



**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

2 Lincoln Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Monday, May 28, 2019

**7:15 PM (or immediately following
Village of Essex Trustees Meeting)**

E-mail: manager@essex.org

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Phone: (802) 878-1341

The Selectboard and Trustees meet together to discuss and act on joint business. Each board votes separately on action items.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [7:15 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
 - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Preparation for Strategic Advance—Liz Gamache
 - b. Update from Governance Subcommittee—George Tyler
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approval of minutes: May 6, 2019
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board Member Comments
 - b. Stormwater Award for Chelsea Mandigo from Green Mountain Water Environment Association
 - c. Recreation Award for Adriane Martin
 - d. Brownell Library Staff and Director's Report March 2019
 - e. "Garbage disposals vs. composting", Burlington Free Press
 - f. Memo from Rob Paluba and Greg Duggan re: website updates
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. An executive session is not anticipated
9. **ADJOURN**

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair or President, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the Chair or President. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings, like all programs and activities of the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Unified Manager's office at 878-1341.

Certification: _____ 05/24/2019 _____ *Emmett*

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees; Selectboard; Evan Teich, Unified Manager

From: Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager *GSD*

Re: Preparation for Strategic Advance

Date: May 24, 2019

Issue

The issue is preparing the Trustees and Selectboard for the Strategic Advance work session on June 22.

Discussion

Liz Gamache, former mayor and interim City Manager in St. Albans City, is going to lead the Trustees and Selectboard on May 28 in preparing for the June 22 Strategic Advance.

The packet for Tuesday's meeting will include biographies of speakers Liz Gamache and Emerson Lynn, as well as materials from past Town and Village efforts around strategic planning – at the board level and the community level. Materials include the following:

- Biographies of speakers, Liz Gamache and Emerson Lynn.
- Heart & Soul of Essex final report. The Heart & Soul website, <http://www.heartandsoulofessex.org/>, also contains information about the community visioning effort that took place over two years.
- Examination of a Shared Service Delivery Model, Essex Junction and Essex, September 7, 2014
- March 24, 2018 work session – materials and minutes from a work session of the two boards.
- Select minutes from joint board meetings in April 25 and May 14, 2018.

Cost

n/a

Recommendation

This memo is for informational and discussion purposes.

BIOGRAPHIES

- **Liz Gamache** has been active in St. Albans as a community leader for the past 15 years. Most recently, she served three terms as mayor during the launch of a successful revitalization effort. She has held other staff and volunteer positions in St. Albans including a stint as interim City Manager, founding director of the Community Justice Center and Chairperson of the St. Albans Downtown Board. Liz has experience in the electric utility field, as well, having been Director of Efficiency Vermont, and prior to that, a member of Vermont Electric Co-op's leadership team. Today, she works with non-profits and municipalities as a consultant focused on strategic planning, organizational development and leadership coaching. She also serves on several Franklin County and statewide boards including: Preservation Trust, Local Motion, the State of Vermont's Downtown Board and Franklin County Industrial Development Board.
- **Emerson Lynn** is a longtime community leader in Franklin County. For 37 years he published the St. Albans Messenger and several other affiliated newspapers, including the Essex Reporter. Today he continues to share political commentary and insights about community issues in Vermont Editor Emeritus.



**HEART
& SOUL
— OF —
ESSEX**

Wrap-up Meeting & Celebration February 10 2014

Summary

On February 10, 2014, over 100 community members gathered at Essex High School for a celebration and culminating report about the work of the Heart & Soul of Essex. Participants included people who live or work in Essex. Guests of honor included an unprecedented breadth of community leaders from within and outside of the village, including elected officials, members of municipal commissions and boards, school board members and municipal staff.

The meeting featured a report about project accomplishments and a conversation with attendees about the future of Heart & Soul. Below is a project summary as presented during the meeting.

BACKGROUND

During the summer of 2011, a diverse group of youth and adults who live or work in Essex (both within and outside the village) met for several months to prepare a joint application for an Orton Family Foundation planning grant. Our team included residents, town and village representatives, planners, public and private sector partners, staff and elected officials.

This group believed the Heart & Soul grant could help Essex

- Have a new conversation that focused more on the identification of shared interests across the community (as opposed to the historical conversation about the relationship between the village and the town).
- Improve communication and collaboration between town and village.
- Tap into new civic energy that sparked a successful revitalization effort in the village center.
- Make sure that as Essex continues to grow and change we hold onto what is special about our community and to ensure that the changes that do happen reflect what matters to the people who live and work here.



Heart & Soul Board members (also known as the CAT) at work

Project Goals

The project set out to...

- Engage people from all parts of our community to help gain an understanding of our history, opportunities, and challenges;
- Identify a set of shared values that will drive community decision making in the future;
- Identify actions the community could take right away to bring our values to life.

With the hope that this work will lead to...

- Coordinated planning efforts that reflect the community values in land use planning and municipal work;
- A culture that encourages and supports residents who want to participate in the civic life of our community;
- A landscape that reflects local values.

WHAT WE DID

We engaged a diverse group of people who live or work in Essex.

Heart & Soul of Essex reached out to many different people in the community. While the project didn't meet all of its goals to engage some of the most hard to reach residents, a diverse mix of people who live or work in Essex participated. A special effort was made to engage people who live inside and outside the village, and we successfully included people who live in all nine of the Front Porch Forum Neighborhoods.

Heart & Soul estimates that the initiative engaged well over 1,000 people (5% of the population of Essex).



A full house during the Orton Family Foundation's initial site

We filled a unique set of roles.

During the grant period, Heart & Soul of Essex played three key roles in the community.

The whole venture has been amazing to watch and has been incredibly organized and publicized.

Kim Maiberger, participant

Convener (hosting and coordinating a variety of events including large public forums, facilitated small group community conversations, and a community-wide public art project)

Connector (connecting citizens with local government, building relationships among Town and Village staff and other community organizations, connecting the community's input with decisions).

Champion/Advocate (ensuring community values are incorporated into decision-making and acknowledging the people and organizations that are taking action to strengthen community values)

We used a variety of approaches to engage the community.

(see page 9 for a complete list of activities)

- personal invitations (phone calls and handwritten notes)
- small group facilitated dialogues
- community summits
- talking to people where they are (living rooms, events, etc.)
- meet-ups organized by community interests
- keypad polling
- informed people through social media and e-newsletter
- combination of small and large group venues
- combination of “thick” and “thin” engagement strategies (an example of thick engagement is participating in a multiple hour conversation or forum while examples of thin engagement include answering a brief survey or stopping by a booth at a community gathering and sharing a quick opinion)



WHAT WE LEARNED

The people of Essex want to be included in decisions about the future.

We had excellent participation in all of our events even though the conversations weren't organized around an urgent issue. People will show up if they are offered a warm invitation and an inviting structure and venue.

We identified six core community values.



The people we talked to shared a wide range of opinions and ideas about the community. Six core values emerged very strongly. These values may seem obvious, which is a good thing. Values are supposed to be enduring. Even so, when we look at how these values are defined, they are unique to Essex and represent our particular hopes for the future (for a description of the community's values, please see page 8).

Many of the community's hopes are already being addressed.

Once we identified our core values, we surveyed the community to make sure these resonated with a broader group of residents. We also provided several opportunities for community members to share their ideas for ways to bring our values to life. We learned that the community and the municipalities are already working on many initiatives that are aligned with our values. Below are just a few examples.

- ✓ **Bike/Walkability** - town officials are currently working with CCRPC and surrounding areas to improve bike and walk connectivity. The village is developing a bike and walk master plan.
- ✓ **Essex Eats Out** - a citizen group, led by Essex faith leaders is working on a plan to bring the community together to enjoy free community dinners on Friday's beginning in April.
- ✓ **Co-working space** - The Essex Economic Development Commission just completed a survey to see if there is interest in creating a co-working space for Essex residents who work from home.

Essex has multiple strengths to build on.

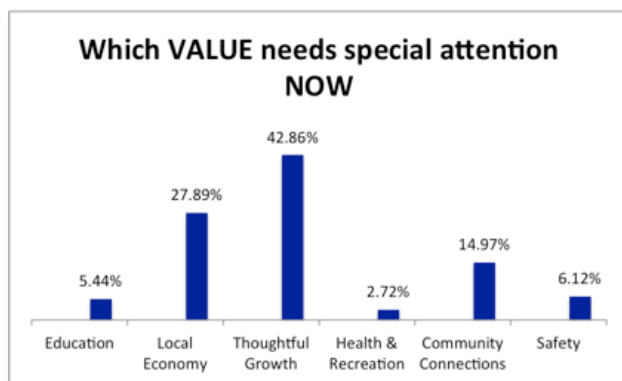
The community had several opportunities to assess how well we are doing in relation to each of our values. A majority of the almost 200 folks who attended our Action Summit (75%) think we are doing well on most of the values.

We take pride in many community assets, including our highly regarded schools, libraries and recreation departments and we want to see these institutions continue to improve.



We used keypad polling during the Action Summit to gauge community priorities

Essex should pay particular attention to two of our core values.



Thoughtful Growth and Local Economy are the two values that people are most concerned about, with 43% of participants saying that Thoughtful Growth is the value that needs attention right now.

Consistent priorities emerged across groups.

There was a lot of alignment among formal and informal community leaders. There was also a lot of alignment between the people who live in the town outside the village and within the village on most issues.

However, strengthening **Community Connections** was especially important to town residents (24% of Essex residents who live in the town outside the village prioritized community connections as an important value that needs attention, compared with only 11% of Essex residents who live inside the village).

WHAT'S CHANGED?

We set the stage for better collaboration and improved communication.

- The Heart & Soul Community Advisory Team (CAT) and project staff included youth and adult residents who live in all parts of Essex as well as elected and municipal officials from the town and the village.
- Heart & Soul provided multiple opportunities for town and village elected officials, planning commissions and municipal staff to talk together about the future of the community.
- During the grant period, village trustees and town selectboard worked together to hire Pat Scheidel to be the first shared manager in more than 40 years.

The community values offer a useful framework for collaboration across organizations. This work inspired me to meet with town planners recently to discuss the implications of future growth for our schools. I was impressed that our planners are staying abreast of educational issues and look forward to ongoing communication between the Essex Select board and the Essex Town School Board as the needs of Essex and its school system change."

Mark Andrews, Superintendent, Essex
Town School District

We built new civic capacity & leadership.



Youth leaders co-moderated many of our events, created films about the project and designed our social media platforms

- New youth and adult leaders stepped forward to manage the project, reach out to the community and lead a wide variety of activities.
- We engaged many people who hadn't been involved before.
- We trained over 30 residents to facilitate public conversations, and engaged many more as volunteers.
- We pioneered new ways to engage people and create successful models that can be replicated.

We served as a catalyst for action.

Three community action teams are moving forward.



School Community Partnership Team

- ✓ **Community Calendar** - [Lara Keenan](#) has taken the lead on the Essex Community Calendar Committee, as it presented the perfect combination of connecting people with one another and with community resources (*Community Connections*)
- ✓ **Multicultural Potluck and Cultural Exchange** - [Jen Bostwick](#) decided to help lead the Multicultural Potluck Dinner group because her family always loved the International Dinner that Summit Street School put on every year. She is now interested in expanding the experience to the entire community (*Community Connections, Health & Recreation and Education*)
- ✓ **School/Community Partnerships** - [Erin Maquire](#), the Executive Director of Student Support Services for CCSU and [Kyle Riester](#), a sophomore at EHS are co-leading this group. This group recognizes that as schools continue to move towards experience based learning and personal learning plans for all students, the need for effective school community partnerships will continue to grow. This group will begin its work by talking with Essex educators to find out what partnerships exist now, what is working well and how we can build on that as we move forward (*Education*)

Community Values are being incorporated in planning.

- ✓ The Brownell Library included values in long range plans
- ✓ Heart & Soul of Essex is working with CCRPC and the village planning commission to incorporate community values in the village comprehensive plan

The Heart and Soul process came at a perfect time for the Brownell Library. We had just begun our own process of updating our Strategic Plan and were able to coordinate our efforts with those of Heart and Soul. As a result we ended up choosing four of the values identified by Heart and Soul - Education, Community Connections, Health and Recreation and Local Economy - as our own long range goals. The Heart and Soul process not only helped us gather information about the library, but also gave us the opportunity to understand and integrate a picture of the entire Essex community into our plan. A perfect fit for us!

Christine Packard, Chair, Brownell Library Board

WHAT'S NEXT?

There is still important work to be done.

Heart & Soul of Essex sees value in continuing to **convene** the community, **connect** people with each other, and to **champion** the community's values. In fact, when we asked participants in the wrap-up meeting how they think we should build on the momentum begun by the Heart & Soul of Essex, their ideas, which are listed below, fit squarely into these three roles:

Convener

- Move forward with community charrette and strategic plan for village core
- Opportunities for healthy dialogue
- Use existing platforms (such as FPF) for neighborhood meet-ups
- Keep bringing folks together several times a year - begin with a social experience, then address topic at hand
- Create community version of Minecraft as a way to bring youth into the conversation

Connector

- There are groups working on almost all of those values - continue to convene these groups and build bridges
- More talking between groups - central processing group
- Opportunities for collaboration with existing groups - central organizing group
- Have the Community Calendar sort information (i.e. if I am interested in _____, how do I get in touch with existing organizations, contacts, etc.)

Champion

- Don't want H & S to go away. Maintain a core group of people to ensure values are being incorporated
- Can we learn what other project towns have done to keep Heart & Soul alive
- Acknowledge young people for participating in community

It is a time of transition.

The grant period ends this month. An interim staff person will be hired with a small amount of funds that remain. This person will keep the community informed about the work of the Heart & Soul Community Advisory Team (CAT). The team will meet during the spring of 2014 to decide whether the Heart & Soul of Essex should continue to fill the roles we've identified. If the answer to that question is "yes" the CAT will identify potential funding sources, and write an implementation grant to the Orton Family Foundation.

We hope you will keep in touch.

Check the Heart & Soul of Essex website as well as our facebook page for the latest news and for specific ideas about how you can help bring our community values to life.

www.heartandsoulofessex.org



CAT members at the 2013 Block Party

COMMUNITY VALUES

LOCAL ECONOMY

Our residents contribute to a vibrant economy by working for and patronizing a diverse mix of businesses, from small, locally-owned enterprises to international corporations. We are committed to fostering an environment that produces a world class workforce and a strong economy for years to come.

HEALTH & RECREATION

We value public places for outdoor and indoor recreation for all ages and abilities. We treasure Indian Brook reservoir, neighborhood parks and the chance to connect by bicycle or on foot. Community institutions provide education and programs to support healthy lifestyles.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Our deep connections with each other make Essex special. Neighbors help each other during good times and bad. We value diversity and welcome everyone. We build our sense of community at local events such as the Memorial Day Parade, Five Corners Farmers Market, and Winter Carnival. Our local newspapers and online forums give us plenty of ways to stay in touch. Residents participate in local government and volunteer.

EDUCATION

Essex invests time, energy, and resources to ensure that our highly respected schools meet the needs of everyone in the community. We are proud to support learning that extends beyond the traditional classroom and includes the arts, athletics, and vocational instruction. Community programs, and libraries offer diverse and affordable opportunities that prepare residents of all ages for lifelong learning and for work in an evolving economy.

THOUGHTFUL GROWTH

We value wide-open spaces and tight-knit neighborhoods, rural roads and vibrant downtown streets. Essex is a place where we can enjoy a beautiful view, walk in the woods and go out to eat without ever leaving town. We support a diverse housing mix, opportunities for business development and a transportation system with a variety of options including a connected network of walking and biking routes.

SAFETY

Essex is a safe place where neighbors watch out for one another. We value an active, visible police force and strong fire and rescue services. Upgrades to our physical infrastructure will allow us to move about our community with comfort and security.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Launch Party** – Brought together over 200 people to kick-off the project and begin a conversation about community values. **September 2012**
- **Neighborhood Conversations** - One of the cornerstones of our activities was a series of 43 Neighborhood Conversations. During these conversations we talked to over 350 people. People met in living rooms, libraries, and businesses. They met in the outermost reaches of rural Essex and in the very center of the village. These structured, yet intimate, two-hour conversations, provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences living or working in Essex. They identified the values they felt were most important to the community. Participants defined those values and shared their hopes for the future. Each conversation was unique and people expressed a wide range of opinions. Even so, we discovered a clear set of six shared values to guide community decision making. **November 2012 – January 2013**
- **Choose Our Future Survey** - Over 500 community members of all ages answered our survey (including at least 352 people who hadn't yet participated in any Heart & Soul of Essex activities). Survey results affirmed that we accurately captured the values we heard about during the neighborhood conversations and that the values rang true for other community members as well. The survey also gave community members a chance to submit ideas about how to put the values into action and to share other hopes and concerns. **Spring 2013**
- **Pop-up Coffee Shops** - Lots of people we talked with would like to see a new coffee house in town. To build momentum for this idea, we hosted five pop-up coffee shops around town. The pop-ups featured live music, games, bike powered smoothies, snacks, and of course, great coffee. **Spring 2013**
- **Project Partner Meeting** - We brought together our project partners to share the results of the Heart & Soul process to date, and to discuss ways to ensure that planning for the future incorporates the community's values. Over sixty Essex leaders participated in a series of lively and productive discussions at the First Congregational Church. Participants also enjoyed a delicious dinner featuring Nepalese food prepared by Sadhana Ruat. **June 2013**
- **Action Summit & Volunteer Fair** - Nearly two hundred people gathered at Essex High School to learn about the work of the Heart & Soul of Essex, and to set priorities for action. The evening began with a tasty dinner prepared by CCSU Child Nutrition services and the lively sounds of the EHS Jazz Ensemble. A volunteer fair featured over a dozen local organizations. Following dinner, participants identified priorities among the six community values and participated in "meet-ups" to set priorities among hundreds of potential action ideas identified by the community. **September 2013**
- **Mobilizing Our Community Art Project** - Heart & Soul of Essex partnered with CCSU, ETSD and area businesses to bring nationally renowned artist, Kevin Reese, to Essex for a two week artistic residency. Kevin worked with students, businesses and a large number of community volunteers to create large mobiles that were inspired by student's interpretation of what matters most to the people of Essex. The end result is over 50 beautiful pieces of public art that will be displayed in local businesses, municipal buildings and homes and serve as a visual reminder of our community's shared values. **November 2013**
- **Meet-ups** - Brought together over 30 community members who wanted to move forward on three action ideas (Community Calendar, School Community Partnerships, and Multi-cultural Potluck & Cultural Exchange). **December 2013**
- **Wrap-up Celebration** – Brought together over 100 community members including elected officials, board and commission members and municipal staff to share the results of our work. **February 2013**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The accomplishments of the Heart & Soul of Essex belong to the people who live or work in our community. Thank you to everyone who contributed your time, talent and enthusiasm towards this effort. And a heartfelt thanks to the Orton Family Foundation for their financial and technical support throughout the duration of the project.

Community Advisory

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Vasanthi Meyette
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Doreen Gianelli
Karin Hammer
Liza Kilcoyne
Sharon Pitterson-Ogaldez
Grace Yu

Project Coordinators

Susan McCormack
Liz Subin

Project Partners

Brownell Library
Chittenden Central
Supervisory Union
Essex CHIPS
Essex Junction Recreation
& Parks
Essex Free Library
Essex Town School
District
Five Corners Farmers
Market
Little Free Library of Essex
Railroad Avenue Recess
Town of Essex
Village of Essex Junction

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Stephanie Teleen
Margaret Turvey
Linda Waite-Simpson
Dan & Sadhana Ruat

And to our Mobilizing Our Community sponsors



An Examination of a Shared Service Delivery Model for the Village of Essex Junction-Town of Essex, Vermont

Summary Report of the Shared Services Assessment Study Team

June 30, 2014 (Updated September 7, 2014)

Commissioned by:

Village of Essex Junction Trustees

Town of Essex Selectboard

Respectfully Submitted:

Mary L. Morris [Former Village Trustee] and Jeffrey B. Carr [Former Town Selectboard Member]

Acknowledgements

As is always the case with such efforts, it is impossible to adequately thank all of the people who were involved in completing this study. Because of this, we will not mention anyone specifically by name. Instead we wish to offer an all-encompassing “thank-you” to the Village and Town department heads and staff, the current and former members of the Selectboard and Village Trustees, and the members of the “administration” of the community—including the current Village-Town Manager. We also gained important information from former staff members in both the Village and the Town, and spoke with numerous members of the community—some Village and Town volunteers and others concerned citizens and taxpayers.

However, a special thank you is warranted to the current and past leadership of the Village Trustees (including Village President George Tyler) and Town Selectboard (including current Selectboard Chair Max Levy and former Selectboard Chair Linda Myers).

Without all of this valuable assistance, the two authors would not have been able to complete this important effort. We feel indebted to all.

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1.0. Introduction: How We Got Here

The delivery of high-quality services to taxpaying residents is a cornerstone of local government. There are roughly 89,000 local governments throughout the United States including municipalities,¹ school districts, and special districts. Collectively, the New England Public Policy Center estimates that expenditures by these local governments totaled \$1.5 trillion in 2007—equal to 11 percent of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in that year.²

External forces to the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex since 1998³a—including changes in education finance, the “Great Recession,” and the subsequent slow U.S. and Vermont economic recovery—have provided the incentive for Town and Village government to examine how they can continue to provide high quality services to Town and Village residents in the wake of increasing budget stress and service quality challenges. Around the country, budget pressures due to state financial aid reductions, stagnant and sometime falling property values, unfunded mandates, and other curbs in state and federal funding have forced localities to reduce services and staffing. Because the financial resources which could fund local governments are expected to remain constrained for the foreseeable future, policymakers and academics have begun to examine service delivery options that as recently as 10 years ago seemed implausible.

