changed gradually as services were combined. However, village residents still pay about 30% more in taxes, due to the fact that they fund the police department.
 - Dan: Does Waterbury have separate town and village meetings?
 - Rebecca: Yes, they are one day apart.
 - Elaine: What is the turnout?
 - Rebecca: A couple hundred for the town, and forty or fifty for the village.
 - Brad: What is the grand list value for the town and village?
 - Rebecca: Seven million for the town, three million for the village.
 - George: Does Waterbury have an economic development department?
 - Rebecca: No, but we are applying for a grant in order to do more with this.
 - Lori: How are hiring decisions made?
 - Rebecca: Currently, the Selectboard makes most hiring decisions. An exception occurred when the village Trustees hired the Public Works Superintendent. This was because it was the village that pushed for the creation of this position.
 - Linda: How does the manager operate?
 - Rebecca: He is busy and very good at his job. He seems to be able to manage the situation, but we have been very lucky to get a manager as good as we have.
 - Linda: Do the Trustees and Selectboard have the same meeting location?
 - Rebecca: Yes.
 - Dan: How much of a say do the Trustees have in joint meetings?
 - Rebecca: Trustee approval is required for most things. The boards generally do not have a vote if it does not seem like they both agree on an issue.

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- Brad: What will happen when a new manager needs to be hired?
 - Rebecca: The boards will hold combined interviews.
 - Brad: why do you think that Waterbury has continually voted no on the issue of merger?
 - Rebecca: The police budget is a big aspect of it. Police service would make the taxes in the town increase, and many residents do not feel that this is a service that they are in need of.
 - Linda: In Essex, the town houses the police department, but the village pays for it as well.
 - Max: Are the tax rates the main reasons that the merger votes have failed?
 - Rebecca: Yes.
 - Andrew: What can we learn from Waterbury's model?
 - Rebecca: It is helpful if the departments work well together prior to a merger. Once the ties are built, these people can be advocates for increased collaboration.
 - George: It is interesting that the inter-municipal payment goes both ways. Why has this system not been able to solve Waterbury's problems with the police department?
 - Rebecca: There are worries that the police department would need to be expanded if a merger was to occur.
 - Irene: Who was responsible for making these changes in structure?
 - Rebecca: Mostly the Selectboard and Trustees, however the Fire Department merger required a vote.
 - Dan: It almost seems like the Waterbury situation is a lot like a couple who chooses to live together instead of getting married. They are merged in many ways, but the relationship could fall apart at any time as Waterbury is still two separate municipalities.
 - Rebecca: The situation does depend a considerable amount on personalities and a tradition of cooperation. Since many functions have been merged for over thirty years, it would be difficult to separate suddenly.
 - Linda: Would you call Waterbury's status one of goodwill between the two boards?
 - Rebecca: Both believe that this combination of services is a necessity in order to make Waterbury a better place. However, when tax rates come into the equation, goodwill tends to fall apart.

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- Max: Has there been any cost savings with the combination of the Public Works department?
 - Rebecca: None has been documented, but it makes the logistics easier.
 - Irene: Waterbury is much smaller than Essex. Do you think that we would be able to function with only one manager considering our larger population size?
 - Rebecca: In this case, Essex would probably need additional administrative staff, such as a CFO or assistant manager.

IV. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

George recommended that each Board member have the chance to express their opinion on the information that was presented at the meeting, and their thoughts about moving forward.

Brad said that the conversation was very interesting, and that he really likes the concept of having a shared municipal manager. He felt that it was feasible as long as the support structure around this person was correct. However, he felt that it might be difficult for one manager to manage staff in two different buildings, and that this should be something to think about.

Elaine said that the efforts seemed cumbersome, and that everyone needed to make sure that both boards are in agreement. She said that the process in Waterbury seemed to be tiring and take up a considerable amount of human capital. She felt that the Waterbury model valued logistics and efficiency as just as much as cost savings, which is a much better lens to view the process through.

Irene mentioned that Essex's population is four times larger than Waterbury's, and our model would have to be altered because of this. She said that she was still crunching the numbers, and wanted to be sure that we were not putting additional and excessive work on our already hard-working municipal staffers.

Dan stated that Waterbury and Essex seem to be facing similar issues, with Essex's loss of the IBM subsidy and Waterbury's loss of the state office buildings. He believes that the changes occurring in Waterbury are positive, but precarious.

Linda Myers said that the idea is a worthwhile one. She believes that we could hire one town manager, along with an assistant or two, and possibly be able to keep the separate office buildings. She said that this was possible if we have a manager who has the desire and ability to make this happen. She also brought up the idea of merging other departments at some point in time.

George agreed with Irene that the scale is different in Essex than in Waterbury, and believes that we should look at larger communities for a model to follow. He believes that there is a lot more research that needs to be done on this topic.