Among the options once thought of as unlikely is the possibility of re-organizing local government service delivery systems to share or consolidate the provision of local services across local political boundaries. While most of the recent discussions on this front have involved a regionalization approach to service delivery (such as the consolidation of services provided by multiple, individual local jurisdictions into a regional entity for a function such as public safety dispatch), this same set of factors has motivated the Essex Selectboard and the

¹ The term “municipalities” in this case refers to cities and towns.

² See “The Quest for Cost-Efficient Local Government in New England: What Role for Regional Consolidation?; New England Public Policy Center; Research report 13-1; February 2013; Page 3.

³ These appear to have begun with the late 1990s re-structuring of state funding for Grades K-12 education in Vermont in the aftermath of the Brigham Decision by the Vermont Supreme Court and continue with the current uncertainty regarding the future of IBM chip fabrication facility in the community and its potential acquisition by another multi-national firm.

Village Trustees to more fully explore, and to take some concrete steps towards, a mutual inter-local agreement to re-organize and rationalize services delivery within the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction.

The process began back in the late Summer of 2012 when the Town Selectboard and Village Trustees held a joint exploratory meeting to discuss the broad concept of an inter-local services agreement. The discussion evolved into an assessment of the idea of a utilizing a “shared manager” and to examine what lessons could be learned on this subject from the applicable history within the State of Vermont. After additional exploratory meetings, the two boards decided a full investigation of the shared services concept was warranted. A former Village Trustee (Mary L. Morris) and a former member of the Town Selectboard (Jeffrey B. Carr) were asked to undertake a broad examination of the community’s services delivery infrastructure, and to serve as a Shared Services Assessment Team. After nearly two years of formal and informal information gathering, interviews with all department heads within the various Village and Town departments, a survey of Village and Town employees,⁴ interviews with the current Town Manager, an interview with a former Village manager, and follow-up synthesis and analysis, this report lays out the findings of this assessment of a shared or consolidated service delivery model for the two municipalities.

2.0. Summary of Findings

The results of our shared-services study included a number of key findings. While there were a large number of important ideas assembled that involved details well beyond the eight more generalized findings of the study, the results fell within the following broad categories:

- 1. POWERFUL FORCES THAT ARE LARGELY BEYOND THE COMMUNITY’S CONTROL ARE COMPELLING CHANGE IN THE DELIVERY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES: A review of the literature and published studies on this subject indicated that the community is being pushed in the direction of a shared service or consolidated service delivery model by powerful, largely external forces. These forces are challenging traditional models of services delivery, and were at least partly responsible for encouraging the two legislative Boards to request this services delivery assessment.**

The forces of change show no signs of abating. The community is, therefore, left with no other logical policy choice but to innovate and collaborate in order to preserve local services quality in this increasingly challenging environment.

⁴ The survey was conducted in November-December of 2012 and resulted in 40 responses from Village and Town employees.

2. **THE INITIAL EXPERIENCE WITH THE UNIFIED MANAGER HAS BEEN A SUCCESS:** This assessment found that initial experience to-date with the “unified manager” has been an unqualified success. No significant impediment to an integrated manager model was uncovered during the study.

The two legislative Boards may wish to consider a more formal review by a third party regarding the initial experience with the unified manager model—such as the Vermont League of Cities and Towns—to independently verify the results of this assessment to protect the community against a “false positive” finding.

3. **AN IMPRESSIVE AMOUNT OF COORDINATION-COLLABORATION ALREADY EXISTS BETWEEN VILLAGE AND TOWN DEPARTMENTS:** Our assessment found an already impressive amount of cooperation and collaboration among and between Village and Town departments. Virtually all department staff expressed a desire to increase the current level of cooperation and collaboration between their respective Village and Town counterparts—as long as they believed this effort had the full support of the Village and Town governing Boards and leadership.

All interviewees felt that there was still much more to be gained through greater cooperation and collaboration with their Town or Village counterpart. With more collaboration, they indicated they would “fall into opportunities” that have not yet been thought of in their service-delivery areas. Interviewees also felt that greater cooperation and collaboration would occur organically, if both Boards clearly said they wanted this cooperation-collaboration to occur as a matter of well-defined, articulated Village/Town policy.

4. **MORE JOINT PLANNING IS NEEDED:** Interviewees identified a need for more joint Village and Town planning. They felt this was the key to strengthening the municipality.

Interviewees indicated that bringing together the planning and zoning committees will ensure the overarching vision of the municipalities is the same and this action will help preserve the identity that is the Essex community. Interviewees also indicated there were too many rules and regulations that prevent Town and Village planning committees from working more closely together. A relatively straight-forward path can resolve this condition—as long as it has support of the two legislative Boards.

5. **WELL-DEVELOPED “SHARED-COLLABORATIVE SERVICES” PLANS IN KEY DEPARTMENTS ALREADY EXIST:** We were surprised to learn that several key departments already had well-developed, though still evolving, plans to consolidate their service-delivery functions with their Village/Town counterparts.

These preliminary plans in our view represent “low-hanging fruit” for next steps in the current shared service effort in the Village/Town.

This study does not make a recommendation in terms of the prioritization or ordering of next steps for each department or service area (see Section 8.1 through Section 8.8 below where each key department area is discussed). If the general policy were to be endorsed by the two legislative Boards and Village/Town administration, there would be a natural impetus for forward progress across most departmental fronts, which would be primarily governed by the idiosyncrasies of each service area and its leadership-policy making bodies.

- 6. THIS EFFORT SHOULD “KEEP IT SIMPLE:”** As the community’s service delivery organizations move toward changing/modifying or eliminating obstacles to shared/consolidated services, care must be exercised to make sure these steps do not make things more complicated or less transparent. We need to make sure to “keep it simple.”

There is already much confusion within the community as to which department or entity does what, when, and how much it costs. The solution should not be more complicated or confusing than the service delivery subject that is being addressed.

- 7. THE END RESULT WILL BE DRIVEN BY OUR OWN COMMUNITY’S NEEDS:** Our review of the shared-service experience of others revealed there is no standard formula for dealing with the strong external forces compelling our community to change. In fact, what is to be done will be driven by our own community’s internal needs.

The “lessons learned” from examining the experience of others is that the path forward for success or failure of the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction effort would be driven by our ourselves. The process will be guided by our strengths and weaknesses, the idiosyncrasies of our own community, and the willingness of our leaders and services stakeholders to set the supportive environment for this improvement to occur for the long-term well-being of our community.

- 8. GOVERNANCE IS A KEY CONCERN TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE FUTURE:** Given the strong forces moving the community into the shared-service direction, the Two Legislative Boards should consider undertaking and completing a comprehensive examination of “governance” within the community. This should be undertaken cooperatively by the Village Trustees and the Town Selectboard.

While this was not an examination of “governance,” the issue came up over and over again in our discussions. However, the two Legislative Boards need to lead this examination and champion any needed changes consistent with “Smart Governance.” This examination should incorporate the values of the community into our government, and identify structural impediments to changes that need to be addressed to further the efficient and effective delivery of high-quality services demanded by our citizens.

The authors intend this to be a “living study,” subject to continuous review and update, as more information is gathered and greater experience is gained with the shared service delivery model. In our current environment, change is inevitable and we believe should be embraced. The ability of our various departments—arising from a strong expression of policy from the two Legislative Boards—to institutionalize an active process of continuous improvement for: (1) planning, and (2) delivering high quality municipal services is a key to increasing “well-being” over the long-term within the Essex community.

3.0. Overview of the Assessment Study’s Objectives

There were three main outcome goals for the inter-local, shared service assessment study. These included the following:

1. Review the current status of services delivery in the Town and Village and identify opportunities for synergies and to reduce overlap/duplication by sharing/consolidating services,
2. Establish the groundwork for further discussions so that the examination of services delivery within the community is continuous and on-going, and
3. Develop a list of recommendations to advancing an effort for shared service delivery in the town for both the near-term and long-term time horizons.

Process objectives for the study included:

1. On an interim basis, identify a list of considerations for a “Unified Manager” approach for Village and Town service delivery using the applicable experience in Waterbury, the Chittenden County Supervisory Union, and elsewhere,
2. Conduct a department-by-department review of service delivery for each Village and Town department within the broader context of #1 above by actively engaging members of each legislative body, department heads and employees, and citizens in each chartered municipality,
3. Assure that broader, community-wide planning efforts and consensus building are incorporated into this study, and

4. Publish a set of study-inspired recommendations for the re-organization of the community services delivery network that take advantage of synergies indicated by the study, while reducing duplication wherever possible in current service-delivery mechanisms.

In early 2013, the interim objective of assessing the pros and cons of a “Unified Manager” was completed and a “Unified Manager” was hired. Following the appointment of a single municipal manager to assist the Village Trustees and the Town Selectboard (which happened to be the incumbent Town Manager), the Shared Services Assessment Team was asked to monitor and evaluate developments during the initial phase of the Village’s and Town’s service delivery experience under the Unified Manager. This additional objective for the study underpins much of the reason why the findings of the study were released in 2014 instead of a year earlier.

4.0. Overview of Recent Local-Municipal Government Experience with Shared Service Delivery

The commitment to “local control” runs deep in Vermont and across the six-state New England region. The Boston Federal Reserve Bank in a recent study on cost-efficient local government noted that although the six New England states comprise only about 2% of the land area of the United States, the 6 New England states together comprise about 4% of the nation’s local governments. This emphasis on local control and the tradition of “home rule”⁵ have resulted in the primary responsibility for providing local services to municipal governments in Vermont, across the entire New England region, and also in states like New York.⁶

Therefore, experience with true inter-local services delivery among municipalities in our region is very unusual. Most of what limited experience there is involves centralizing the responsibility for certain types of municipal services at an existing regional authority (such as a county government or a Council of Governments) or involves centralization at the state level. In fact, the available evidence indicates that full-scale mergers of local governments have remained “extremely rare.”⁷ Much of the reason for this is that empirical evidence on the merits of service

⁵ Home rule places the primary responsibility for providing local services on cities, towns and villages. The original objective of “home rule” during the progressive era of the twentieth century was to facilitate local control and minimize state intervention in municipal affairs. In New England, Home Rule states include Massachusetts and Maine. Limited Home Rule exists in Rhode Island. Vermont and New Hampshire are so-called Dillon’s Rule states where municipalities have only limited authority to pass a law or ordinance that is not specifically permitted in the state’s constitution. For these “not permitted” laws or ordinances, the municipality must obtain permission from the state legislature. See “Dillon’s Rule or Not?,” Research Brief; National Association of Counties; Volume 2, Number 1; January 2004.

⁶ This in part explains the very limited role of counties in the provision of public services in all states across New England.

⁷ See “The Quest for Cost-Efficient Local Government in New England: What Role for Regional Consolidation?” New England Public Policy Center; Research Report 13-1; February 2013; Page 4; and see Warner, Mildred E. and

consolidation has generally been inconclusive. There has been little solid, decision-making quality information to-date regarding the impact that service delivery consolidation will have on either service quality or cost-savings for those who attempt it.⁸

Although the empirical evidence regarding a shared-services approach is somewhat lacking, various studies and articles have accurately laid out the opposing perspectives. Proponents of shared services or consolidation point out that the maximum decentralization of services may lead to higher service delivery costs—requiring duplicative oversight and less efficient utilization of the municipality’s services delivery assets (including both hard assets and personnel resources).⁹ Proponents of shared/consolidated services also correctly note that assigning responsibility for providing local services to each municipality can cause inequities in funding burdens on taxpayers (e.g. when state financial support for any service is insufficient)—causing sub-populations within the municipality to either carry unequal funding burdens which may cause the population to “self-select” into jurisdictions based on ability to pay. Proponents also point to possible negative externalities associated with maximum decentralization of services delivery, where the decisions-actions of one jurisdiction may have adverse consequences (such as traffic congestion) on their neighbors. Having a more centralized structure, this reasoning goes, allows the governing body or bodies to more appropriately internalize such externalities.

Opponents to shared/consolidated services correctly point out that decentralized systems allow localities to devise services delivery mechanisms and the taxation systems to support them that are most in line with the desires of a locality’s residents and taxpayers. In addition, the smaller scale of decentralized systems facilitates the ability of municipal residents to more closely track and monitor what their local government is doing—potentially increasing the quality and efficiency of services versus the larger scale of a shared or centralized delivery system. In addition, opponents point out that many municipal services can be provided as cost effectively by smaller units of government as by larger units of government. The resulting service delivery diversity that the decentralized model affords allows residents and businesses to make more informed choices about their own individual preferences regarding municipal services and taxing structures. This alignment between individual household and business preferences regarding the role of their local government would, in turn, tend to increase societal welfare-happiness.

Amir Hefetz; 2009; Cooperative Competition: Alternative Service Delivery, 2002-2007; Municipal Yearbook 2009; Washington, DC; International City/County Management Association.

⁸ See Carr, Jared B. and Richard C. Feiock; 2004; City-County Consolidation and Its Alternatives: Reshaping the Local Government Landscape; M.E. Sharpe; Armonk, New York and London, England.

⁹ To the extent services exhibit economies of scale potential, smaller jurisdictions will have higher costs per resident/user.

4.1 What Was Learned from Others' Experience in Vermont

Despite strong arguments on both sides of the issue, there are few examples that are truly applicable to the current status of the service delivery network in the community. That is, upon examination of the circumstances and experience with shared/consolidated services in the Town and Village of Waterbury, Vermont (which recently moved towards service sharing/consolidation) and in the Town of Northfield, Vermont (where a shared services agreement was recently terminated) in the end appeared to be less applicable to Essex Village and Town efforts than was originally expected.

For example, the motivation driving Waterbury Town and Waterbury Village to share/consolidate was financially driven by one of the involved municipalities and did not involve a discussion between two equally-positioned municipalities looking for service delivery synergies. With respect to the Northfield separation experience, the end of a shared services arrangement was not based on a perceived failure of a shared/consolidated services arrangement per se. Rather, the agreement appeared to end primarily due to inter-personal conflicts among political leaders and others in the community. As such, neither of these experiences was thought by the Shared Services Assessment Team to be directly applicable to the Village and Town experience. **The lessons learned from the examination of those Vermont experiences and what we have found in the literature was that the blueprint for success or failure of the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction effort would be driven by ourselves. We would primarily be guided by our strengths and weaknesses, the idiosyncrasies of our own community, and the willingness of our leaders and stakeholders for various types of services to seek to improve the overall well-being of our community.**

4.2 What Has Been Learned from Experience To-Date with the Unified Manager

All interviewees indicated that the experience to-date with the Unified Manager was an unqualified success. Although this manager's sharing arrangement has caused some on the Town staff to have reduced access to the Town Manager, we identified no significant impediment or negative fall-out from the first roughly two years of actual experience with the decision. Certainly, at least some of the "success" is attributable to the incumbent and the leadership of the two involved Boards. However, it seems clear that as important as the persons and leaders involved with this new approach to municipal administration in the Village and Town are for laying the groundwork for change, it is the incumbent and the leaders on both Boards that will continue to be the critically important catalysts for future steps.

Although we found no significant criticism of the Unified Manager arrangement, we recognize that there is a small possibility that interviewees were telling us what they thought we wanted to hear. Most interviewees understand the concept on a Unified Manager had the support of the Town Manager and they all appeared to understand that our investigation had the support of the Town Manager. As such, we believe it is prudent that the two legislative Boards undertake an

independent assessment of the Unified Manager experience in order to assure there was no bias in the information provided during this study. An independent organization such as the Vermont League of City and Towns is a logical candidate to undertake such a review—given their deep institutional understanding of local governance issues of significance regarding this issue.

5.0. This Study Took a Different Approach than is “Typical” for Shared/Consolidated-Services

While most studies and efforts regarding the efficacy of a shared/consolidated services approach tend to focus on the economic aspects of the issue,¹⁰ this study had the singular focus of developing recommendations for improving the quality of and rationalizing the service delivery system of the community in total. If there were budget savings (e.g. from reducing the administrative effort for each service) or new sources of revenue (e.g. grants) that emerge from the implementation of the recommendations, those economic or financial gains were treated as secondary impacts. This overriding service quality process objective was decided early on during the initial discussions with the Village Trustees and the Town Selectboard as the study was being designed.

Non-economic reasons abound for the two service delivery staffs to collaborate. These were succinctly presented in a recent publication from the IBM Center for the Business of Government entitled: “A County Manager’s Guide to Shared Services in Local Government,” published in the Spring of 2013.¹¹ Although this publication was, like many others, focused on regional consolidation of municipal service systems, there were several underlying themes that are also applicable to inter-local services sharing that also make good sense for the current Village and Town service delivery assessment effort:

1. Stimulates Innovation/Continuous Improvement

Conversations between professionals on both staffs will (and already have) lead to opportunities for innovation. Such conversations get very detailed about how services currently are and should be provided. This tends to wear down concerns about the current system and shifts focus to how these services could and should be provided—leading to innovations and on-going analysis-assessments that leads to continuous system improvement.

2. Builds on Complimentary Strengths by Sharing Knowledge and Skills

The process of providing shared or consolidated services often leads to the sharing of staff expertise or specialized equipment that one community may have and the other lacks. Working together, this sharing of expertise and skills can result in the helpful exchange of ideas and improve the level and quality of services in the community.

¹⁰ Either through cost or budget savings and/or as a source of new revenue.

¹¹ This was provided to the Shared Services Assessment Team by Essex Selectboard member Brad Luck.

3. Improves Working Relationships

A shared/consolidated services approach allows for free, regular, and open dialogue among service delivery staff and volunteers at all levels across municipal boundaries (e.g. not just among the legislative bodies). This regular communication can lead to better coordination and encourage new ideas that will be mutually beneficial to both the Town and Village service networks.

4. Improves Service Quality

Working together can create results that exceed the sum of the individual services delivery system parts working separately. The working partnerships forged by this approach, even if it does not ultimately save money, promotes stronger partnerships that result in the provision of better services to residents and taxpayers.

5.1 What Do We Know About the Precursors to Successful Shared-Service Arrangements?

As mentioned above, the literature is thin with respect to empirical research on the implementation of shared service arrangements in government. However, one such study of note was conducted by the Anisfield School of Business of Rampano College of New Jersey in 2008. In that study, the authors found that the success of shared service programs is dependent upon several factors—including the strength of the leadership, effective communication, and the utilization of a phased approach. Among several findings that the authors identified through a survey of individuals and organizations involved in such efforts, they noted that the most positive result (Finding #4 of the study) regarding the implementation of a shared service approach was improved service (see below).

Finding 4: The most positive result of implementing shared services was “improved service.”¹²

Positive Result	Number	Percentage
Improved Service	10	19%
Increased collaboration	7	13%
Standardized Services	6	11%
Increased Efficiency	4	7%
Increased Focus	4	7%
Cost Savings	4	7%
Consolidation of Services	3	6%
Increased Awareness	3	6%
Increased Constituent Support	3	6%
Other	10	19%
Total Response	54	

¹² Yeaton, Kathryn G.; Success Factors for Implementing Shared Services in Government; The Anisfield School of Business, Rampano College of New Jersey; 2008; Pages 17-18.

By far, the most negative finding from the survey was inadequate “change management” and “political “turf wars” (see below).

Finding 5: The most negative result of implementing shared services was “people issues”.¹³

Negative Result	Number	Percentage.
People issues	23	43%
None	9	17%
Mistakes in Implementation	7	13%
Increased Confusion	5	10%
Other	10	19%
Total Responses	54	

To the Shared Services Assessment Team, the results of the interviews with the department heads, the employee survey, and discussions with the Unified Manager and the two Boards indicated to us that the necessary precursors for a successful experience with a shared/consolidated services model for the Village and Town were firmly in place. The Unified Manager and the Department Heads all wish to move forward in a way that will minimize the downsides and give the greater community the opportunity to realize all of the upsides associated of such an approach. Indeed, not only are the precursors in place, but the departments of each municipal entity appear to have developed significant forward momentum in that direction on their own. The chances for success in this area seem higher than they have ever been before—at least in recent memory. Success in this area seems to be within the grasp of the community if the leaders and department heads can avoid the typical pitfalls and remain focused on moving forward for the greater good for the entire community.

5.2 What This Shared-Consolidated Services Study Is “Not”

In the past, discussions in the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction regarding the re-organization of service delivery have inevitably raised concerns about municipal merger. While it is clear that the sharing of services can and in all likelihood will again raise such concerns, it is premature to engage in that discussion within the community based on this effort. Instead, this study is singularly focused on what makes sense for the effective delivery of local services to the residents and businesses within the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction. Further, the findings of this study are made in the spirit of full transparency.

The members of the Shared Services Assessment Team encourage the residents and businesses in the community to review and ask questions about this study’s findings, which should be taken as they are presented. There are no hidden agendas or stealth efforts underway—in either direction way regarding municipal merger or municipal separation. That merger/separation issue is a broader discussion that can occur outside of this effort. This effort specifically looks only at matters to help organize the delivery of public services in a way that maximizes the benefit to the community and follows the broad guidelines of “smart governance.”

¹³ Ibid; Page 18.

6.0. Overview of the Current Service Delivery Network in the Community

Any study examining the possible sharing/consolidation of the Town and Village service provider network must begin with a description of the service-delivery network as it now stands in June of 2014. Currently, there are a total of 29 municipal services categories that exist in the community between the Town and the Village. Of that total, there are 20 services categories where there is no Village-Town service-delivery overlap. These services range from Police Services to voter registration and vital records. In addition, the community recently moved from separate Village and Town Managers to the “Unified Manager” concept. Another recent duplication-reduction step took place in 2009, when the Town assumed responsibility for providing Senior Bus service to the entire Town—including the Village. In terms of Town/Village resources expended, the most significant shared service in the community by far is the Police Department, with a 2015 budgetary expenditure level of more than \$3.9 million. The smallest shared service provided by the Town is the Health Officer’s budget, with 2015 budgetary expenditures of roughly \$10,450.

Table 1 (below) lays out the inventory of services provided within the community organized into two categories: (A) Services Provided by the Town Service Delivery System for the Entire Community, and (B) Services that are Candidates for Shared Service Delivery Systems. Although the first category of services categories could be termed “duplicative,” it is clear that many of these departments primarily serve either the Village geography or Town outside of the Village area—much like districts for those services. This is particularly true for Planning and Zoning, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation—even though the latter two services clearly do benefit both Village residents and Town-outside-the-Village residents. The listed costs associated with each function reflect total Town and Village expenditures and Town and Village expenditures funded by taxes, in order to allow the reader to understand the difference between total costs and taxpayer funded costs of each service. The difference between the two cost numbers reflects non-tax revenue sources in some services areas such as user fees for Parks and Recreation, state funding (for Public Works), grant funding (for CCTA), equitable sharing funds (for the Police Department) and similar non-tax sources.

Services that already fall into the shared category (Category A) comprise \$6.2 million of total budget expenditures and \$5.0 million of all tax-supported spending (considering Town spending only) and include 20 of 29 service areas in the community. Overall, already-shared-services categories comprise 49.4% of the total expenditure budget and 51.3% of the tax-supported spending by the Town taxpayers (which include both Village residents and Town outside the Village residents). A total of 4 of the 20 shared service categories have no direct budgetary costs associated with them—although there clearly are costs associated with these functions that are assigned to other categories (e.g. Liquor Control Board which is split between Police, Town Manager’s Office and the Selectboard).

The candidates for service sharing (Category B) together total 40.6% of the total Town and Village budgetary spending and 48.7% of tax-supported Town and Village budgeted spending in 2015 and include a total of 9 additional categories of services. Of the service categories that are candidates for shared services, the Public Works-Highways and Streets/Stormwater category¹⁴ has the largest total expenditures budget and tax-supported expenditures level. The Board of Civil Authority and Board of Abatement have the smallest budgetary impacts. A total of 3 of these 9 services categories have no direct costs assigned to them. These items fall within other cost categories as they do have costs, but are not currently broken out separately.

This suggests there are a number of candidate areas for services sharing, which will be discussed below.

¹⁴ We include Stormwater, Highways and Streets, and Public Works sub-categories of spending in this service area for analytical purposes.

services currently provided to the community's residents. The study was also guided by the premise of beginning the process with a unified manager approach. This approach would allow the currently separate service delivery entities to incorporate the broader communitywide planning efforts into the assessment of NEEDED service in and across each municipality. Developing shared, forward-thinking planning will allow economic improvements; foster shared community values; and a commonality of goals and objectives that would collectively result in a higher quality of services provided to households and businesses alike across the community.

7.1 Summary of Interviews with Department Heads

In order to get the best information, the team conducted more than 20 interviews with a variety of Village and Town stakeholders. The Shared Services Assessment Team tapped the wealth of information residing within the experience sets of the department heads of both municipalities; the President of the Board of Trustees; Chair of Town Selectboard; the outgoing Village Manager;¹⁵ and the current Town/Village manager. These interviews were held over the course of 15 months. Each interview included a variety of questions which led to creative thinking and probing of each interviewee. Overall, it was apparent the Department heads are very dedicated to their work, their teams, and to the provision of the highest quality services to the public that they can, within budget and other constraints.

Some meetings were held with both the Town and Village holder of the role simultaneously (e.g. the interview with the town planner and village planner). Some interviews were held separately—particularly if the Shared Services Assessment Team felt the interview process would interfere with the free and uninhibited flow of information and ideas. While not an expected result, we found an impressive amount of existing collaboration between many town and village department heads. Departments were already sharing ideas and were cooperating on at least some issues and planning efforts. It also was also evident there were operational differences in many departments. However, it was universal that if encouraged to plan cooperatively, those departments would willingly work toward achieving shared, and in most cases, complimentary goals.

7.2 The Questionnaire

Each department head, and others, were asked a series of 12 questions (although for some questions there were sub-questions which increased the actual total number of inquiries) designed to identify what's working, what's not working and what the future would look like. These questions enabled the interviewee to discuss what was possible and practical to bring about efficient change and/or what makes sense to change. Each interviewee was specifically asked about obstacles to service sharing/consolidation. The participants all talked freely about how they thought their departments were working; how the "counterpart" in either the Village or the Town was working, and how they "were" or "were not" collaborating. They freely talked

¹⁵ As of the time of the interview.

about and identified areas for improvement—whether the service delivery within the community was shared, consolidated, or not.

7.2.1 The Questions

Although the interviews were wide ranging, the shared service assessment process used a prescribed set of what we called “exploratory questions” to structure each interview. This approach was employed primarily for consistency reasons in terms of gathering the information and data—but at the same time giving each interviewee the opportunity to elaborate on the critical service delivery issues within their department or area of responsibility. Although interviewees may have voluntarily offered information and perspective for a question before it was asked (and it was therefore not formally asked of the interviewee during the interview), the same areas of concern were covered in each session or interview conducted during the study.

The questions employed in the study included the following:

1. Do you have a to-do list?
 - a. What about a “stop-doing” list?
2. In terms of your current role, what gets you jazzed up? What are you passionate about?
3. What are you, or the municipality, the best at?
4. What are you, or the municipality, not the best at?
5. Describe the core values of the municipality.
6. What is the purpose of the [municipality or board]— in your own words.
7. What is the vision for the next 3-5-10 years?
8. Where do you see the shared service model?
 - a. Successful?
 - b. Not working? e.g. What are the potential road blocks or pitfalls?
9. Identify current challenges in your area (department manager)?
10. Identify recent success(es) in your area (department manager)?
11. If you were to “grade” the past year’s performance of the municipality/government, on an A-F scale, what would that grade be?
 - a. How do you believe the residents would grade?
 - b. How do we reconcile the differences?

- c. How do we get to a consistent “A”?

7.3 Full Survey of Village and Town Staff

The team also conducted a survey of all Village and Town staff (See Attachment 1). This survey focused on the individual as a member of the whole: decision making, awareness of department and municipality goals, team work and resource availability. The survey was provided to all staff members with a 30% return rate. This survey, anonymous by department and staff member, showed there is disparity between departments when asked about clear goals and long term objectives for the specific department. One very positive outcome is most of the staff members in each municipality have a high level of confidence in their leadership/management and believe their leadership has a long-term vision of the department and the services it provides the community.

Survey respondents indicated they were proud of what they do and feel very much a part of the team. Respondents also noted there is a demonstrated room for improvement when it comes to encouraging employees/staff members to be innovative in their work and reward/recognize the staff for their efforts. Finally, respondents pointed out that they could also improve overall service levels by increased communication within and between departments.

7.4 Overview of Discussions with “Heart & Soul of Essex”

Before we conducted the in-depth interviews with key department heads and staff, we met with the project coordinators¹⁶ of the Heart & Soul effort. This meeting was held in order to make sure the perspective of the Heart & Soul effort was included in the study and to communicate any common findings from the Shared/Consolidated Services Study.

The goals of the Heart & Soul’s grant funded initiative are to identify values of the community and to engage the community in a wide ranging discussion about its future. The opportunities were to establish regular conversations of shared interest. The feeling was that the community was in a time of growth and change and the Village and the Town had the ability to strengthen what matters in the community. The focus was not on solving problems, but on identifying shared values. The Heart & Soul of Essex effort accomplished the objective of conducting a civil and in-depth conversation about the direction of the community by many different groups of stakeholders. This effort laid important groundwork for the Village and the Town to proceed towards a shared-services approach.

The Heart & Soul Essex initiative identified six (6) core values that members of the community not only shared, but were also seen as critical to ensuring positive growth and effective change in the community. These included:

Core Values:

¹⁶ Susan McCormack and Liz Subin.

- Local Economy
- Health and Recreation
- Community Connections
- Education
- Thoughtful Growth
- Safety

Of these values, “Thoughtful Growth” and “Local Economy” have the most connection to the service delivery study. These two values were identified as the most concerning to the community because they were identified as needing attention “now.” The Town and Village appear to agree on priorities: balance of open space along with buildings; economic development providing support and growth for business; public and alternative transportation. The village and town planning committees are being urged to incorporate the six values into their new plans based on results of the Heart & Soul effort. This was an obvious link to the work of the shared/consolidated services study. Community connections also can be viewed as a link between the Heart & Soul initiative and this study. This value reflects a need to support/develop shared service or better collaboration between Village and Town governments and departments.

8.0. Summary Overview of Department Interviews/Recommendations

The following section summarizes the substance of our many interviews. These summaries also include any identified findings/recommendations by each major service delivery area within the Village and Town.

8.1 Unified Town Manager

As mentioned above, we found the Village and Town experience with the Unified Town Manager has been a success. All interviewees were decidedly positive in terms of their initial experience with this approach. While we did hear some feedback from Town staff that their contact with the Town Manager had had to become more limited and structured as the Town Manager split his time between Village responsibilities and his responsibilities with the Town, no interviewee indicated that this was a significant negative.¹⁷ While this may no doubt be a reflection of the skills and management expertise of the incumbent Unified Manager and his so far overall positive interaction with the Village and Town Legislative Boards, this is a very important enabling factor to proceeding further toward the shared/consolidated services model.

¹⁷ In many ways, losing unfettered and easy access to the Town Manager by Town staff may have had the benefit of compelling some to be more deliberate in terms of their requests and needs on the Town Manager’s time—perhaps even helping to improve decision-making for impacted department heads and staff.

In fact, the importance of maintaining this manager-to-board dynamic and the so far positive manager-to-staff interactions in both the Village and the Town cannot be over-stated. Just as they have had to-date, both the incumbent Manager and the two Legislative Boards must continue to carry this level of leadership forward if the shared service approach is to continue to advance.

As such, because this leadership dynamic is so critically important to the success future steps toward the shared service model, we recommend that the two Boards consider having an independent group—such as the Vermont League of Cities and Towns—conduct a review of the community’s experience with the Unified Manager model though its first 18 months of experience. Although we tried to obtain only honest and objective opinion in our interviews about the experience with the unified manager model from department heads and staff, we recognize that there could be some bias in the comments of interviewees that may have resulted in less than fully objective and unbiased feedback on the Unified Manager experience. This may have occurred because interviewees thought that was what we, as the Shared Services Assessment Team, may have wanted to hear only positive feedback. This independent review should be considered in our view as an important validation step against what could be a false positive—with respect to the community’s actual experience to-date with the Unified Manager.

Assuming affirmation of a positive outcome with respect to the Unified Manager experience, we recommend that a process be put in place to devise a series of next steps. The process should be inclusive of department heads and key staff, and result in consensus between the two legislative Boards¹⁸ and the Village-Town Manager. If warranted by the outcome of the previous steps, a short-term and long-term implementation plan should be devised and implemented after review with department heads and key staff.

8.1.1 Suggested Action Steps:

1. Consider commissioning an independent review of the Unified Manager experience to-date in the community to protect against a “false positive” determination with respect to to-date experience.
2. If step 1 has a positive outcome, consider holding a joint Board workshop with the Unified Manager and department heads to brain-storm next steps for the shared-services model implementation.
3. Identify all statutory and charter issues with Village and Town counsel.¹⁹

¹⁸ With the legislative Boards—who are elected officials—representing the taxpayers as they often do on many issues with respect to running the two service delivery systems.

¹⁹ During the initial joint meeting of the Village Trustees and Town Selectboard to discuss the findings of this study on August 26, 2014, a question arose about the impact service consolidation might have on the various employment

3. If steps 2 and 3 are undertaken, synthesize results and develop an action plan for the near-term and longer-term. Reach consensus among the legislative Boards and the Manager. Include strategies for addressing all legal and charter change issues identified above.
5. Review with affected Department Heads/Senior Staff.
6. Devise implementation plan—if warranted—including any required community votes.
7. Develop and implement a public engagement plan for the above.
8. Consider a comprehensive review of governance issues for the community that is consistent with the current advances in inter-municipal cooperation.

8.2 Finance and Administration

The meeting with Village staff occurred at the time they were sharing the vacant Village Manager position functions while continuing their “regular” functions: HR/Taxes/Clerk, IT,²⁰ Finance. Interviewees gave the performance of the Village an “A” for the value community members receive. Highlighted area for improvement overall was: helping the Village Trustees to keep from “getting to into the weeds” of day-to-day operations (e.g. managing process rather than allowing the specialists to get it done). They spoke of a need to better educate the citizens to understand how government was supposed to work. They also identified an incredible sense of support between and for each department. Consolidating, or at least sharing, resources among Recreation Departments, Public Works, Highways, and Stormwater between the Village and Town staffs were identified as opportunities for efficiencies.

Meeting with Town staff pointed to opportunities to reduce the number of bills citizens have to pay in the community—which would help reduce the current level of confusion. For example, the two finance departments are currently jointly pursuing a “one tax bill approach” that will combine Village and Town taxes and enterprise fund charges to be paid as one bill the same time, at either place—the Village offices or the Town offices. Overall, the Town Finance Director expressed a keen interest in harmonizing billing and accounting systems and in providing a balance between the services provided against the cost or efficiencies of those services. The Town Finance Director also suggested that a collaboration on administrative issues and planning in enterprise funds like water and sewer. It was suggested that consideration be given to a more coordinated planning/zoning effort, and to technology—a critical enabling factor to the single billing and record-keeping. It was noted that plans have been developed to share IT

contracts in the Town and Village with employee collective bargaining agreements. After follow-up with the Village-Town Manager, it was found that each agreement contains language that would result in “no impact” on the Village or Town collective bargaining agreements. Each agreement contains language that preserves the negotiated items in the event of a consolidated service delivery structure for village and town departments.

²⁰ The acronym “IT” refers to “Information Technology.”

infrastructure between the Town and the Village. This will allow for one platform and pave the way for ease of administration between the Town and Village departments.

8.2.1 Suggested Action Steps:

1. Follow through on staff suggestions to harmonize/consolidate billing and record keeping functions—which involves IT coordination to streamline.
2. Investigate the efficacy of consolidating enterprise funds and billing-recordkeeping functions for key utilities. Identify obstacles (e.g. differences in billing policies—such as minimum bills) to, and strategies, for addressing any such obstacles.
3. Investigate the ramifications of consolidation on waste water operations and existing agreements (e.g. the Tri-Town Agreement for waste water treatment). Consider the potential opportunity for the acquisition of the waste water facility on the IBM-Technology Park campus.
4. Review with affected Department Heads-Senior Staff
5. Devise implementation plan—if or as warranted
6. Review with legislative bodies—if or as warranted

8.3 Public Works/Streets-Highways/Storm Water

The Public Works, Highways and Stormwater services area is a complex mosaic of high profile services for the community. Everyone wants their street plowed in the Winter and no one wants to drive on poorly maintained streets or sidewalks. High quality potable water needs to be available “on demand,” and this part of the community’s service delivery network is responsible for maintaining water quality in the community and beyond our borders. The Village and the Town currently perform many similar functions, but each have different systems in place to manage and supervise the delivery of these services.

During our interviews with the two Public Works/Highway Departments, several shared-service synergies were identified. These included shared equipment and engineering review of capital projects. During the interviews, it was clear that both departments were concerned about sharing or consolidating services carefully, making the transition as smoothly and seamlessly “as possible” because services in this category minimizing are very important to all citizens. It was pointed out by at least one interviewee that it is important to be fair and provide the same services for all. Currently, differing management and supervisory approaches, as well as regulation, in each of the municipalities tends to be roadblocks for more service sharing. There is a definite concern that merging Public Works/Street Departments would slow the response actions to the community and require the use of a different business model than may currently be in place in one or both entities. The possibility of decision making being taken away from the workers and having to wait for a shared department manager to decide is expected to delay

decisions. Public Works has its hands in everything and is able to provide an immediate response to customer concerns. Perhaps it is the balance between what the residents need versus what they think they need.

However, it was also noted that the dynamics that have operated against greater sharing or consolidation of services appear to be changing. These run the range from the increasing burdens of addressing storm water issues to perhaps establishing a single department with two service districts to respect the long-standing differing cultures, and providing the opportunity for more collaboration to gradually work its way toward providing more shared services. In some utility functions, there is pre-existing debt that will have to be reconciled. The path to a consolidated approach would likely involve surcharges for users assigned to that debt. Debt service (including principal and interest) would be paid by rates, charges, or special assessments in accordance with “best practices” approaches and state law.²¹

There is a draft plan that has been developed over the years that would, if implemented, facilitate the consolidation of at least some of these functions. If the legislative Bodies supported more shared or consolidated services, there is a blueprint that could be further refined and put in place to advance the process over a relatively short period of time. Stormwater has been a logical place for increased collaboration, and this could be expanded without a great deal of additional planning efforts in a way that could maintain current services packages for two Public Works/Highway Districts. Further advances could be made from there after the initial transition period.

8.3.1 Suggested Action Steps

1. Undertake a collaborative and comprehensive review of the most recent version of the plan to consolidate the Village and Town departments.
2. Update the plan as needed to fully-consider recent developments since the last update and potential future staffing-administrative personnel changes that could affect the consolidation effort.
3. Investigate the efficacy of utilizing a two district approach which fully respects but advances towards harmonizing the differing service packages of Village and Town outside the Village areas.
4. Identify all fiscal potential issues associated with a consolidated department and develop a financing system that is consistent with smart governance, consistent with all applicable

²¹ There is long-term infrastructure debt outstanding for the Town (supported by all taxpayers—including both Town and Village residents) and there will be an issuance of \$3.3 million in infrastructure improvement debt supported by the Village taxpayer in July 2014. This debt will be 20 year debt and will likely have to be supported by a surcharge on taxpayers in the Village unless there was an affirmative vote by the voters outside of the Village to assume financial responsibility for this debt.

state laws governing user fees and charges, and financial synergies and potential impediments to a consolidated department for Public Works, Highways and Stormwater (e.g. any impact on the grants strategy for a combined department or state support for highways?).

5. Review with affected Department Heads-Senior Staff
6. Devise implementation plan—if or as warranted
7. Review with legislative bodies—if or as warranted

8.4 Fire Department

While not attributed to the actual Fire Department interviews, the merging of the two departments appears to be “an elephant in the room” to the Shared Services Assessment Team. Having two Battalion chiefs report to one Manager will quickly bring these two separate departments together. An initial plan to put the two departments together exists and was drafted during an earlier round of community discussions on the subject of smart, more efficient governance.

Both Fire Chiefs indicated that, while there are cultural differences between the two departments, the opportunities for shared practices exist and that they could move in that direction. For example, cross training, operating procedures, standards for equipment, and a unified plan for equipment capital budgeting all could be addressed through a combined effort. There may be additional opportunities for grant money if the departments were consolidated.

According to our discussions, the easy part of consolidating the two departments was in the area of day to day operations. There is already an impressive amount of sharing/cooperation in meeting the community’s fire protection-fire safety needs. Consolidating budgets may not be as easy as joint operations. This is mainly due to the current wage structure, expectations of station coverage, and the requirements of day-to-day administration.

From the interviews, it was clear that both departments struggle with acquiring/keeping trained personnel; keeping current on standards; and obtaining needed resources to retain trained personnel. Many times, the community’s departments lose well-trained personnel to other departments in Vermont and across the New England region because there are few full-time professional opportunities within the community. This is perhaps best characterized as a “cost” of having the departments structured as they currently are—particularly in the Town outside the Village.

8.4.1 Suggested Action Steps

1. Undertake a collaborative and comprehensive review of the most recent version of the plan to consolidate the Village and Town departments.

2. Update the plan as needed to fully consider recent developments since the last update of that plan and with respect to future staffing/administrative personnel changes that could impact the consolidation effort.
3. Investigate the efficacy of utilizing a two-district approach which fully respects the differing approaches to fire for the Village and Town outside-the-Village areas—including cross training, operating procedures, standards for equipment, and a unified plan for equipment capital budgeting. Review any state or any operational-training certification impediments to a consolidated department.
4. Identify any cultural or operational impediments to consolidation and develop strategies to address them.
5. Review with affected Department Heads-Senior Staff.
6. Devise implementation plan—if warranted.
7. Review with legislative bodies—if or as warranted.

8.5 Parks and Recreation

The message from our interviews with Village staff, and Town Parks and Recreation staff, and the Prudential Committee pointed to the very high profile nature of programs and the many issues that would need to be dealt with to increase services sharing and perhaps consolidating programs. Interviewees pointed to how many of the programs offered by each department were more complementary, than redundant or duplicative (although there is clearly some duplication), many times serving different populations within the community. At the same time, interviewees responded that if they were to start over from scratch to design a system for a community with roughly 22,000 residents, the current services delivery network would not be how it would be designed—assuming efficient and smart governance of programs for residents were the objectives of the system.