Max noted that Waterbury's path was unplanned, and seemed to gradually evolve. However, he believes that a long term vision for the future is needed. We also need to find a way to get to an equalized tax rate between the communities. He believes that it is important to encourage cooperation between departments, so they will be more comfortable working together over time.

Lori said that this is the start of a great conversation. She agrees with Brad that it is important to have all administrative staff in one building. She also believes that it would be valuable to hear from Mike Dewese, the CCSU Superintendent to learn more about he manages reporting to several different boards. Her goal for the next few months is to get a friendly agreement between Essex and Essex Junction that states that if a staff member retires or decides to move on, there is a hold on hiring so that the boards can discuss the idea of combining services.

Dave said that there were lots of collaboration opportunities between Essex and Essex Junction, especially concerning economic development. He thinks that it is a good idea to collaborate and discuss the issues before replacing managers or department heads.

Andrew said that he was excited that this process is happening, and that he thinks that Waterbury's collaboration was successful because it was gradual, and not an all or nothing change. He also mentioned that a shared culture between the community as a whole is important to lasting change.

V. DISCUSSION OF HOW TO PROCEED

George said that he did not know when either of the managers was planning on retiring, but that it is important to begin discussion about a possible administrative consolidation soon. He also mentioned that he does not have a specific plan in mind, and that an independent study on the issue might be needed.

Linda said that this is a good idea, and that they might want to have a smaller group take a look at the issue. It can sometimes be easier for smaller groups to accomplish tasks. George said that he would talk to Trustees about recommending candidates for this board, and Linda said that she would have the same conversation with the Selectboard.

Dan asked if the boards were only discussing managerial combination or the greater combination of department heads. Linda said that they were starting with the managers, and would take a top down approach.

George asked both Dave Crawford, and Pat Scheidel, Village and Town managers, respectively, what their feelings on this process were.

Pat said that he liked the idea of starting this process by looking at managerial consolidation. He felt that the idea of having one manager and a larger, combined board was something to consider as well. He believes that it is important to include the opinions of residents who are not on either board in the process.

Dave agreed that a small group would be good for this task. He also noted that he does not believe that either manager has a specific timeline for retirement. He believes that, should the boards feel that this is a goal of theirs, they should begin the exploration process quickly.

The consensus was to create a committee of six, comprised of the two Managers, two Board Chairs and two residents.

Brad said that the reason that so many merger votes have failed is because there was not enough public input into the process. A larger group might be necessary to come up with more creative solutions.

George said that nothing of substance would happen without massive amounts of public input. The small group is intended to only iron out the financial and technical issues of this process.

Linda said that this group would be in constant contact with both boards.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to adjourn the Essex Junction Trustees meeting. VOTING: 5 ayes; motion carried.

MOTION by David Rogerson, SECOND by Max Levy, to adjourn the Essex Selectboard meeting. VOTING: 5 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Darby Brazoski, Management Assistant



**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
VILLAGE-TOWN MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF WORK SESSION
AUGUST 1, 2012**

PRESENT: George Tyler, Village President
Linda Myers, Essex Selectboard Chair
David Crawford, Village Manager
Patrick Scheidel, Town Manager
Jeffrey Carr, Town Resident
Mary Morris, Village Resident

1. CALL TO ORDER

George Tyler called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. OUTLINE OF MEETING

Committee members introduced themselves. Myers and Tyler summarized the discussion that took place during the joint meeting of the Essex Selectboard and Essex Junction Trustees in June 2012 regarding two municipalities sharing the same management staff. Tyler noted that Village Manager Crawford will be stepping down from his position in October, and said that Town Manager Scheidel had previously indicated the possibility of retiring from his position in the near future. Tyler said that the pending departure of both municipal managers presented an opportunity for the two governments to consider consolidating some administrative functions rather than continuing the traditional model of having two separate full time managers. He said that the Chittenden Central Supervisory Union and the town and village of Waterbury provided two successful examples of chief administrators serving separate municipalities.

There was agreement that the best way to proceed was to gather information from the two governments on the managers' roles, and to survey appropriate staff, including the managers, regarding their views on consolidating their offices. There was discussion about the process of the information-gathering, particularly regarding the schedules of the committee members. There was agreement that Mary Morris and Jeff Carr should lead the information gathering process because they were not affiliated with either government, but had prior experience as elected officials within the Town and Village governments.

Carr asked if only the management functions of the two governments should be considered or if other Town and Village departments should be included. Tyler and Myers suggested that the agreement between the two boards had generally been to focus on the managers and affiliated administrative services, but not other municipal departments. Carr and Morris suggested that they would define a scope of work and develop a template of questions for each staff member or elected official they interviewed. They said that when their work was complete they would develop a report for the committee based on their findings and, possibly, some recommendations for next steps.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by George Tyler, Village President