Currently, the largest obstacle to consolidation of programs or more shared programming is the fear that change might not be well received among users in the community. Some of this concern seemed to be grounded in “typical” fear or opposition to change of any kind from current programmatic norms. At least some of the concern about greater collaboration is tied to political concerns—that the governing or legislative Bodies would not support creative thinking in this regard. This is true, even though greater sharing or cooperation might reduce confusion among users, and potentially help to protect services quality by better leveraging the best parts and competencies of both programs. One interviewee flatly stated that “...if the Boards wanted it, it would be done.”

Currently, a financial issue complicating service consolidation that would need to be addressed: the final 5½ years of the Maple Street recreation facility debt. The current loan balance is

\$630,000²² and this debt is scheduled to be retired in December, 2019. Prior to retirement, it is likely that there will need to be two recreation-park districts where surcharges would need to be developed—consistent with state law²³—that would equitably spread the remaining principal and interest payments between Village taxpayers and non-Village users. In our view, this would not be a complicated process, and the entire issue would be moot within a relatively short period of 5½ years anyway.

8.5.1 Suggested Action Steps

1. Identify and review a list of opportunities for programmatic collaboration.
2. Investigate the efficacy of utilizing a two district approach which fully respects the differing approaches to programs for the Village and Town outside the Village patrons, and identify any financial issues (e.g. the existing debt on the Maple Street facility) associated with a consolidated department and how to address them.
3. Identify any cultural or operational impediments to consolidation and develop strategies to address them.
5. Review with affected Department Heads-Senior Staff.
6. Devise implementation plan—if warranted.
7. Review with legislative bodies—if or as warranted.

8.6 Planning and Zoning

The overarching message from these interviews is there does not appear to be consistent values between the Town and Village. Interviewees indicated that there were definite synergies to be had by combining parts, if not all, of the Town and Village planning and zoning functions. Interviewees indicated this would be particularly helpful to aid in forward thinking and planning. A challenge is how to keep things alive by having constant community ideas flowing and provide channels for consistent communication from, and to, the community. This ties with the obligation to have increased and continuous public outreach to gain insight on what the community wants and needs. There is a need to help the Boards to be policy makers, NOT detail managers. Interviewees also indicated there is a need for more holistic approach to green spaces; walking/biking paths and safe routes to schools.

²² As of June 30, 2014.

²³ For example, taxpayers in a municipality cannot be compelled to pay debt service on municipal borrowing without an affirmative vote by affect taxpayers (those that are expected to pay debt service). In this instance, the payment of debt service costs on the Maple Street facility would require an affirmative vote by a majority of taxpayers in the Town outside the Village in order for those tax payers to pay the above-referenced debt service costs. This would be an unlikely event in the opinion of the authors—thereby underpinning the two district recreation-park districts observation.

Efficiencies identified: sharing the Town Engineer; sharing the Village Grant Writer and write grants for shared improvements (e.g. for the CCMPO sidewalk program?). Regulation can be a challenge. There are different rules and regulations that each municipality follows. However, these challenges do not seem insurmountable.

In the Service Assessment Team's view, this could be perhaps most effectively dealt with by establishing two planning districts within the community—just as there are now within the two individual municipalities. Once the plan for the Village Planning District was passed, this plan would be automatically incorporated into the plan for the entire Town of Essex as a community—similar to the way the “approved” Transportation Improvement Plan for the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, conducting the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO)’s business, is incorporated into the Transportation Improvement Plan for the State of Vermont as a whole. The community also could investigate the efficacy of establishing a separate Planning Commission and Development Review Board—with commissioners from each planning commission self-selecting (with legislative Boards’ approval) based on their interest in planning versus development review.

8.6.1 Suggested Action Steps

1. Identify and review a list of opportunities for greater Village and Town-outside-of-the-Village planning and development review collaboration. Examine the pros and cons of a single grant writer for a consolidated community development effort—both inside and outside a prospective Village planning district.
2. Investigate the efficacy of utilizing a two planning district approach—one for the Village zone and one for the Town-outside-the-Village zone—which incorporates the differing character and differing approaches to programs to planning and development for the Village and Town outside the Village.
3. Investigate the efficacy of utilizing a separate Planning Commission-Development Review Board model for a shard services approach. Allow current Planning Commissioners in each zone to self-select based on incumbent commissioners’ interest in either planning or development review functions for the community.
5. Review with affected Department Heads-Senior Staff.
6. Devise implementation plan—if warranted.
7. Review with legislative bodies—if or as warranted.

8.7 Library

Based on our interviews, the libraries self-identify more as individual services than as combined/shared resources for the community. Both are culturally different and have different levels of staff, money, and visitors. The Village library (Brownell) is in the center of the village

and most community members can walk if they reside within the Village. Numerous Brownell users do not even know they are able to use the Town library (commonly referred to as the “Essex Free Library”). Town library users generally drive/ride a bike.

While both see themselves as the “heart of the community” both offer different resources to the community. Brownell has a very large community room available to provide programs that reach a large group of people all at once. This room can also be used for organizations not connected with the library. Essex Free library offers creative writing workshops in schools and at the library and has language learning software available for patrons.

At this point, infrastructure appears to be a major roadblock to a shared/consolidated services approach. This infrastructure takes several forms: (1) separate boards, (2) different staffing levels and resource requirements (budgets), as well as (3) an apparent the desire to continue to be different. This appears to be based on “tradition” and “physical distance” between the two libraries—both of which were identified as major pitfalls to combining these two important community service providers. On the other side of the coin, both organizations expressed a desire and shared interest in having more joint/shared programs for the communities; team building for staff; and for sharing staff. This may be indicative of an important initial step towards greater cooperation for this important part of the community services asset base.

8.7.1 Suggested Action Steps

1. Identify and review a list of opportunities for programmatic collaboration.
2. Identify any cultural or operational impediments to consolidation of programs and develop strategies to address them.
5. Review with affected Department Heads-Senior Staff.
6. Devise implementation plan—if warranted.
7. Review with legislative bodies—if or as warranted.

8.8 Other

There are a number of additional Boards and Commissions that were beyond the scope of this study that would require some additional thought. Our study did not include those aspects of shared services/consolidation. Our approach is that there is nothing in those areas that appears to be impediments to greater shared or consolidated services. There are others, such as the Board of Civil Authority, which would need to be addressed as part of broader discussions regarding any changes in governance that may arise subsequent to this current shared-consolidated services investigation.

8.8.1 Suggested Action Steps

1. Identify and review a list of opportunities for Board oversight and responsibilities streamlining.

2. Identify any cultural or operational impediments to consolidation of programs and develop strategies to address them.
3. Identify any statutory or legal obstacles to re-organizing and realigning responsibilities for a consolidated services model.
4. Review with affected Department Heads-Senior Staff.
5. Devise implementation plan—if warranted.
6. Review with legislative bodies—if or as warranted.

Attachment 1: Results of the Employee Survey



TOWN OF ESSEX VERMONT

81 MAIN STREET, ESSEX JUNCTION, VERMONT 05452
Fax: 878-1353 • E-mail: manager@essex.org • Website: www.essex.org

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
Saturday, March 24, 2018
Essex Community Educational Center - Cafeteria
Two Educational Drive
Essex Junction, VT 05452
10:00 AM**

Note: Refreshments will be available at 9:45 a.m. The public is welcome to enjoy breakfast and lunch.

1. **CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** [10:00 AM]
2. **JOINT MEETING**
 - a. Introduction (George Tyler & Jennifer Knauer) [10:05 AM]
 - b. Presentation: "Governance: What does it mean ... to an outsider" (Evan Teich) [10:10 AM]
 - c. Discussion: "As the Consolidation Effort progresses, what do you wish to preserve or protect?" (Opportunity for Public Input) (Jennifer Knauer) [10:30 AM]
 - Lunch** [12:00 PM]
 - d. Presentation: Consolidation Efforts to Date (Greg Duggan) [12:30 PM]
 - e. Discussion: "What have you learned from past mergers and consolidation efforts that might impact this next phase?" (Opportunity for Public Input) (Jennifer Knauer) [12:35 PM]
 - f. Discussion: Next Steps (Jennifer Knauer) [1:30 PM]

**All times are approximate*

3. **ADJOURN**

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the Chair.

This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the Selectboard, like all programs and activities of the Town of Essex, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Town Manager's office at 878-1341.

Certification:

3/21/18 JL

TOWN MANAGER	Date Posted PARKS AND RECREATION	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	Initials PUBLIC WORKS	ASSESSOR	FINANCE	TOWN CLERK	LIBRARY	POLICE
878-1341	878-1342	878-1343	878-1344	878-1345	878-1359	879-0413	879-0313	878-8331

To: Greg Duggan, Deputy Town Manager
Essex Town Managers Office
81 Main Street, Essex Jct., VT 05452
Gduggan@essex.org

From: Jennifer Knauer
Jennifer Knauer, LLC
50 Snowflake Drive, Jericho, VT 05465
jenknauer@gmail.com / 802.355.4468

Date: 28 March 2018

Re.: Summary Report of Joint Meeting of Essex Selectboard and Essex Jct. Board of Trustees: March 24, 2018

Dear Greg,

Attached are several documents recording (and categorizing) the easel sheet work from the Joint Meeting last Saturday, March 24th. Please share these documents with Trustees, Board Members, and Town Staff as appropriate.

- Essex Selectboard and Trustee Mtg Transcriptions 032418.doc (Transcribed easel sheets & comments word for word)
- Essex Selectboard and Trustee Mtg Easel Images 032418.pdf
- What do you wish to Achieve 032418.doc (edited raw material – sorted into categories, single page)
- Lessons Learned 032418.pdf (edited raw material – sorted into categories, single page)
- Next Steps 032418.doc (direct transcription, single page)

Suggestions for how this work might be used:

1. **The edited notes are sorted into categories and will be the easiest to reference and use for planning.** I also attached documents of the raw material from easel sheets and comments for comparison purposes, and in case I missed anything as I condensed material. Rather than use meeting time to digest these documents as a group, my sense is that it will be more productive for various participants to consider in advance, as well as task a small subset of leadership to generate a proposed roadmap for how/when various topics will be addressed. Begin the next meeting reviewing the proposed roadmap instead of the mountain of raw material. This draft may be as detailed as there is time for – the objective is to round up the topics generated to date and imagine how to strategically use/leverage efforts. (See joint meeting minutes: Next Steps 032418, November 2017 and October 2017, and perhaps also content from Evan's opening slides on March 24, 2018). The intent is to maximize time; it will be easier for the group to respond to a plan (and adjust, reality-test, add) than to generate one from scratch.

2. **How to use “lessons learned” summary:** this is formatted as a “force field analysis” and there is a suggested use listed on the top of the document. It might be a helpful tool for prompting reflection and content for the strategic “road map,” and/or for informing how tasks are prioritized for the next fiscal year and beyond. Keep in the mind that not all items that show up on the “lessons learned” are immediately actionable; the idea is to identify where available energy and resource may be wisely allocated in order to make adjustments and progress.
3. **One piece of feedback that I received on Saturday is that if all the joint meetings incorporate the same volume of public input as Saturday, there will not be enough time left to complete the work itself!** This is legit. It’s likely that future agendas can further hone the sort of input that would be helpful. Here’s an example: if the next joint meeting begins with a discussion of a strategic plan between trustees and board members – ultimately producing a proposed plan – it might be helpful to break for public comment before lunch to invite feedback, reality testing, suggested resources etc.. Board members and Trustees can then consider, make adjustments (or not) as feasible, and design next steps accordingly.

Let me know if you have questions about any of the materials that I have provided. It was a pleasure to work with this group, and I wish participants the best of luck in their next steps from here.

With appreciation,

--Jen

“What Do You Wish to Achieve?...” Easel Sheets from Joint Essex Board/Trustee Meeting of March 24, 2018. (*Abridged. Scribe: Jen Knauer*)

Note: This is an edited list of topics & categories raised in the joint meeting on March 24, 2018. Entries from the original easel sheets were re-organized with these two priorities in mind: 1) group like-topics together, and 2) eliminate duplicate entries.

Prompt: “As Essex Considers Potential Adjustments to Governance, what do you wish to achieve / what do you wish to protect?”

Governance – representation and participation

- Reconcile two charters. Create new charter?
- In the meantime, consider method(s) to supplement current charter/process in order to improve confidence of decision-making during transition(s) and incorporate unique perspectives from all regions of Essex.
- Achieve tax equity – who pays how much and why? Anticipate what future population needs and cares about [may not be the same]. Don’t default to historical assumptions about “appropriate” levels of service.
- Determine/establish terms for various regions. Districts? Wards?
- Maintain annual meetings. Incorporate use of Australian Ballot.

Economic Sustainability & Vitality

- Economic and development for entire community – planning for 1 community / 1 board
- How to keep the industry that is here to stay here?
- Draw new industry – town officials weigh in to help support this
- How does town economic commission interact with village economic planning?
- Preserve “sense of place” as new structures are considered (i.e. village walkability, maintaining downtown, identities/assets of various regions)
- Create clear avenues to engage with Essex and market this community (i.e. single website attentive to various audiences: business, families, etc.)
- Amplify and celebrate Essex: achievements, attributes, business & economy

Services

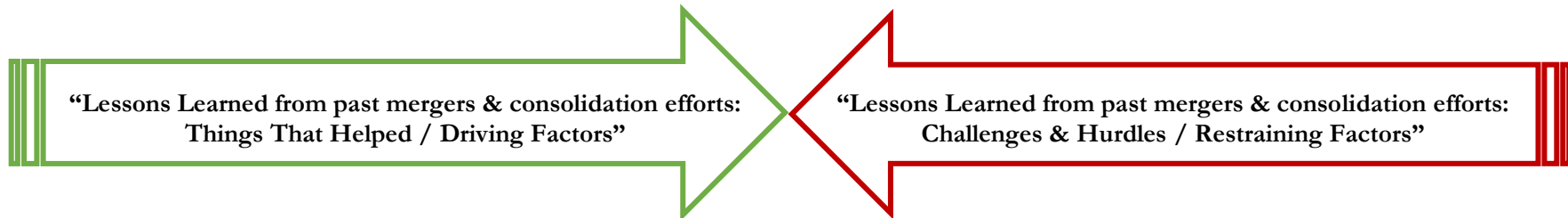
- Evaluate geographic efficiency (schools, public works services)
- Protect what is bringing families to the area (schools, walkability, growth, recreation, open land)
- Equal access to resources in town and village; equal taxation → anticipate what future population needs and cares about [may not be the same].

Community Dialogue

- Create opportunities for dialogue, not always debate. Reference Heart & Soul of Essex – use this perspective to inform
- Reference historical roots
- Develop shared community vision?

Lessons Learned: Easel Sheets from Joint Essex Board/Trustee Meeting of March 24, 2018. *(Abridged. Scribe: Jen Knauer)*

This graph is modeled after a “force field analysis” concept. The premise is that there are driving factors and restraining factors which contribute to the status quo. Suggestion for use: if you wish to move the dial, identify accessible leverage points for change. Which driving factors may be amplified or built upon? What would it take to address some of the restraining factors (challenges & hurdles)?



- **Outreach efforts** really help move things forward.
- Use **good and balanced data/info** to make informed decisions
- Locate **efficiencies for electorate/residents** re. Essex Services
- Consolidate only when/where it makes sense to do so – strategic planning and evaluation helpful
- Support for one community – keep focus clear!
- Use **focus groups** before proposals are set in order to inform process
- Suggestion: Look at state mandated Q’s from school consolidation process and tailor to town process.

- **How to get consistent message and info out to the public?**
Establish authoritative source for info: website / contact person etc / communication director.
- **Challenge for board/trustees to speak with one voice:** Establish avenues for clear communication & updates. Establish procedure for how trustees/board members will make decision.
- **Ambiguity of how to name various regions** (town, junction, etc.).
Need to clarify terms.
- **Tax inequity.** Explore and reality-test options/consequences of financial decisions (i.e. tax increases)
- Need thoughtful, informed **community engagement process** that takes pulse as we go (discern between selling/informing i.e. community development, and recreation departments). How to circulate significant info/voting/input for folks who cannot attend – input?
- **This will take time** → prior efforts tried to move too quickly.
Adjust expectations for time it takes to make policies and to transfer into practices.
- **Legislative body / Representational equity will need to be addressed.** Lopsided representation results in decision that do not represent all interests/access to planning and reality testing.
 - Consider how to establish districts (2? 10?)
 - How to be mindful of distinct view region-wide

Next Steps: Easel Sheets from Joint Essex Board/Trustee Meeting of March 24, 2018.

(Unabridged. Scribe: Jen Knauer)

Prompt: “Discussion of Next Steps between Trustees and Board Members”

- How to digest THIS input?
 - Report [Jen provides summary note]
 - Take Time
- Want to integrate this process in future joint meetings? I.e. elements of public input?
- Technical assistance
 - Municipal structure
 - Taxation
- How to support Evan / Unified Town Manager’s work?
 - Complete HR/IT work that staff has underway
 - How to evaluate unified town management
 - Define goals for Evan to work on
- How to consolidate Boards
 - Operationally
 - Politically
- [to] Answer: how to incorporate all votes (i.e. outside of village)
- Representation / Budgets
- How to use joint meeting time this fiscal year:
 - Policy and procedure alignment
 - Focus on consolidation projects already in place
 - Fire Department alignment
 - Talk about communications procedure/position
 - Take time to reflect on how board’s governance procedures impact decisions / impact – how to combine and reflect (parallel process?)

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 24, 2018**

SELECTBOARD: Max Levy, Chair; Michael Plageman, Vice Chair; Susan Cook, Clerk; Andrew Watts; Irene Wrenner.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: George Tyler, Village President; Elaine Sopchak, Vice President; Andrew Brown; Lori Houghton; Dan Kerin.

STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Town Manager; Lauren Morrisseau, Finance Director.

FACILITATOR: Jennifer Knauer

OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Austin, Jim Bernegger, Diane Clemens, Paula DeMichele (did not sign in), Paula Duke, Annie Dunn-Watson, Betsy Dunn, John Egan, Jerry Fox (did not sign in), Marie Froeschl, Barbara Higgins, Dawn Hill-Fleury, Mary Lou Hurley, Greg Morgan, Linda Myers, Leah Pastel, Michael Ross, Lynn Smith, Margaret Smith, Andy Suntup, Linda Suntup.

Mr. Levy and Mr. Tyler called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Levy invited those present to join him in reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance."

BUSINESS ITEMS

Introduction (George Tyler & Jennifer Knauer)

Mr. Tyler welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief introduction.

Ms. Knauer introduced herself and gave an overview of the rules and expectations of the meeting.

Presentation: Governance: What does it mean ... to an outsider?

Mr. Teich introduced himself in his official role and his outsider status. He said the benefit of being an "outsider" is that it allows him to have an objective stance as consolidation efforts progress. He identified governance as a union that includes mutual likes that become stronger over time. He gave a PowerPoint presentation about governance. The slides highlighted the following areas: Strategic Direction; Form of Government; Respect; Governance through Policies, Procedures and Protocols; Culture and Philosophy; Expert's Report; and Legal Composition. Mr. Teich ended with comments about change taking time.

Discussion: "As the Consolidation Effort progresses, what do you wish to preserve or protect?"

Ms. Knauer said she believes it is helpful to have experts and outsiders come in. One of her favorite sociologists, Kurt Lewin, talked about the “everyday scientist,” and that everyone knows so much regardless of their background. She said governance is similar: everyone has something to contribute that will make the final product more reliable in the long run.

Ms. Knauer announced that writing materials were available to write down thoughts. She then posed a question to the boards and the public: “As the consolidation effort progresses, what do you wish to preserve or protect?”

Ms. Wrenner indicated that the term “consolidation” means different things to different people, with harmony, tax equity, and equity in representation being some examples. She asked if there was a need to define consolidation.

Mr. Plageman said the process moving forward for consolidation is maintaining the level of service to both the Village and the Town, without it decreasing in quality.

Ms. Knauer suggested that rather than calling referring to consolidation, to say “as you align different operating procedures, what sorts of things do you want to hold onto?”

Ms. Wrenner said the Town has recently lost some representation for School Board slots for residents outside the Village. They were promised four representatives in that territory. She indicated that residents outside the Village need equal representation. She feels we do a great disservice to all residents by not including this group in discussions.

Ms. Knauer asked if it was fair to say that what Ms. Wrenner wants to preserve and protect is making sure there is a voice from the outside the Village population. Ms. Wrenner said that it should be just as it is with those inside the Village: equitable representation.

Ms. Sopchak said perhaps consolidation is not the best word to use, and perhaps alignment is the best word to use. She said the end goal is that all residents still have the quality of services they have always had, and that these services are delivered efficiently. She suggested removing language (inside and outside) as they are exclusionary and divisive. She suggested using the terms “Town District” and “Village District”. She said we should look at our Town as one entity with two districts.

Ms. Houghton recommended considering using the concept of “your community,” which can be defined by individuals. Your community is what is special about an individual’s own defined community. This could be your own neighborhood. She thinks governance and community can mean different things to everyone.

Mr. Levy said that consolidation and alignment are two different things. Consolidation would mean one budget, whereas alignment would mean aligning two budgets under best practices. Alignment should continue to occur with one manager running two governments.

Ms. Froeschl objected to the order of comments. She said that five board members were allowed to speak before any members of the public and that the public was there to be heard, not to listen. She reinforced Ms. Wrenner’s statement about equal representation and raised the issue of needs being different between the Village and the Town. She feels that the Selectboard should have equal representation, and that when someone is put on both the Trustees and the Selectboard you have an

issue in that one person cannot serve two masters. She said it must be very challenging to one day be a Trustee and represent the residents in the Village and the next day be a Selectboard member representing the district outside the Town. She wants those in the Town district to feel like they have equal representation.

Barbara Higgins said that this is the Selectboard and Trustees' meeting and that she didn't have a problem with the boards speaking first, and then opening it up to the public.

Ms. Knauer mentioned the 2015 Essex Governance Group report, which talked about how to engage the community. She said this meeting could be that. She indicated that the report did not talk specifically about concerns, hopes, and fears.

Ms. Duke agreed to some extent with Ms. Froeschl but she has some concerns with districts and a Mayoral type of government. It is hard sometimes to find qualified individuals who want to serve in public services. Having a larger body of residents to choose from can help with this.

Ms. Banks discussed shared budgets and said it was important to have equal representation on the board and that half should be from the Town district and half from the Village District. She feels qualified people can be found from both districts with representation balanced by geography.

Mr. Egan asked for clarification on current representation. He feels that equal representation would mean five people from the Town and five people from the Village. He said at this stage of consolidation things can be touchy and that equal representation would be the best remedy.

Mr. Tyler explained that the Town of Essex Charter makes no distinction on districts. He said everyone is a Town citizen. There is nothing in the charter that says people outside the village need equal representation, but this is an opportunity to build this into a new charter or into an amendment.

Mr. Fox spoke about eliminating the terms "Townie and Villager" within the Town of Essex. He said all are people of Essex. He always felt there was too much municipal government in the town and that it should be reduced. He feels all of the present Selectboard and Trustee members represent him.

Ms. DeMichele said everyone should remember that the charter was put together in the 1760s or '70s and the Village Charter was put together in 1893. She said if we are going to talk about charters we need to talk about both charters. She also discussed the fact that the Village has different ordinances, such as a gun ordinance. She said that somehow we need to end up with one charter, and that is a serious legal issue that needs to be resolved and kept in mind.

Annie Dunn-Watson said she was an outside the Village resident, and said it would be wonderful if everyone could feel like they are members of Essex. She asked about the structure of the boards, and why the Village has a Board of Trustees. She asked if there was a need for a parallel structure for people living outside the Village. She said she would love to see less government, and would like to see one board with equal representation for people inside and outside of the Village.

Mr. Tyler gave a history of charter; it started in the 19th century with the development of schools and fire department, which started near the railroad. This resulted in the need for taxes to cover development, which needed consent from the state. The state came up with a process that areas in this

situation could incorporate themselves as a Village, which led to a charter for the Village of Essex Junction.

Ms. Wrenner added a comment that the Village is not part of the Town Outside the Village, it is part of the Town. She again requested referencing the “Town District” and “Village District” and to not use the term Town loosely. Adding to the history she said the outside the Village portion has a water district and a school district, and only in the past year has there not been a district that covers the outside the Village population.

Ms. Knauer re-visited the overarching question: as Essex considers potential adjustments to governance, what do people wish to achieve and what do they wish to protect?

Ms. Cook indicated that she wants services at the same level or better, but not an inherited level of service. She said an appropriate level of service for one individual may not be for another. She wants services to evolve based on collective input from different perspectives, culminating in a clear values statement.

Mr. Levy commented that as policy makers the boards need to focus on the big picture, not just tomorrow, but decades from now. He wants to focus on developing a sustainable community that is socially, economically, and environmentally healthy and resilient.

Mr. Tyler said he wants to respect the identity of folks both outside and inside the Village. He does feel there is a distinct identity and sense of place both inside and outside the Village. He said the Village was formed to create services, not a division. Mr. Levy added that history is identity and this needs to be preserved as the community evolves.

Ms. Sopchak suggested maintaining the identity of the Village Center as a downtown. She would like to see annual meetings continue, as well.

Mr. Brown said he wants to reach a place where everyone can stop talking about process, charters, and governance, and move more towards purposeful development/conservation and innovation. This would allow the municipalities to offer the most service in the most effective way.

Mr. Kerin said he wants to ensure that quality of life is maintained. He said the Town and Village are stronger together than apart.

Ms. Houghton suggested identifying defining characteristics of the Village, such as it being walkable, the schools, and the growth that is happening. She wants that preserved. She also wants to achieve tax equity for one community and economic planning and development for one community. As one community Essex is the second largest community in the state, but receives little press coverage for achievements. She believes this is due to separation.

Jim Bernegger said he is a recent resident, a little over two years. He talked about being a new arrival and having confusion over whether his residence was Essex Town or Essex Junction. He wasn’t sure where he lived. He has since had the opportunity to work on the Economic Development Commission, which requires an outside perspective looking in on this community in discussions. This creates difficulties, such as two different websites. One easy strategy would be one joint website. He said the Town and Village need to represent themselves as one community rather than adding to the confusion.

193

194 Mr. Morgan spoke to the size of the municipality and lack of recognition, adding it's not the fault of the
195 media but the citizens. He said the community hosts the heart of Vermont's economy. He said Essex
196 needs to identify a vision and market and brand it. People who run for office need to have an agenda
197 and a vision for community growth. He also feels the current geographical boundaries are inefficient.
198 Mr. Kerin added that Town trucks used to drive through Village roads and lift their plow blades and
199 then would drop them again when back in the Town.

200

201 Ms. Dunn-Watson said she wants to turn to other communities that have joined forces to address
202 moving forward in a collaborative and participatory process. She likes the idea of one board that serves
203 both. She said Community Development is not consolidated, and said it will have to be.

204

205 Ms. Margaret Smith said she has lived in the Town outside the Village since 1974. She said she never
206 felt like the Junction wanted anything to do with the Town. She identified inequality of representation
207 and raised a concern about the impact this has when it comes to voting. She commented that she only
208 counts nine board members and that it is interesting that the newest member of the Selectboard is
209 sitting with the Village board, and that they have two boards. She feels this isn't equal representation
210 and that this issue is happening with the school board as well.

211

212 Mr. Austin said the community spends so much time on the issue of "merging" that it has forgotten
213 about economic development. He said people need to start thinking about the economic health of the
214 community instead of squabbling, and that the community needs a vision that involves everyone.

215

216 Ms. Higgins stated that she has a bias and wants to see one community. She spoke to economic
217 development as the crux of the problem. She said unless the end game is to truly be one, economic
218 development won't be successful. She thinks budgets and dollars have moved, but the community has
219 not done a full merger of any departments. She asked the Trustees what they really want to be going
220 forward.

221

222 Ms. DeMichele addressed the concept of framing. She identified four frames: organizational, family,
223 political, and celebratory. She wants the community to focus on goals, not identity, and feels
224 community is stuck in the organizational and political frames. She cited the dissipation of the Heart and
225 Soul grant as an example. She feels Heart and Soul should have been kept and a public engagement
226 specialist should have been hired. She said the Heart and Soul project was an opportunity that was
227 missed and that really hurt the community.

228

229 Ms. Lynn Smith said one of the best things she heard today is creating districts. She said the merger
230 idea is like a gaping wound, but the community is putting Band-Aids on it when it needs surgery. She
231 spoke to the need to be small-business friendly and she supports the idea of districts. She owns a small
232 business based in Essex and she cannot find a place where she is allowed to buy a building because of
233 all the zoning regulations. Her business instead rents a place in South Burlington.

234

235 Mr. Egan expressed shared frustration with Ms. Smith and spoke about inequality in representation. He
236 thinks Essex should start with five members from each "district." He said the charter would need to be
237 amended to require "five and five" on the boards.

238

239 Mr. Suntup said he had no idea when he moved here that they were coming to an area that resembles
240 the North and South before the Civil War. He said the Town and Village have the same needs. He lives

right on the Village border and doesn't feel his needs would change if he moved one block down. He wants everyone treated as equals, with equal taxes and equal access to services.

Ms. Banks said that on the premise that everyone is part of Essex, she doesn't know why there is so much pushback to the idea of equal representation. She would like to suggest there be equal representation going forward.

Mr. Fox said the community is in flux. As recently as 15 years ago the division between the Town and Village was clear, with the Town being cows, farms, and wells. He indicated that farmers did not want to pay the same taxes as those in the Village, and they were happy with a lower level of service. He stressed the need for patience.

Mr. Watts said he really appreciated the comments about framing and intends to take them to heart.

Ms. Wrenner said she was delighted to have the public present and for them to have this opportunity to provide input. The last organizational chart she saw had the public at the top and she was happy to have them here.

Lunch

There was a break for lunch.

Presentation: Consolidation Efforts to Date

Ms. Knauer said cards were available for audience members to write down topics. Ms. Knauer asked the audience to focus on efforts thus far. She handed the mic over to Mr. Duggan for a presentation on consolidation efforts to date.

Responding to questions that came up during lunch, Mr. Duggan clarified which of the elected officials were on each board. He told the audience that Ms. Sopchak will be serving on both boards starting in April. He then began a PowerPoint presentation on consolidation efforts to date, including merger and separation votes from the past 20 years.

Ms. Banks asked about the consolidation of the Senior Center. Mr. Duggan and Mr. Tyler clarified that the Senior Center is a collaborative effort between the Town and Village. The Senior Center Coordinator is a Town employee, and the Center is in a Village building.

Mr. Egan asked where the schools fit into consolidation. Mr. Duggan clarified that the schools have already merged and that his presentation and the meeting was focused on municipal government.

Mr. Fox asked what the next steps are. Mr. Duggan indicated that the budgets show a plan for the consolidation of departments for the next coming year, with a focus on human resources, information technology, and fire department alignment. Mr. Teich said the continuance of the consolidation has to keep going internally. Combined, the Town and Village have three unions, as well as non-union staff, and have to align benefits and policies to find efficiencies and provide services at high levels.

Ms. Banks said she feels the Town and Village aren't making progress.

Mr. Fox spoke about the community being a suburb in crisis, explaining that change takes time. Mr. Watts spoke to the need to consider relations between the elected officials and residents.

Discussion: “What have you learned from past mergers and consolidation efforts that might impact this next phase?”

Ms. Knauer asked the boards and audience to reflect on past mergers and consolidation efforts, looking at what was learned, what worked, and what did not work?

Ms. Houghton did not want to focus on failures, but instead on what the community wants to become one. The community needs to identify as one before moving forward. Tax equity issues must be resolved, as well as the creation of a new charter.

Mr. Kerin spoke about outreach and getting the message out by using facts and simple, straightforward language. He suggested learning from the past, focusing on outreach rather than past feelings of animosity.

Mr. Brown spoke about sticking to facts, saying perceptions aren’t helpful.

Ms. Sopchak sees the need for the Board of Trustees to speak with one voice and sees the need for a communication specialist to handle press releases and manage a web page.

Mr. Tyler commented on the challenges of previous consolidation efforts and said identity needs to be maintained. He feels the name of the new community needs to be taken into consideration. He is concerned about the tax increase that would be shouldered by the Town, and wants to see a gradual roll out of any tax increases.

Mr. Levy spoke about the merger vote in 2007. He said the voting was close, and polarized in the way folks inside and outside the Village voted. He wants efforts to focus on transparency, keeping the community informed, and validating recommendations from the public. He said the vote at the end for a charter change should validate what has already been done. He said the vote at the end should not be polarizing. He also talked about addressing equal representation.

Mr. Plageman wants to see conscientious progress, gaining tax efficiencies for the electorate one bite at a time. He feels one of the issues with the past merger attempt was trying “to eat the entire elephant in one bite.” He wants to continue consolidating services at a high quality, while gaining tax efficiencies. He thinks consolidation needs to continue one bite at a time. He added that one-sided tax increases will be the kiss of death.

Ms. Wrenner started with the topic of outreach and communications. She mentioned that she has been asking for a Communications Director since she started volunteering 13 years ago. She talked about the Saxon Hill Town Plan Amendment in 2014 and the Recreation District Proposal in 2016, both of which she said received one-sided perspectives on the Town website and official communications. Official communications need to show both sides of a perspective. She said she will speak out whenever she sees a website that only shows one side of a perspective. She added that social media adds another layer, with people saying or doing anything to take down someone they don’t like. The community needs to commit to speaking highly of each other, and not spreading malicious gossip. She feels everyone needs to trust each other and not work behind the scenes against the greater good. She said it

is about respect, personal conduct, and understanding each other's perspectives. She appreciated hearing from her peers regarding individual consolidations being easier to work on than a total top-down merger. She reiterated that the Town and Village are not just consolidating to consolidate, but only when it makes sense to.

Mr. Watts spoke to the idea of selling issues, stating that no one is entitled to their own facts. He recognizes there is a challenge for people to recognize information as factual in given scenarios. He wants to resolve policies and adopt those into practice.

Ms. Cook indicated that a lot of what she had been thinking was already stated. She agrees that outreach and communication are crucial to success, along with transparency. She also said there should be no bias in facts that come through.

Mr. Fox spoke about being "one" and keeping an eye on the goal.

Mr. Suntup spoke about the Recreation District vote. He said the powers that be need to think more before making a decision. He understands that many proposals were available for this and that one was chosen without considering all options. He suggested a task force in the future. He also feels both boards need to be on board before something like this goes forward again.

Ms. Clemens said she is on the School Board but what she is saying is not on behalf of the Board. She indicated that the school district went through the process over 20-some years to consolidate the board. She requested the Selectboard and Trustees look at questions from the State that the School Board had to answer, and tailor these questions to the municipal situation.

Ms. Duke said the community needs to answer and keep one question in mind: "As we come together how can we be respectful of the different needs and different desires of the different areas Town-wide?"

Ms. DeMichele said the merger failed for two reasons. First, arguments about tax increases and decreases at Brownell Library, which is 26 percent of the Village budget, whereas the Essex Free Library is 4 percent of the Town budget. She wants to talk about equalizing budgets. She also talked about the need to dissolve the Brownell Library Foundation as part of the merger, which was why she voted no.

Mr. Austin commented on the question, "What have you learned?" He discussed past votes that have failed and feels the common denominator on all of these was insufficient knowledge. He feels no one's voice should be muzzled.

Mary Lou Hurley said she found out after the last election that one person would serve on both boards. She feels that this needs to be changed in the charter, and that nothing will happen until that situation is changed.

Next Steps

Ms. Knauer guided the group toward a conclusion, asking audience to identify questions that can't be answered. The following list was the outcome: lack of communication, improper information in relation to votes, voting on the web, any member of either board having freedom to express opinions.

Ms. Knauer said she would create a report of all information from the meeting.

**IRENE WRENNER MOVED AND MICHAEL PLAGEMAN SECONDED A MOTION TO
ADJOURN AT 2 P.M. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.**

**DAN KERIN MOVED AND ANDREW BROWN SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 2
P.M. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Travis Sabataso,
HR Coordinator/Administrative Assistant

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2018

(See minutes of this date for corrections, if any).

Elaine H. Sopchak, Clerk, Selectboard

(THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE NEXT SELECTBOARD MEETING)



TRUSTEES MEETING NOTICE & AGENDA
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018 at 7:00 PM
81 MAIN STREET, ESSEX JUNCTION, VT 05452

1. **CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG** [7:00 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **GUESTS, PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS**
 - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
5. **JOINT MEETING WITH ESSEX SELECTBOARD**
 - a. *Manager's Personnel Updates – Evan Teich
 - b. Presentation of staff work plan for consolidation and alignment – Evan Teich
 - c. Trustees and Selectboard work plan for consolidation and alignment – Evan Teich
 - d. Goals and process for annual joint evaluation of Unified Manager – Evan Teich
6. **CONSENT AGENDA**
 - a. Radar list of joint Selectboard and Trustee work items
7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. *An executive session may be requested for evaluation of a public official
8. **ADJOURN**

Meetings of the Trustees are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Village Manager's office at 878-6944.

Teich because there can't be policy changes that drive away the volunteers. He suggested that, for alignment decisions that may impact service delivery, staff involve the SB and the BT at the ground level so it gives the public that extra level of assurance and brings some public perspective and oversight to the process.

Ms. Wrenner wanted to make sure there was someone on staff making sure the Town is not missing out on what is going on outside of this alignment focus. Mr. Teich agreed, and Mr. Duggan pointed out that staff is very active regionally and state-wide through the Regional Planning Commission, State-wide stormwater efforts, community development practices and meetings with other managers.

Mr. Brown stated that it was great to hear that staff values team building, finding the "best way" as opposed to the "Village way" or "Town way" and having flexibility and a willingness to work together. With regard to the timeline for alignment and charter changes, he suggested looking at the election of 2020, during which there would be greater voter turnout, and Mr. Teich agreed.

With regard to the Alignment Group, Ms. Wrenner suggested including members with institutional knowledge who may know what hasn't worked in the past. Mr. Teich agreed and noted that people will be added as needed.

Board of Trustees and Selectboard Work Plan for Consolidation and Alignment – Evan Teich

The issue is for the SB and Trustees to discuss consolidation and governance and agree to a work plan. With regard to Board Member Thoughts on How to Continue Governance Conversation, Mr. Tyler stated that he was "Member D," Ms. Houghton stated that she was "Member A" and Mr. Levy stated that he was "Member B."

Mr. Tyler suggested hearing from each member on their thoughts with this issue, and members agreed.

Ms. Houghton expressed that the most immediate step for her is to address the issue of tax equity because if it didn't get tackled, then things might remain in the status quo. She would like to see everyone in Essex paying the same taxes. She also would like to learn sooner than later if a full consolidation is not going to happen so that the Trustees can move to other important matters. If that is the case, the Town and Village could continue to work on joint communications and improving what is already consolidated.

Ms. Sopchak agreed with Ms. Houghton, but was interested in moving slow and deliberative with consolidating departments. She felt working with smaller chunks would be better and would address the tax equity issue along the way. She suggested starting with the Public Works Department. She also felt they should revisit the way Heart and Soul provided outreach to the community as a way to engage the community since that was so successful. Ms. Houghton thought that the departments left to consolidate are really difficult. She reported that Heart and Soul is technically dormant, but that they still meet and have a plan to resurrect their efforts soon.

Mr. Watts asked to add "assets" and "libraries" to the list of Areas that May Require outside Consultation. He disclosed that his wife is a Library Trustee for the Essex Free Library. He understood that the libraries may have different regulations to follow through the State Department of Libraries and that the Boards may need some assistance to understand how those affect any consolidation effort.

With regard to tax equity, he noted that it is not a 50/50 share, and he wants to know what the Village taxpayers get from the taxes they pay to the Town. He also noted that, should that Village \$3.4 million in taxes be added to the Town budget, it would mean a 13 cent increase to the tax rate for the Town outside the Village residents, which is “big to swallow.” He suggested looking at an incremental increase so it is not such a hardship. With regard to Thoughtful Growth in Action, he wondered about moving things forward and suggested that may be a good place to start. With regard to the Recreation Departments, he stated that it was a large chunk of the difference in tax rates between the Town and the Village and thought the consolidation plan from the department heads should be looked at soon.

Mr. Tyler believes that the Village is sharing responsibility with the Town government for providing services to the entire community, but it is not being compensated for its share. All the services the Village provides are services that the Town would need to provide if the Village didn’t exist. Village residents are the only ones being taxed to provide its portion of those services, but people in the Village are sharing the responsibility of what the Town provides. As a result, he thought it was important to start with a grounded understanding of the funding structure and asked Ms. Wrenner if she saw any problem with his statements.

Ms. Wrenner replied that she would counter that the same thing is happening to TOV residents with no representation. She gave an example of how the Town Highway Department is paving inside and outside the Village, but has no Board appropriately managing Village policies. She thought this needed to be revisited because it is a “chicken and egg thing.” She stated that if we go forward, we need to get buy in from the 11,000 residents (TOV) by affording them equal representation equivalent to the TIV. Then there could be conversations around a table with equivalent strength on each side. She suggested considering the idea, last year, of a cultural district for the Village Recreation Department and Brownell Library, which have much more in common than the two different philosophies, backgrounds and locations of the two libraries. Ms. Wrenner would like the members to be broad in thinking about the meaning of consolidation. Mr. Tyler, in that scenario, asked Ms. Wrenner if she would look to do a similar thing in the Town with the Recreation Department and Essex Free Library, so there is an adjusted tax rate in the Village and the Town or for the Village to have a cultural district, but continue to support the mirror entities in the Town. Ms. Wrenner did not think it was her decision, but wanted representatives from TIV and TOV to hammer that out. She stated that, right now, having a SB that has the big picture view only doesn't help anyone hammer out those compromises and is inappropriate.

Ms. Sopchak was confused about the “chicken and egg” comment. She was hearing that there are solutions to the problems, but not until the SB solves the TOV problem and asked if that was accurate. Ms. Wrenner thought that was one way to look at it, but it might be a legislative issue for the Town Attorney and staff to address. Ms. Sopchak thought that was what the Boards and staff are already doing. She referred to the meeting on March 24th when the public told them to change how they were doing things and to move forward, which is what they are trying to do right now. She stated that this is not some capricious set up that the SB decided to do. It is State Statute, and they are working with a charter that is V.S.A. annotated and not something they can just fix. Ms. Sopchak did not think that the fixes Ms. Wrenner is proposing are any different than the proposed fixes from everybody else at the table. Ms. Wrenner understood that with consolidation of services, the Village tax rate has decreased, but she has never heard that this is helping the representation issue get fixed. She recalled that some of the “hiccups” and frustration from past merger efforts is that the Town has not had adequate representation and that will continue if we don’t work out ways that are fair to everybody. Ms. Sopchak stated that the Boards have been talking about representation at every meeting the last several months

and asked, “Why don’t we just focus on the future and get it done?”

Mr. Watts reiterated that he represents the TOV residents and resents being told that he doesn’t. Mr. Levy agreed that all selectman represent the entire community regardless of where the members live in the Town.

Mr. Plageman agreed with Ms. Sopchak. He did not understand the argument and agreed with Mr. Watts. He lives in the Village and serves on the SB, which he considers a privilege. He hasn’t heard anybody in six years say that his opinions are slanted one way or the other. It’s always been what is best for Essex. He is tired of listening to this and thought they should move on and get the work done. He thought tax equity and governance representation were the top two issues, but did not know which one should come first and if they should be addressed together or separately. He agreed with Ms. Houghton and Mr. Watts that there are tax inequities to deal with and need to be addressed and agreed with Ms. Houghton that they have “picked the low hanging fruit.” The rest won’t be quite as simple. Ms. Houghton commented that, based on the past, the two issues need to be tackled at the same time and be a parallel discussion.

Mr. Kerin advocates getting this message out to the public so that the public is not lacking for knowledge and understanding of any of these issues.

Mr. Tyler stated that any consolidation efforts should not hit the TOV with a large tax increase all at once, which would be a huge impact to those taxpayers. He would rather see this consolidation effort as something with overwhelming support from both municipalities. He believed that the process of what and how needs to be discussed and modified. He suggested that the members provide a list of ways to proceed so they can determine which ones overlap.

Mr. Brown agreed with the sentiment that it is not the “Village way” or the “Town way,” but the “best way.” He felt that the discussion on taxation and representation has to be a parallel process and suggested that the members look at the end goals to this process, be transparent about what they are doing and where they would like to see this effort go.

Mr. Tyler also thought they should ask “what is the end goal?” Mr. Levy agreed that they needed to define the end game and how they know when they’ve arrived. He believed in a sustainable community by working together and didn’t think it was insurmountable. He suggested looking at this issue into the future by 20 to 30 years to see if they are going to be in a better place. He suggested getting rid of the memorandum of understandings, changing the charter and getting the public involved. He believed in not a positive vote, but an expected positive vote because it was an effort by the public and something the residents want.

Ms. Higgins asked that each member be clear with their thoughts so that when they say “tax equity” or “consolidation,” it is clearly defined.

Each member took a turn explaining how each saw the end goal.

Ms. Sopchak’s end goal was one single community/municipality, one board, one budget, one set of staff and one day of voting, which included the school vote and a school and Town meeting before the vote.

Mr. Brown’s end goal was the same as Ms. Sopchak’s with one municipality, one board with equal

representation and a vote aligned with the school vote. He was not sure yet how the one board would be structured.

Mr. Plageman's end goal was the same as Ms. Sopchak and Mr. Brown's, but he wanted to add that he favored the Hybrid Model for Town Meeting and the vote. He was in favor of keeping Town Meeting. He was also not sure yet of how the one board would be structured.

Mr. Tyler's end goal was a consolidated community. He saw two charters for the first few years, which could provide a mechanism to solve tax equity and adjust it slowly. He favored voting districts so that no one part of the community dominates the other. He was basically in agreement with the comments so far.

Mr. Levy's end goal was a single sustainable community with one tax rate for all, one governing board with districts, if that makes sense. He has heard from the community that it was time to put the budget on Australian ballot.

Ms. Houghton's end goal was one community, one budget, one board with a representative structure, one vote using the Hybrid Model for Town Meeting, one economic development commission, one tax rate for all and a brand new charter, starting fresh. She would like to see Essex respected in the State for all that it has to offer.

Ms. Wrenner's end goal was in agreement with other members and to have one board. She thought that the at-large representation on the board is problematic so that working groups may be needed in its formative period. She also wanted a different date for the school vote because right after school vacation is not optimal.

Mr. Kerin's end goal was in agreement with everything said, but with one board doing things together and that the process be at a faster pace than more slowly. He also saw preserving the Village Five Corners as an Historic Center.

Mr. Watts' end goal is a single community, single board that is responsive to all the community and a co-mingling of ballots (sooner than later) so people can't see how each municipality voted.

Mr. Jerry Fox talked about how he saw the community being the most divisive ever when the high school was being merged. He suggested that the SB and BT have committees for each of the departments, such as libraries, recreation and public works, that would report to the Boards. He felt that more manpower was needed if they want to move faster and be successful.

Mr. Bruce Post felt that the revote in 2006 taught us to learn to do things together, and he recalled hearing that, if the Town and Village can learn to do things together over the assuming years, then it would be easier to merge later on. He has not kept up with the consolidation efforts to date, the cost implications and the savings, but noted that usually a merger results in some efficiencies. He suggested using the word "municipality" instead of "community." He didn't think this effort needed to take all that long and encouraged the SB and BT to make up their minds. He also suggested using the work from the Essex Governance Group (EGG), which had recommendations with a lot of good ideas and results from citizen surveys. With regard to a new charter, he was opposed to carving out a special district in the Village. If they are talking one municipality, then it should be one municipality. He would,

however, favor districts.

Ms. Mary Post urged the Boards to involve the public, which needs to know what is being talked about. She hopes that things will change because sometimes the discussions can be so vague and many of them that used to go to meetings had felt that they were treated as if their voice didn't matter. If they all get involved again, she hoped it would be in a really positive, honest way. Even if she didn't get what she wanted, Ms. Post hoped to feel heard and respected.

Ms. Dunn didn't think the Boards needed to start with a new charter from scratch as town charters are looked at regularly at the Legislature, and Essex could use those as models for its new charter. She favored one charter and thought the Boards should "jump in" and just do it. She didn't think what they named areas of the Town was important, and she was in favor of a hybrid model for Town Meeting and has heard from residents that they favor Australian ballot for the budget. She was also in favor of one vote and thought they could get this done quickly. She suggested using ad-hoc committees as there was so much expertise to utilize in our community and didn't think that would slow down the process.

Mr. Jim Bernegger has been involved with the Economic Development Commission for the past 18 months and is a newcomer to the Town. He has taken a single entity and external approach with his work as a volunteer and is encouraged by tonight's discussion. He hears a single point of view, which is what he feels the members are charged to do. He stated that Essex is competing for a lot of resources, so a more united approach is essential.

Mr. Tyler suggested that members put in writing their end goals as the next step. Members further deliberated, and Mr. Tyler felt that it would be important to have a theoretical model and process to put before the public for a focus and a discussion.

Mr. Brown recalled governance models being presented at a past meeting and suggested bringing those back and doing a dry-erase board exercise at the next joint meeting.

Mr. Plageman was not quite ready to discuss having committees as he felt it was too early in the process.

Ms. Houghton suggested that each member submit their top three issues to be tackled and a list of potential committees with department heads to tackle them and then just start working.

Ms. Wrenner suggested setting up a doodle for more joint meetings. She thought they could be monthly as long as they were productive. She also wanted representation as a priority on committees.

Mr. Kerin agreed, but was concerned about getting the message out to the public as he was surprised that there was no coverage in the Essex Reporter on the joint meeting on March 24th. It was noted that press releases need to happen to ensure something goes into the Essex Reporter. He also added that just because you don't get what you want, doesn't mean you weren't listened to, it just means you didn't get what you want.

Mr. Watts expressed that democracy was designed to run slowly so adding meetings might not be helpful. He suggested that members add comments in writing on the proposed work plan and comments on what issues they need extra help with. Mr. Watts may not be available to attend additional meetings

as his work is involving more travel.

Mr. Teich thought that more meetings would work in this case to keep the momentum going as well as the camaraderie presented tonight, which is so important. He suggested each member comment on the definitions as well so they are understanding the meanings in the same way.

Mr. Tyler synthesized the discussion thus far with the following highlights, and Mr. Levy agreed:

1. hold another joint meeting soon that is dedicated to this issue
2. members provide comments on the work plan
3. comments about committees
4. comments on where outside expertise is needed
5. comments on solutions for governance and representation
6. first three priorities of tasks to accomplish
7. comments on the definitions

Mr. Tyler and Mr. Levy agreed to provide a summary and reminder memorandum to the members with a due date for comments. Mr. Teich agreed that staff would summarize the common end goals as well and then summarize the comments from each member for discussion at the next meeting. Staff will put out a doodle to determine the next joint meeting date and then proceed with future meetings as needed in order to keep the momentum moving forward in this collaborative way.

Goals and Process for Annual, Joint Evaluation of Unified Manager – Evan Teich

Ms. Wrenner suggested tabling this issue due to the late hour, and members agreed. Mr. Teich asked that this topic be discussed as a priority at the next joint meeting, and members agreed.

IRENE WRENNER MOVED AND MICHAEL PLAGEMAN SECONDED A MOTION TO TABLE THIS DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.

GEORGE TYLER MOVED AND ANDREW BROWN SECONDED A MOTION TO TABLE THIS DISCUSSION. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.

GEORGE TYLER MOVED AND LORI HOUGHTON SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA WITH TRUSTEE MEMBER COMMENTS.

CONSENT ITEMS

a. Radar List of Joint Selectboard and Trustee Work Items

There were no comments on the Consent Agenda.

THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.

ANDREW BROWN MOVED AND DANIEL KERIN SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 10:00 P.M. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Saramichelle Stultz, Recording Secretary



TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE & AGENDA
MONDAY, MAY 14, 2018 at 7:00 PM
2 LINCOLN STREET, ESSEX JUNCTION, VT 05452

1. **CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG** [7:00 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **GUESTS, PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS**
 - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
5. **OLD BUSINESS**
 - a. Amendments to Open Burning and Enforcement Ordinances – Evan Teich
6. **JOINT MEETING WITH ESSEX SELECTBOARD**
 - a. Determine goals and evaluation process for the Unified Manager – George Tyler and Max Levy
 - b. **Discussion about the Trustee/Selectboard and Staff work plans for alignment – George Tyler and Max Levy**
 - c. Discussion about defining commonly-used words around governance and consolidation – George Tyler and Max Levy
 - d. Determine whether to establish subcommittees with missions and responsibilities around governance and consolidation – George Tyler and Max Levy
 - e. Discussion about areas where experts should be hired to inform governance and consolidation – George Tyler and Max Levy
 - f. Discussion about top three priorities to be accomplished by consolidation – George Tyler and Max Levy
 - g. **Discussion about general ideas for governance and representation – George Tyler and Max Levy**
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Memo to Trustees and Selectboard, and Board Member Responses
8. **ADJOURN**

Meetings of the Trustees are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Village Manager's office at 878-6944.

DAN KERIN MOVED AND ANDREW BROWN SECONDED A MOTION TO APPOINT ANDREW BROWN AND LORI HOUGHTON TO SERVE ON A SUBCOMMITTEE TO PROPOSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, AS WELL AS AN EVALUATION PROCESS FOR THE UNIFIED MANAGER POSITION, FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL ON JUNE 14, 2018. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0.

There were no public comments on this issue.

b. Discussion about Trustee/SB and Staff Work Plans for Alignment– George Tyler and Max Levy

Ms. Sopchak and Mr. Tyler appreciated Mr. Teich's Work Plan. Mr. Tyler addressed Ms. Wrenner's written comments about representation and noted that, according to the Town Charter, all SB members shall be elected at large. He commented that Village citizens are citizens of the Town, and everything the Town owns was contributed to by taxpayers of the Village. He could not see the basis in law or finance for having a subgroup of citizens on a board. Ms. Wrenner gave the unified school district as an exemplary effort of maintaining districts based on geographic differences. She thought it was untrue for Mr. Tyler to say that "everything" the Town owns was contributed to by the Village taxpayers, as she pointed out that the original 8 cent Highway Tax was not paid for by the Village taxpayers. She requested that there be equal teams at the table because having lopsided representation is problematic. Mr. Tyler pointed out that a former SB supported the 8 cent Highway Tax as a way to contribute to the unfair tax structure. He stated that the school district follows the charter that it created. The Town and Village can only follow its charters, and to designate another group is unethical and illegal according to Charter.

Mr. Levy felt that the charter could be amended to have equal representation, and he didn't think it should sidetrack their work at this time. Ms. Wrenner expressed concern for the 11,000 Town residents, outside the Village (TOV), who feel that this lack of representation isn't fair. She asked that this problem be given some weight so that the TOV residents buy into this vision. Mr. Tyler expressed that the Village also needs Ms. Wrenner's 100% representation. Mr. Watts agreed with Ms. Wrenner that Mr. Tyler's statement with regard to Town assets is somewhat misleading. Ms. Sopchak pointed out that, in the work plan, Mr. Teich recommends that the boards continue to work on Public Works alignment. She stated that when the finances of public works get aligned, there will be a very detailed explanation of where money is coming and going. At the same time, Mr. Tyler and Ms. Sopchak discussed how to solve tax equity without a giant increase for TOV residents.

Mr. John Egan was in favor of a charter change for one ten-member board with five members from the Village and five members from the Town. He was also in favor of staggered terms. He stated that there is a perception that representation is uneven and that needs to be overcome. He agreed that the tax rate should be the same town-wide, but should be increased slowly over time for the TOV residents.

Mr. Jerry Fox was in favor of taking the long view of this issue.

Ms. Iris Banks asked if there was any provision in the charter about consolidation. Mr. Tyler replied that how to consolidate is in state statute, not the charter. Ms. Banks didn't understand why equal representation seemed to be antithetical to what the boards are trying to do.

Mr. Levy noted that the long-term goal identified at the last joint meeting was one municipality with one board, which would address equal representation. He suggested considering a charter change earlier in the process to address this issue. Mr. Teich stated that the work plan addresses representation and tax equity by looking at what the communities can align, share and consolidate, so that the Town is

ultimately being good stewards of people's money. Other priorities include the voting process and public engagement, and he agreed that an intermediate step for a charter change might be something to discuss.

Mr. Mark Banks appreciated the value in sharing different points of views through respectful conversation, which he saw tonight and would like to see continue.

Mr. Rich Maggiani saw clearly that the charter needs to change to have equal representation and then everything else will flow more easily. He did not think this issue would proceed unless there are equal voices at the table, which needed to happen first.

Mr. Watts stated that he fully supports the staff work plan and asked that they continue that work and then get more specific as it evolves.

c. Discussion about Defining Commonly-Used Words Around Governance and Consolidation – George Tyler and Max Levy

Mr. Levy suggested forming a subcommittee to synthesize the comments from the members and report back with recommendations to the boards. Mr. Watts proposed talking about the definitions as they come up, instead of having a subcommittee, because there may be other words to define as discussions continue. Ms. Sopchak and Mr. Brown were in favor of defined common language to be able to reach the common goal. Ms. Wrenner thought that it would be handy to have this list of each member's ideas of definitions as a glossary on hand at every meeting to understand each other's perceptions. Ms. Sopchak thought it would be worthwhile to synthesize the various interpretations from all of the members so they have a common set of definitions relative to these conversations. Mr. Kerin reminded Mr. Watts that the public needs to have common definitions so that the members are not misrepresenting anything. Mr. Plageman was concerned about not having clear definitions as it might slow the process down. Mr. Levy thought it was important for the public that the boards have common language. Mr. Teich reminded the members that these definitions can be revisited and tweaked at any time.

Mr. Mark Banks thought the word "community" was missing from the list.

Mr. Maggiani asked if all the members were clear on the ultimate goal they are trying to achieve in order to define these words. Mr. Levy stated that, at the last joint meeting, the long-term view from all the members was for one community, one municipality, one board and one vote.

Ms. Sopchak and Ms. Wrenner agreed to work on synthesizing the definitions.

GEORGE TYLER MOVED AND DAN KERIN SECONDED A MOTION TO APPOINT ELAINE SOPCHAK TO A SUBCOMMITTEE TO FINALIZE DEFINITIONS TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO A FUTURE JOINT BOARD MEETING FOR DISCUSSION AND ADOPTION. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0.

MICHAEL PLAGEMAN MOVED AND ANDREW WATTS SECONDED A MOTION TO APPOINT IRENE WRENNER TO A SUBCOMMITTEE TO FINALIZE DEFINITIONS TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO A FUTURE JOINT BOARD MEETING FOR DISCUSSION AND ADOPTION. THE MOTION PASSED 5-0.

d. Discussion about General Ideas for Governance and Representation– George Tyler and Max Levy

Mr. Tyler presented a draft idea and sketch for discussion purposes only. He proposed exploring the idea of a charter change sooner than later. His idea is to create a charter that would amend the two existing charters without abolishing them and to execute a seven-member Council – 3 from the Village, 3 from the Town and one new member at-large. If this idea was feasible, he thought it could be a good transition when departments are still working on alignment over time. This would also reduce meeting time and staff time. This Council could address tax equity and representation working towards one budget, one annual meeting and one vote. If it was formed this year, all current holders of seats would be unified into this Council, which would execute both Town and Village charters. Mr. Tyler saw hurdles with this idea, such as there being only 3 members who could execute the Town charter. He believed, however, that they have to trust each other and take a leap together to see if something like this could work.

Mr. Watts asked about the end goal, and Mr. Tyler replied that it could be a realigned Council that works towards a final consolidation. Mr. Watts suggested a Unified Municipal District, instead of the charter. He thought that it would give either party an “out” if things are not working. There was further discussion about the legality of both of these ideas.

Mr. Teich suggested having the Town or Village Attorney present to address these questions. Mr. Kerin suggested having a representative from the League of Cities and Towns. Mr. Plageman, even though he was against smaller charter changes, liked this idea, and Mr. Brown thought it would be a great step to solving the current issues. Ms. Wrenner would like to see a 10-member board with members who have geographic wisdom and institutional knowledge. She wanted five people from the TOV and five from the Town Inside the Village (TIV) with equal power at the table.

Mr. Brown wondered about having a “tie breaker” if there was a stalemate vote. Ms. Wrenner didn’t think there should be any vote close to a stalemate, and she felt that a tie breaker gives one district a chance to have more weight than the other. Mr. Kerin felt that, even within the Town, there were different geographic areas. He thought Mr. Tyler’s idea was a great way to have a trial run and was a positive step.

Mr. Watts suggested having three budgets based on how people are being represented and what services are being provided to which citizens. Mr. Tyler thought that the budgets should remain the same as the Council wrestles with these questions. Members further deliberated on these ideas, including the legality of them, the meeting processes and the procedures for voting and taxing residents. Ms. Sopchak struggled with the TOV voting if the TIV is still paying taxes. Mr. Watts felt that the TOV should have the same right to vote to tax themselves and spend money for things in the TOV. Ms. Sopchak thought that sounded like a single town with two incorporated villages, and she preferred it be less complicated with one budget. Ms. Wrenner added that ordinances would also have to be aligned. Mr. Brown reminded the members of the vision of reaching the end goal, not separation. Members agreed that legal advice is warranted before discussing any details.

Mr. Fox saw equal representation with this idea, but it also scared him that it might perpetuate the current situation. He wondered how to provide for provisions so things don’t take 50 years.

Ms. Banks thought this was a good idea so that there are five from the TIV and five from the TOV all agreeing on the larger goals, which might get the community there sooner.

Mr. Maggiani didn't think the boards need to be deterred by an even number of members on the Council because he thought all votes of that board should be unanimous before moving forward.

Mr. Teich would contact legal counsel and the VLCT for a future discussion on the ideas of an Essex Council and a UMD.

Ms. Sopchak asked that the Town receive assistance from experts on taxation and finances for this issue in such a way to establish tax equity from a mathematical standpoint.

Mr. Watts pointed out that another option is to continue with alignments as proposed by Mr. Teich. Mr. Levy pointed out that the work plan doesn't address the representation issue. Mr. Brown stated that Mr. Watt's suggestion is another idea on the table.

e. Discussion about Top Three Priorities to be Accomplished by Consolidation– George Tyler and Max Levy

Mr. Tyler introduced the issue of synthesizing all individual priorities to one list to see what is overlapping. He asked if staff could do this work, and Mr. Teich agreed.

f. Determine Whether to Establish Subcommittees with Missions and Responsibilities Around Governance and Consolidation– George Tyler and Max Levy.

Ms. Sopchak suggested a subcommittee for Economic Development, which desperately needs attention. Mr. Levy agreed that there were a lot of other Town and Village projects that need attention. Mr. Tyler liked the idea of looking at all the existing committees and commissions in the Town for alignment and for increased communication between them. Ms. Wrenner and Mr. Levy agreed.

Ms. Diane Clemens suggested having a subscription based service for sending minutes to the various committees and commissions to facilitate discussion.

g. Discussion about Areas Where Experts Should be Hired to inform Governance and Consolidation– George Tyler and Max Levy

Mr. Teich and staff will explore getting experts in the following areas: library, finance, legal, VLCT, government structure, taxation and assets.

Mr. Teich asked if members wanted to consider a third-party attorney, which could be more objective, and members agreed.

The next step is a joint meeting in June. Members will keep talking about ideas, but wait for legal opinions on the ones discussed tonight.

READING FILE

- a. Memo to Trustees and Selectboard, and Board Member Responses

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees; Selectboard; Evan Teich, Unified Manager

From: Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager *GSD*

Re: Governance Subcommittee Update

Date: May 24, 2019

Issue

The issue is informing the Trustees and Selectboard about updates from the Governance Subcommittee meeting; and whether the Trustees and Selectboard will authorize staff to recruit a marketing firm to oversee public engagement around governance change.

Discussion

Since the last joint meeting, the Governance Subcommittee has met twice, on May 13 and May 23. Minutes of the May 13 meeting are attached.

Much of the discussion on May 23 centered on how to proceed with public engagement around governance change. The Governance Subcommittee is interested in having the Village and Town hire a marketing firm to conduct surveys and focus groups, the results of which can be used to shape a governance change proposal to bring to voters in November 2020.

Upcoming meetings of the Governance Subcommittee are scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, June 6, June 20, and July 18. The locations are to be determined, but the Town Offices at 81 Main St. are the likely meeting place.

Cost

The cost for a marketing firm to conduct surveys and focus groups is estimated at \$30,000 to \$50,000.

Recommendation

In addition to any discussion the boards have about the Governance Subcommittee, it is recommended that the Trustees/Selectboard authorize staff to recruit a marketing firm to oversee public engagement around governance change.

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE - SPECIAL MEETING
May 13, 2019

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS: Raj Chawla, Andy Watts, Max Levy, George Tyler.

ADMINISTRATION: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager.

OTHERS PRESENT: Irene Wrenner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Tyler called the meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and Town of Essex Selectboard Subcommittee on Governance (hereafter referred to as "Subcommittee on Governance") to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Mr. Duggan noted that staff received additional feedback on non-responses to the recent Request For Proposals (RFP) for a public engagement effort regarding potential governance changes, and would like to include it in Business Item #5.

MAX LEVY made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, to include additional feedback in Business Item #5. The motion passed 4-0.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

GEORGE TYLER made motion, and ANDY WATTS seconded, that the Subcommittee on Governance approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 4-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Ms. Wrenner stated that it is critically important that both the Town outside the Village and the Village be represented on this Subcommittee.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Teich called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Chair.

MAX LEVY nominated George Tyler for Subcommittee on Governance Chair, and GEORGE TYLER seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.

Mr. Tyler called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Vice Chair.

GEORGE TYLER nominated Max Levy for Subcommittee on Governance Vice Chair, and ANDY WATTS seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.

b. Selection of the recording secretary

Mr. Tyler called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Recording Secretary.

GEORGE TYLER nominated Raj Chawla for Subcommittee on Governance Recording Secretary, and MAX LEVY seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.

c. Schedule of future meeting dates

The Subcommittee members discussed scheduling future meetings, and decided to hold meetings on the following days, at 7 p.m.:

- May 23, 2019
- June 6, 2019
- June 20, 2019
- July 18, 2019

Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed.

d. Identifying next steps for the Governance change initiative

Mr. Tyler began the discussion on next steps for the governance change initiative by noting that formal bids on the RFP were not received, but that feedback was received on why no bids were submitted. He also outlined the issues and potential roadblocks that would cause the public to vote against a consolidated governance structure for the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction. These issues include tax equity between the Town and Village, representation on boards for the Town and Village, and issues of identity. He also outlined the timeline for developing a consolidation plan/proposal, which would entail developing a proposal to refine the charter between now and the end of the calendar year so that changes could be publicized and circulated by spring/summer 2020 for a fall 2020 ballot vote.

Mr. Levy suggested that the previously released RFP could be broken up into smaller, more specific tasks, such as survey development and educating and marketing the proposed changes to the public, with staff completing some of these tasks and outside consultants hired to complete others.

Members of the subcommittee agreed that survey data from the public would be vital to the governance change initiative, that any surveys fielded could also be used as educational tools, and that they should attempt to reach as many members of the public as possible.

Subcommittee members agreed that staff should be directed to identify potential candidates for survey development by June, and that members of the subcommittee should think of survey questions in the interim.

Mr. Chawla suggested that, in addition to surveys, holding focus groups would be another valuable source of information on public sentiment. Focus groups could be better representations of diverse demographics and communities within the Town and Village, and could also provide more immediate and actionable data to inform governance change proposals. Mr. Teich suggested that focus groups could help guide survey development as well, and that the results of focus group discussions could be used to conduct larger, more targeted surveys. These could, in turn help guide the Town and Village boards in their decision-making regarding consolidation initiatives. Mr. Chawla emphasized that any focus groups be well-publicized and that they be

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE
(DRAFT)**

May 13, 2019

accessible to all members of the community by holding them at various times (morning, afternoon, evening) and locations that are on public transit routes. Mr. Duggan noted that the Heart & Soul initiative conducted a network analysis to target segments of the communities for participation in focus groups and events, and that something similar could be done to solicit feedback for this initiative.

Mr. Levy suggested that survey development could occur in tandem with holding focus groups, in order to use time most efficiently.

Next steps:

- Staff will research firms that could recruit for and conduct focus groups for the initiative;
- Staff will simultaneously research firms or organizations that could conduct surveys regarding the initiative;
- Subcommittee members will develop a list of priority questions for the focus groups prior to the subcommittee's May 23 meeting;
- Subcommittee members will develop a list of demographic areas and communities to target with the focus groups and survey for discussion at the subcommittee's May 23 meeting.

Mr. Watts had a number of legal questions regarding whether tax districts can have their own libraries, whether different water districts need separate governance, and voting procedures around charter changes, noting that the state legislature is currently working to clarify language in statute regarding process for charter changes in Bennington. Mr. Teich offered to pass Mr. Watts' questions to Dan Richardson, the Town and Village's special counsel on governance.

e. Discuss financial plan for Governance change initiative

The Subcommittee briefly discussed the financial plan for the governance change initiative. Mr. Tyler noted that the financial plan is currently in the process of being drafted, and that he will direct staff to specifically look at the different water and sewer rates for the Town and Village, based on interest from members at tonight's meeting regarding the differences between the two.

f. Approval of minutes: March 11, 2019

MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, to approve the Subcommittee on Governance meeting minutes from March 11, 2019. The motion passed 4-0.

6. ADJOURN:

MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0 at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE
(DRAFT)**

May 13, 2019

138 Amy Coonradt
139 Recording Secretary

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141

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143 Approved this _____ day of _____, 2019

144

145 (see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

DRAFT

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
DRAFT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 6, 2019**

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Max Levy; Patrick Murray; Annie Cooper; Andrew Watts

TRUSTEES: Andrew Brown; George Tyler; Dan Kerin; Raj Chawla; Amber Thibeault

ADMINISTRATION: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sarah Macy Finance Director/Assistant Manager; Police Capt. Ron Hoague; Police Chief Rick Garey; Aaron Martin, Town Engineer/Utilities Director; Dennis Lutz; Public Works Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Colin Bellamore; Ben Chiaravalle; John Dunn; Colin Flanders; Lisa Laberge; Hubie Norton; Alan Nye; Abby Parmenter; Bruce K. Parmenter; Laura Parmenter; Sarah Reeves; Jenny, Aria & Ainsley Remillard; Kevin & Natalie Remillard; Kris Remillard; Mary Small; Jeff & Michelle Weber; Bryon Wheman; Marla and Patti Wehman; Nichole Wehman; Irene Wrenner; Lisa Laberge, West Sleepy Hollow Road Association (WSHRA)

1. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Andrew Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Trustees Special Meeting to order at 7:41 PM.

Elaine Haney called the Selectboard back to order, from their Selectboard Meeting recess, to enter into the Special Meeting with the Village Trustees, at 7:41 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

With no additions or changes to the agenda, approval was not needed.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

There were no comments from the public.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Presentation of Lifesaving Medals to Essex Police Officers – Capt. Ron Hoague, Chief Rick Garey

Ms. Haney invited Chief Garey and Capt. Hoague to lead a Life Saving Medal ceremony in honor of Officers Ben Chiaravalle, Kris Remillard and Bryon Wehman. Chief Garey explained that the Life Saving Medal is awarded to a person in a public safety agency capacity who performs an act that saves another person's life, under conditions that were not dangerous to the member.

He described Officer Chiaravalle's performance of the Heimlich maneuver in August of last year, which saved the life of a choking woman. Officer Chiaravalle received a standing ovation, when presented with his Life Saving medal.

Chief Garey described how, last October, Officers Remillard and Wehman saved an unresponsive man's life by performing CPR until Essex Rescue arrived. Officers Remillard and Wehman also received a standing ovation, when presented with their Life Saving medals. On behalf of the Trustees and Selectboard, Ms. Haney extended gratitude to all three officers for their service.

b. **Presentation from Chittenden Solid Waste District on Proposed Fiscal Year 2020 Budget – Sarah Reeves & Alan Nye**

This agenda item was addressed after item 5E, later in the meeting. Ms. Reeves and Mr. Nye provided a brief overview of Chittenden Solid Waste District's (CSWD) mission, history, mandates for member towns and board representation. Ms. Reeves explained the CSWD FY20 proposed budget, which includes \$12.5 million in revenue, \$11.5 million in expenses, \$665,000 in capital expenses and allocations and a net of \$331,000. She then discussed changes to CSWD services related to their financial system, the Organics Diversion Facility, the Materials Recovery Facility, Drop Off Centers and Solid Waste Management Fees. She explained that as of July 1, it will cost \$60 per ton to compost food scraps, which is about 50% less than the cost of landfilling, and \$40 per ton to recycle paper. The tip fee for plastics will increase this year to \$65 per ton. Ms. Reeves pointed out that the CSWD will no longer be packaging and selling composted organics, because this area of operations was losing money. Instead, they will sell the product unpackaged, locally. Ms. Reeves explained that the CSWD recycling operations have outgrown the space, which was originally sized to process 25 tons but now processes 45 tons. She said that, this year, they plan to return to the Selectboard and Trustees with a municipal bond proposal to build a new facility. A new facility would also enable them to take advantage of new opportunities with local paper mills and decrease costs associated with landfilling. Ms. Reeves discussed the increasing cost of recycling plastic and the resulting increased bag fee, as of July 1, of \$2 per car who drops off just recycling.

Mr. Kerin asked about public concern related to the risk of increased pest animals, such as rodents, when compost bins begin to be picked up at the curbside. Ms. Reeves discussed the CSWD's plans to ensure organics compliance, enforce healthy composting practices and monitor hauling efforts from residential organics pick-ups.

Mr. Watts and Mr. Brown wondered if the recycle drop off fee would deter people from recycling. Ms. Reeves and Mr. Nye discussed that the longstanding local history of recycling efforts and suggested that this small fee will not be a deterrent.

Ms. Haney and Mr. Watts discussed the CSWD's closure of the Reuse Zones. Ms. Reeves detailed many liability items that had regularly been left in these zones and explained that community entities like ReSource and Habitat for Humanity are filling the reuse niche.

Mr. Watts commended the CSWD's interest dividend increase, which was based on a change in investment strategy. He also wondered how CSWD functions might be shared between districts and with community entities to encourage efficiencies. Mr. Nye pointed out that the CSWD is a leader with a long history in the state, so any collaborative efforts maintain management oversight of CSWD operations. Ms. Haney wondered if there is an estimate for how much money may be requested in the bond, and Ms. Reeves and Mr. Nye explained that it is too soon to project this.

c. **Award bid for Summer 2019 Paving – Dennis Lutz & Aaron Martin**

Mr. Lutz presented the bidding results for 2019 paving, recommending that the low bidder, Engineers Construction, Inc. be awarded the contract. He pointed out that two bidders' estimates were higher than anticipated, due, in part, to increasing oil costs. Mr. Lutz explained that funds used for 2019 paving in the Town will include money from the fiscal year (FY) 2019 capital and operational budgets, available before July 1, as well as from the FY2020 budget, available after July 1. Six Essex Town paving projects will be completed with FY2019 funds and the rest of the projects, with the exception of one "alternative project," will

be completed with FY2020 funds. Mr. Martin explained that that the paving priorities were rearranged in the Village, because the West and South street project will no longer take place in the 2019 paving plans, as the grant to help fund this project was not received. This leaves four Village roads to be completed and the West and South Street project pushed back to FY2021.

Mr. Brown wondered which Village streets were prioritized, after the projects were rearranged based on the grant denial. Mr. Lutz explained that they are Mill Street, River Street, Stanton Drive and Silverbow Terrace, and Cascade Court. Mr. Tyler confirmed with Ms. Macy that \$35,000 will, as planned, be transferred from the Town to the Village to help offset some of the the cost of paving projects.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard award the 2019 Summer Paving bid to Engineers Construction, Inc., of South Burlington, Vermont, in the amount of \$1,142,391.25. The motion passed 5-0.

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees award the 2019 Summer Paving bid to Engineers Construction, Inc., of South Burlington, Vermont, in the amount of \$1,142,391.25. The motion passed 5-0.

d. Discuss Governance Subcommittee schedule – George Tyler

The Trustees and Selectboard had appointed members from their respective boards – Mr. Tyler, Mr. Chawla, Mr. Levy, and Mr. Watts – to serve on the Governance Subcommittee, and discussed the challenges associated with scheduling meetings. Mr. Tyler pointed out the importance of scheduling these meetings at times that enable the discussions to be shared at the following Joint Trustees and Selectboard meetings. The subcommittee members discussed times that were problematic and weighed the benefits of remote meetings. Mr. Chawla suggested identifying a 7:30 AM meeting time, which was well received by the rest of the group.

e. Approve selection process for Public Engagement Consultant on potential governance changes – Greg Duggan

Mr. Duggan requested that the Trustees and Selectboard members provide direction for proceeding with selecting a Public Engagement Consultant. He said that no applications had been received by the time of the deadline of 4:30 pm on May 6. Specific firms experienced in this type of project were invited to apply and it was posted on Vermont's League of Cities and Towns' website.

Mr. Levy suggested that staff reach out to firms they'd expected would apply to find out why they did not, then adapt the search process accordingly. Mr. Chawla thought it would be beneficial to split the project into two RFPs of unbundled but coordinated efforts – a community facilitation and engagement RFP and a marketing and outreach RFP. He stressed the importance of staff devising a clear structure of the job to be done. Mr. Teich plans to discuss the project with the Strategic Advance meeting facilitators to solicit input and Mr. Tyler suggested soliciting quotes from relevant firms, instead of issuing an RFP. Ms. Cooper expressed her enthusiasm for this project and her commitment to being involved as needed. Mr. Duggan suggested that they devise volunteer-based options as well as consultant/organizational engagement strategies and report all findings and plans at the next Joint meeting.

f. Update on June 22 Joint Board Strategic Work Session – Evan Teich

Ms. Macy provided an overview of preparations for the Strategic Advance work session. The Strategic Advance will be held on Saturday June 22, 2019 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Delta Burlington. Ms. Macy explained that Liz Gamache, with a background in city management, and Jennifer Knauer, who worked with Essex on the Firearms Discharge Ordinance, are being hired to facilitate the event. Each of the facilitators will engage in preparation exercises leading up to the event with staff, Selectboard and Trustees and will play important roles in achieving process-oriented deliverables. As per open meeting law, public comment will be embedded in the day. Mr. Teich asked for feedback on the timing of the public comments during the work session and requested any other ideas for work session topics.

Ms. Cooper, Ms. Haney, Mr. Tyler and Mr. Chawla discussed the importance of taking comments from the public to be used moving forward, while also ensuring that the day is upheld as a work session with a clear agenda aimed at laying important groundwork for staff and board members. Mr. Brown noted the importance of not allowing public commentary to go beyond its allotted time. Ms. Haney described Ms. Knauer as a skilled taskmaster who could ensure this, and confirmed with Mr. Teich that Dan Richardson, consulting attorney on governance, does not need to be present for this work session.

g. Discuss options for Tax Equity Planning – Sarah Macy

Ms. Macy informed the boards about the genesis of a project to model scenarios in a tax equity plan. She explained that, with the help of former Finance Director Lauren Morrisseau, whose expertise in this area is deep, staff are planning to model tax equity scenarios based on each of the three proposed governance models presented at the April 9, 2019 joint meeting. These scenarios will consist of a variety of models suggesting different ways to achieve tax equity through a full merge all at once; a full merge with phased in tax rates over 3, 5 or 7 years; or a full merge with a special district. For comparison, each tax equity plan will also contain a snapshot of the status quo.

Mr. Brown and Ms. Haney expressed that they are looking forward to receiving thorough information about how tax equity can be achieved and are glad to know Ms. Morrisseau is on this project with staff. Mr. Watts and Mr. Tyler both pointed out that these scenarios should include how the different water rates between the current municipalities will be addressed through consolidation. Ms. Haney clarified with Ms. Macy that this exercise will not yet specifically address the Capital Plan but will focus instead on operating budget cohesion. Mr. Teich explained that assets in existence will not affect the tax rate synthesis. Mr. Chawla wondered how future capital needs would play out in this process and Mr. Teich clarified that the exercise will focus on the economics of FY 2019 to model scenarios, opening a discussion of all elements of the budget that would play a role in achieving tax equity. This would not necessarily mean looking forward at capital needs yet.

h. Discuss Joint Board work items – Greg Duggan

Mr. Duggan introduced a proposed work list for this new era of more frequent joint board meetings, to gather input and possible other items to be considered. Mr. Duggan provided an overview of the topics that may be covered: Board Level Policies & Procedures; Administrative Policies; Budget; Evaluation of the Manager; Governance; Creation of Subcommittees; Consolidated Departments/Functions; Joint Capital Projects; Taxation/ Tax Equity; Ordinances; Alignment Discussions; Outreach & Engagement Campaign; Decisions Impacting both Municipalities; Annual Presentations & Appointments of Representatives; Fee Schedules; Economic Development; Space Needs; Tree Farm; Wastewater Treatment Facility; and Joint RFPs.

Mr. Brown suggested prioritizing items that will enable the boards to work more easily together. He pointed out that aligning some of the different operating procedures of the boards could improve peer-to-peer discussions and decision making. Mr. Watts suggested deprioritizing policy alignment if it may need to be revised again based on the consolidation vote. Ms. Haney suggested that any policy alignment that makes work easier on staff would be good to focus on. Mr. Tyler, Mr. Levy and Ms. Haney would like to prioritize a process for evaluating the Unified Manager. Ms. Haney requested that Trustees or Selectboard members email Mr. Duggan if they have other suggestions for this list of work items.

6. CONSENTITEMS

MAX LEVY made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard approve the Consent agenda with comments.

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the Consent agenda.

- a. Approval of Maple Street Park and CSWD Park & Ride as priority locations for electric vehicle charging stations

Approve Maple Street Park and the CSWD Park & Ride as priority locations for EV charging stations.

- b. Approval of Town of Essex & Village of Essex Junction Community Development Department Records Retention Policy

Approve the Town of Essex Community Development Department and Village of Essex Junction Community Development Department Records Retention Plan.

- c. Approval of minutes: April 9, 2019

The Selectboard motion passed 5-0.

The Trustee motion passed 5-0.

7. READING FILE

a. Board Member Comments

Mr. Brown thanked Ms. Haney for bringing cookies and wished her a Happy Birthday. Ms. Cooper led those who would join in singing Happy Birthday.

Mr. Teich pointed out that he purposely scheduled the presentation of life saving medals ceremony to take place at the joint meeting and asked for feedback. Ms. Cooper, Mr. Watts, Mr. Brown, Mr. Chawla and Mr. Kerin discussed the event, noting that it was good and very special to be part of because these awards mean so much to people. They talked about having the boards be more involved in the future by standing in recognition, orchestrating a photo opportunity, making a resolution and/or putting out a press release.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

9. ADJOURN

MAX LEVY made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, to adjourn the Selectboard meeting. The motion passed 5-0, 9:46 PM.

DAN KERIN made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, to adjourn the Trustee meeting. The motion passed, 5-0, 9:46 PM.

TRUSTEE & SELECTBOARD (DRAFT)

May 6, 2019

259

260 Respectfully Submitted,

261 Cathy Ainsworth

262 Recording Secretary

263

DAN KERIN made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, to adjourn the Trustee meeting. The motion passed 5-0, 9:46 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Ainsworth
Recording Secretary

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees; Selectboard; Eyan Teich, Unified Manager

From: Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Lily Vile, Parks & Recreation Director

Re: Vermont Recreation & Parks Award for Adriane Martin

Date: May 24, 2019

Issue

The issue is informing the Trustees and Selectboard of an award received by Parks & Recreation Program Coordinator Adriane Martin.

Discussion

Adriane Martin was recently awarded the Young Professional Award from Vermont Recreation and Parks. The award is given to individuals who exhibit leadership, creativity, and have made significant contributions to the field of parks and recreation over time.

Cost

N/A

Recommendation

This memo is for informational purposes.

Staff and Director's Report March 2019

Report from the Director

Staffing

We said goodbye to long time shelver Moth this month who has decided to move on to new things.

We are thrilled to have Teen Trustee, and longtime Brownell volunteer Carrie Egan join us as our new shelver! Carrie started her new position at Brownell on March 27.

We are in the process of hiring more circ desk subs as some of our subs have moved on, and some shifts have been hard to fill, even when we know ahead of time.

Meetings and Trainings

Wendy H and Hannah traveled to Barre to attend a State Board of Libraries meeting on March 22 where the appointment of a new State Librarian was discussed. Librarians and community members across Vermont wanted to see the best qualified candidate fill this position and Wendy H shared her Dept. of Libraries experiences with the State Libraries Board and Secretary of Administration Susanne Young, as a Library Director and President of the Green Mountain Library Consortium, on how ineffective this department has been for so many, including Brownell. Despite the feedback they received, the easiest option of appointing someone from within the Department was chosen, and Jason Broughton who was hired last year by the past State Librarian as an Assistant State Librarian, with no VT library experience, and very limited professional library experience, was pointed as VT State Librarian.

Programming

After navigating more difficulties, volunteer Maggie decided to end her time as Friday Knit Night volunteer coordinator and will not continue through the spring as she initially planned.

Brownell volunteer Bridget Meyer connected with a community member from Richmond that wants to bring a weekly current events discussion to Brownell that has been very successful in Richmond. We are planning to launch this in the fall on Tuesday mornings, which will be a great time to experiment with, as we don't have many adult daytime programs, and less complicated availability of the Kolvoord Community Room.

Other

The Strategic Planning Committee has been hard at on our community feedback surveys. The Village Meeting will begin the distribution of surveys. This group is managing a great balance of moving the strategic planning process forward!

The re-vamped Essex Unified Communications team sent out a communications profile for departments to fill out. Brownell has a number of outlets we use to communicate with, so it was a project to fill out. Also included were emergency procedures, which we are happy to report are well documented for anything that might happen inside our library building!

HR Director Travis is working on a unified hiring procedure for both Town and Village. We are grateful he sent out a draft for feedback, and had a lot of feedback to offer as our hiring needs are different with our team approach and consideration of younger candidates for our shelving positions.

Last year Brownell staff heard through their film loving channels of an independent film “The Public”, that was directed by Emilio Estevez that speaks to the more human challenges of working in a public library. This is a trailer for the film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eZtMGM6ya8> This film was released to theaters in April, and in the interest of making sure it would be shown in VT for our enthusiastic Brownell staff, Wendy H contacted the Savoy Theater in Montpelier (more central to librarians across the state) to ask if they would consider showing it. The Savoy is not only going to have a run of this film, but also requested an event around a showing of it to raise library awareness. Wendy H is organizing a panel of library directors (including herself) for some stories and a Q&A that will happen the weekend of April 26. Wendy will alert Brownell Trustees when the details are sorted out.

Adult Department:

- New Adult Patrons: 38
 - Cards Started for Essex Free Library: 2
 - Attendance at 24 Adult Programs: 187
 - Kolvoord Room: 20 Adult Events, 153 People Attending
 - Adult Program Support: 131 hours
-
- 10 cozied up to the fire for our last First Friday Knit Night on March 1st.
 - On March 4th, The Vermont Astronomical Society talked about using a planisphere and the Sydney Observatory which had an audience of 20.
 - Clif offered tech help 6 times assisting 9 people.
 - On March 6th, Middlebury political scientist Sarah Stroup asked: What topics are suitable for public discussion? And how can we facilitate productive disagreements? She explored how to deliberate hot topics in ways that are respectful and ultimately helpful. This 1st Wednesday program saw 36 attendees.
 - The Must Read Monday group had 12 people for their discussion of *Lincoln's Last Trial* by Dan Abrams.
 - AARP volunteers, the Ng's, assisted 89 people with tax preparations over 11 days of appointments.
 - The Great Decisions part 3, on Nuclear Negotiations, had 6 participants. The 4th part, 7 people discussed The Rise of Populism in Europe.
 - 8 people listened to Historian and Author Rick Winston discuss his recently published book "Red Scare in the Green Mountains: The McCarthy Era in Vermont, 1946-1960"
 - Alison hosted the viewing and discussion of TedX videos based around the theme of Getting Duped, but no one showed up.

INTERLIBRARY LOAN STATISTICS

MAR	FY 18		FY 19
ILL Sent	180	-21%	143
ILL Requested	84	-6%	79
Holds	366	-2%	359
Avg days to receive	6.7	1%	6.8

COURIER STATISTICS

MAR	FY 18		FY 19
GMM SENT	156	-1%	154
GMM REC'D	157	-8%	145
USPS SENT	28	11%	31
USPS REC'D	27	-22%	21
Est. SAVINGS	\$ 302.76	5%	\$ 318.90

Youth Department:

Updates

- Mary K gave notice of her plans to retire as of the end of May. While we wish her all the best in her next adventure, we will miss her enthusiasm for the kids and teens we work with, her talent for community engagement and intergenerational programming, and her commitment to the work we do. This comes at an important time for the youth department, and we will begin a search for a new Teen Librarian soon.
- Summer planning is well underway. The Youth Department has scheduled all of our big performances and programs, as well as some of our program series. We are submitting a Rotary grant application to cover the cost of one of our collaborations with Essex Free Library, a travelling planetarium provided by VINS. In addition, a new parent is designing a space station for our picture book room. This will be an interactive play area for young children to practice imaginative play.
- One of our strategic planning goals this year was to update the Dewey Decimal Call numbers for our animal non-fiction. In the last month, our intern, Marissa, and Megan have worked to create a list of titles and call numbers to change. Wendy Johnson and Erna developed a process and trained Marissa on how to change the call numbers in the catalog and on book labels. Marissa is about 20% through the project; Erna is double-checking the work. This has been a big undertaking and a great team effort!
- In March, the youth department began an experiment to see if moving our music collection would increase CD circulation. Music CDs have been located in our non-fiction collection for some time, and were rarely checked out. Since the move to a basket on our Circulation Desk, we have seen renewed interest in this collection. If circulation continues to improve, we may consider moving the rest of the collection.

Exhibits

- **Picture Book Room:** Fairy Tales
- **Youth Nonfiction:** Money, money, money
- **YA Room:** Shakespeare and Ides of March

Events

- In preparation for National Poetry Month, the youth department asked community members to submit their personal poetry, to be displayed in the windows of local businesses for a program called **Poem Village**. We received over 20 poems, which will be displayed in April. This has been a fun way to celebrate local creativity and business.
- 26 patrons, young and old, joined us for **Yoga** on March 1st.
- 21 patrons made cheese/apple quesadillas with Jade and Mary K on March 1st for **Fun Food Friday**.
- 5 patrons attended **Magic the Gathering** on March 1st.
- Mary K worked with Cheru, one of our LEEP volunteers, to offer library activities for the **Winter Carnival** at ADL on March 2nd. Participants made dragons out of recycled materials inside and exploding snow volcanos outside. This was a community event offered by Parks and Recreation. Many people attended the carnival, about 40 kids and parents participated in the library activities.
- 28 patrons visited or read to our new therapy dog **Pugsley** in March. Poor Pugsley was a little nervous the first day, but he seems to have found his place among new admirers and enjoys the program.
- 123 patrons attended **Story Times** in March. Themes explored included: Robots (shapes), Exercise (Play), Feelings (Social-Emotional) and the Alphabet (Letter knowledge). Attendance seems to have gone up since we combined our Toddler and Preschool Story Times on March 5th.
- 3 patrons attended **Teen Advisory Board (TAB)** on March 5th. They talked about book recommendations, observed the Ides of March, and played a game of trivia in preparation for the May 3rd Trivia Night.
- 18 kids participated in **Jelly Bean Construction** on March 5th. This program challenged participants to make 3D objects out of jellybeans and toothpicks. Creations included cars, people, aliens, weight lifters and more.
- 10 patrons participated in **Minecraft Club**.
- 23 patrons interacted with or read to therapy dog **Daisy**.
- 45 people attended the **Author Skype with Terry Lynn Johnson**, author of Dorothy's List's nominee *Falcon Wild* on March 7th. This was a collaboration between Mary K and the new Fleming Librarian. A Brownell patron was chosen to introduce the author; she came to Brownell the next day and checked out more of Johnson's books.
- 79 people attended **Music with Raph**.
- For **STEAM Fridays** in March: 25 patrons took apart computers during Tinker Time. 23 patrons made elephant toothpaste and playdough. 10 patrons made kites and boomerangs. Due to rain, participants did some balloon jousting rather than flying their kites. 16 patrons made marionettes from recycled materials.
- 16 patrons attended **Dungeons & Dragons** in March.
- 6 patrons attended **Library Elementary Event Planners (LEEP)** on March 12th.
- We offered our last Homeschool Book Clubs for this program year on March 13th. Participants voted on their favorite books and celebrated another great year of reading. 13 patrons attended Red Clover. Their favorite book was *The Legend of Rock, Paper, Scissors*. 4 patrons attended Dorothy's List. This group could not come to a consensus on the best book this year. 2 patrons attended GMBA. Their favorite book was *Invictus*.
- 7 people attended **LARP**.
- Linda Costello entertained 12 patrons with **Stories and Legends from Ireland** on March 14th.
- 15 patrons attended **Baby Time** on March 15th.

- 13 patrons watched *The House with a Clock in Its Walls* with us on March 15th.
- 16 patrons watched *Smallfoot* on March 19th.
- 9 patrons contributed to our **Collaborative Zine** on March 20th. This month's zine celebrated National Goof Off Day with cartoons, jokes, and funny stories.
- 16 patrons attended **Chess Club**.
- 13 patrons attended **Lego Fun** on March 25th.
- 7 patrons attended **Wii Fun** on March 26th.
- 4 people watched *The Hate U Give* with us on March 30th. 2 stayed for a conversation after. This was a trial run of a potential **Doc & Talk series**. It may be worth experimenting with this concept in its next iteration.

March by the Numbers

- New Youth Patrons: 5
- Attendance at 36 Kids Programs: 385 Kids, 13 Teens, 174 Adults
- Attendance at 9 Teen Programs: 36 Teens, 1 Kids, 4 Adult
- Kolvoord Room: 24 Youth Programs, 262 People attending
- Youth Program Support: 15 Adult Hours, 0 Teen Hours
- Passive Programming: 27 Games Played, 45 Visits to Exploration Station, 0 Express Books
- 40 Dollhouse check outs
- 17 Welcome Baby letters sent
- 24 people worked on the Magnetic Poetry board in the YA room

News from Tech Services:

We continue to work to get the settings on the new public copier set so that it will be easier for people to copy odd sized materials such as newspapers. We are able to Wi-Fi print to the staff copier, which has been nice for some staff.

Tech services has been low on volunteers resulting on slowing down some of our processing, especially laminating books. We are excited for people to come back to Vermont this spring.

Hannah has joined the website committee that is working on the new municipal website. She hopes to bring experience from our recent website redesign to the committee.

Materials Added in the Adult and Juvenile collections this month:

- Adult materials added, March: 170
- Youth materials added, March: 98
- Magazine issues added, March: 137
- Total catalogued collection size March: 68837

Wi-Fi Statistics March

- Daily Average visits time-
- 6+ hrs 16
- 1-6 hrs 40
- 20-60 mins 35
- 5-20 mins 68
- Daily Average return rate-
- Occasional 20
- Weekly 66
- Daily 40
- First time 33
- Total Unique Clients (users connected devices) for the month 605

Twitter

- Number of Twitter followers- 51

Instagram

- Number of Instagram followers-179

Facebook Monthly Reach and Engagement

- March 2019
- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 184
- Total number of post views – 3335
- Number of Page Likes- 1068
- February 2019
- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 689
- Total number of post views – 7999
- Number of Page Likes- 1064

January 2019

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 488
- Total number of post views – 6567
- Number of Page Likes- 1058

December 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 357
- Total number of post views – 5179
- Number of Page Likes- 1056

November 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 297
- Total number of post views – 4306
- Number of Page Likes- 1047

October 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 505
- Total number of post views – 6310
- Number of Page Likes- 1046

September 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 360
- Total number of post views – 5990
- Number of Page Likes- 1045

August 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 551
- Total number of post views – 7752
- Number of Page Likes- 1039

July 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 456
- Total number of post views – 6086
- Number of Page Likes- 1032

June 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 350
- Total number of post views – 5737
- Number of Page Likes- 1025

May 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 304
- Total number of post views – 6313
- Number of Page Likes- 1016

April 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 512
- Total number of post views – 6967
- Number of Page Likes- 1008

March 2018

- Number of engagements with our posts (likes, shares etc.) – 261
- Total number of post views – 5251
- Number of Page Likes- 1007

Brownell Library Website monthly visitors:

- Mar-2018 Visits 2,425 Page Views 3,902
- Apr-2018 Visits 2,126 Page Views 3,363
- May-2018 Visits 2,303 Page Views 3,679
- Jun-2018 Visits 2,645 Page Views 4,415
- Jul-2018 Visits 2,337 Page Views 4,044 (new website started July 10th)
- Aug-2018 Visits 2,215 Page Views 3,660
- Sep-2018 Visits 1,866 Page Views 3,295
- Oct-2018 Visits 2,151 Page Views 3,397
- Nov-2018 Visits 1867 Page Views 2867
- Dec-2018 Visits 1784 Page Views 2716
- Jan-2019 Visits 2238 Page Views 3436
- Feb-2019 Visits 1917 Page Views 3,228
- Mar-2019 Visits 1828 Page Views 2931

Vermont

Garbage disposals vs. composting

Few sewage systems are equipped to handle food scraps, local experts say

Joel Banner Baird Burlington Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Kitchen food scraps can vanish at the flick of a switch — but the virtues of a garbage disposal might end there, say Vermonters well acquainted with the tail end of residential plumbing.

Few sewage or septic systems in the state are equipped to handle ever-larger onslaughts of food-derived slurry, other than that which is first digested by humans, local sewage experts agree.

Yes, piping leftovers down the drain helps save precious space in landfills — and so the practice will remain legal when Vermont's food-waste law extends to households on July 1, 2020.

But kitchen disposals (termed “garburators” in Canada) can subtly subvert the Vermont law's other goals, including the one that advocates recycling food scraps directly into compost, said Michele Morris, a spokeswoman for Chittenden Solid Waste District.

Rebuilding soil fertility is a sound investment for local gardeners, farmers and foresters — and remains one of the district's core missions, according to the CSWD.

Food-based “organics” fed into domestic and municipal plumbing too often adds extra, costly and even wasteful steps to decomposition, Morris added: “Food that enters a wastewater system does not just magically disappear.”

Can the pipes take it?

Not all the “disposed” food scraps bound for the Essex Junction Water Resource Recovery Facility make it



Can the pipes take it?

Not all the “disposed” food scraps bound for the Essex Junction Water Resource Recovery Facility make it there.

Originating in Williston and Essex, some of it hangs up in (and disables) pumps; some of the greasier sludge cakes up in pipes, said Jim Jutras, superintendent of the treatment plant.

Industrial-sized portions of food waste from breweries or dairy-based industries typically arrive by truck, Jutras said. Those loads are carefully managed so they won’t upset the plant’s microbial colonies, which break the slurry down into cleaner, ever-smaller particles.

So far, the plant has been able to absorb the erratic wash of pipe-borne food waste from homes, Jutras continued, but it would be spared a lot of wear and tear if more folks composted, either in their back yards or through a pickup service.

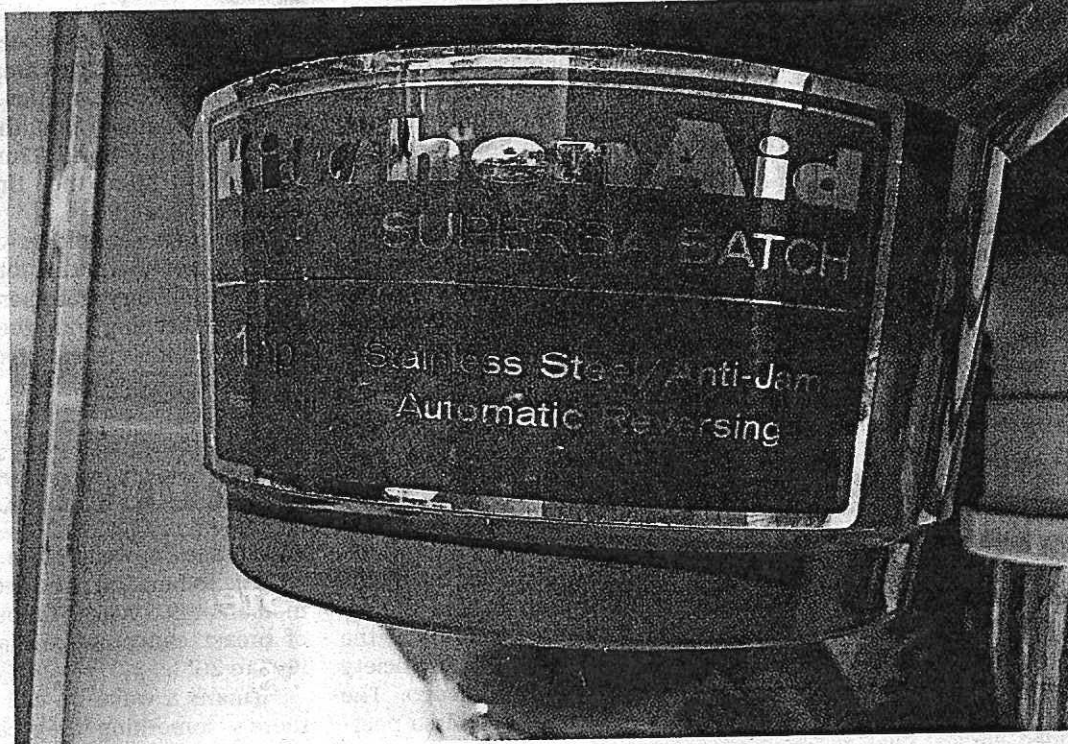
“Whatever you don’t put down the drain helps preserve a wastewater system,” he said. Too often toilets and kitchen disposals become a trash receptacle. What should go down the drain is really just Number One and Number Two.”

Burlington follows the same principle, said Megan Moir, the city’s director of water resources: Cumulatively, a few extra pounds of “organic loading” from disposal-disposed households every week could occasionally overwhelm the plant — and potentially spill partially treated sewage into Lake Champlain.

Moir’s emphasis these days is on larger sources, such as breweries and cideries. Reducing their impacts on the Burlington plant’s biochemistry might help clarify garburators’ role in the mix, she said.

Moir owned up to owning (and even operating!) a kitchen disposal, but only once every other day or so, “to just grind up the smallest of things” that get past her sink strainer.

Almost everything else goes into her family’s two compost bins. It’s nowhere near as convenient as mashing everything down the sink, Moir conceded. Composting demands a little more effort from city residents — and our inertia worries her.



ABOVE: A winter's worth of compost awaits the introduction of red wriggler worms in Burlington.

JOEL BANNER
BAIRD/BURLINGTON
FREE PRESS

The Kitchen Aid “Superba Batch” garbage disposal sits under the kitchen sink of a home in South Burlington.

AKI
SOGA/BURLINGTON
FREE PRESS

How Earth-friendly are garbage disposals?

Combined with sewage, food scraps carry a lot of potential. One byproduct of most of the region’s wastewater treatment plants is a nutrient-rich fertilizer, or biosolid.

Another is methane, the most common element in natural cooking and heating gas, and when released into the atmosphere, a potent greenhouse gas. Methane is commonly collected and burned (releasing water and carbon dioxide) to warm up the heat-loving, bacterial

stews in enclosed “digesters” at regional wastewater plants, and to generate electricity.

South Burlington’s wastewater treatment plant on Airport Parkway might be Vermont’s poster child for “resource recovery.” Thanks to a 2012 upgrade, it produces a virtually sterile, food-crop grade fertilizer, said the city’s director of public works, Justin Rabidoux.

The SoBu plant also has the capacity to handle the community’s plethora of garbage disposal-equipped

See DISPOSALS , Page 6A

to be in the United States.

Later Sunday, two more Mexican citizens were apprehended after they asked for directions to a bus station.

also include enhanced information technology and larger family spaces within rooms.

Associated Press

Disposals

Continued from Page 4A

homes, Rabidoux said: "If you put it in, we'll take care of it for you."

Although food scraps so jettisoned do contribute to the plant's generation of electricity, they are also needlessly processed in the same way that human waste is, noted Bob Fischer, the city's water quality superintendent.

"Food grinders are about the worst way to get more solids into the digester," Fischer said. Other experts agree.

'Garburators' and global warming

"If the goal is to recycle the nutrients and organic matter in food scraps, and maybe also capture the energy potential in them, then sending them down a disposal is not the way to go," argues Ned Beecher, executive director of New Hampshire-based Northeast Biosolids and Residuals Association.

The soggy nature of garburator slurry adds to the cost — and carbon footprint — of putting it to good use in a wastewater plant, Beecher said.

A 2014 study conducted by the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency confirms Beecher's bias. It concludes that food scraps in sewage-conveyed treatment systems leaked almost four times more greenhouse gases (notably methane and carbon dioxide) than composting.

Climate-warming gas from landfills totaled more than releases from those other two methods, combined, the study adds. Interestingly, the study found that large, commercial loads of food scraps and slurry — hauled by truck to treatment plants designed specifically to sort, grind and digest that material — actually contributed to a net reduction in atmospheric greenhouse gases.

Anticipating a flush of more food waste to its Williston composting facility next year, Chittenden Solid Waste District is eyeing the possibility of diverting some of that payload to slurry digesters, said spokeswoman Morris.

She hopes Vermonters will also seek solutions higher up on the food chain.

"The first question we should be asking," Morris said, "is 'How can I stop wasting?'"

Contact Joel Banner Baird at 802-660-1843 or joelbaird@freepressmedia.com. Follow him on Twitter @VTgoingUp.

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees; Selectboard; Evan Teich, Unified Manager
From: Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Rob Paluba, IT Director
Re: Update on website redesign
Date: May 24, 2019

Issue

The issue is informing the Trustees and Selectboard about progress for a redesign of municipal websites.

Discussion

Staff continues to work with CivicPlus on the redesign of the Town of Essex website, and had a status update on May 20. A mock site will be ready on May 31, and revisions will be due back to CivicPlus by June 21.

The Village of Essex Junction will keep its primary website, www.essexjunction.org, with the current design and provider. The contract with CivicPlus does not include two separate web designs, as would be required to keep the current essexjunction.org design.

Brownell Library will also continue to have its own website. Other Village websites, such as the Fire Department and Essex Junction Recreation and Parks sites, will be brought into the CivicPlus platform.

All Town of Essex websites will be on the CivicPlus platform.

The survey asking residents for input has received 49 responses thus far, and staff will make another push to solicit input before the survey closes at the end of the month.

Recommendation

This memo is for informational purposes.