



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

Delta Hotel
1117 Williston Rd.
South Burlington, VT 05403
Saturday, June 22, 2019
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

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

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [8:00 AM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION**
 - 8:00 Welcome and Introduction
 - 8:10 Public Comment – 10 minutes
 - 8:20 Strategic Planning Session
 - 10:00 Break
 - 10:15 Strategic Planning Session, continued
 - 11:50 Public Comment – 10 minutes
 - 12:00 Break – Lunch
[Lunch will be provided to board members and staff only]
 - 12:30 Strategic Planning Session, continued
 - 2:20 Public Comment – 10 minutes
 - 2:30 Strategic Planning Session Wrap Up
5. **ADJOURN** [3:00 PM]

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: _____ 06/19/2019 _____ *Am Mitchell*

Strategic Advance



Essex Town +
Essex Junction
June 22, 2019

Strategic Advance – Departmental Reports

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Executive Summary

2020 Is Only the Beginning

Attached you will find a packet of materials for all to review and be ready to work upon at our first Strategic Advance, scheduled for Saturday, June 22nd, at the Delta Hotel from 8:00-3pm. Staff is very excited to be a part of the discussions on building the strategic path forward leading to a public vote in November 2020 and then for what lies beyond that vote.

What is a Strategic Advance and why are we doing it?

A rose by any other name is still a rose, right? This is, at its core, a board retreat. A work session, if you will. But while retreat may give some visions of ice breaker games and golf, our first reaction was the withdraw from enemy forces as a result of their superior power or after a defeat. Other synonyms include: withdraw, pull back, run away etc. We have no intention of retreat, rather we plan to advance and to continue advancing until we reach our goals.

What do you mean 2020 is only the beginning?

The reality is the vote is really only a singular important point in a longer planned journey towards a merged community. The Vote will signify that the electorate legally wants the two communities to be one. But, the work, as defined in the Merger Plan and project timeline will take several years beyond 2020 due to financial and political forces as well as personal preferences. So, November 2020 is really not the end goal in and of itself, but the starting line in a new era.

During the morning of our Strategic Advance we expect to provide insights from the 17 departments on successes in the current environment, challenges of the status quo, and what is yet to be accomplished. Each department was tasked with providing a brief, two page, bullet point list with some narration as to what is going well and what challenges they face in a semi-consolidated state. We planned for the departments who have a counterpart to go together and allow 8-10 minutes each.

Within those department insights, I note several themes in areas that the two boards can help guide and direct us. Please read the reports by the departments and be ready to ask questions.

Summary of Themes:

- The desire for more clarity, communication and removal of ambiguity
- Staying separate is not a good option
- Dealing with me (individual departments) versus us (the organization)
- Customer service first focus

- Managing two organizations- Issues/challenges/perceptions: the perception that “the Town is taking over the Village”, our cultures are different, dealing with the complexity of size and our growing pains, we are not merged yet, the potential for loss of control, changing how and why we do things, and new communication chains
- Staying nimble and collaborative
- Board actions or inaction sends a message
- Asking for permission when it seems that it has already been given

In addition to the staff’s morning session we plan other sections where the elected officials and department heads will work through the process of developing the big picture of Merger 2020 and beyond.

I appreciate that all of you have committed to the giving of a Saturday in June. Our team and our ultimate success rests on all of us coming together and presenting to our public our united vision for the future. To be successful we must create a clear and direct work plan, establish common goals and values, be transparent and inclusive, and perform an extensive amount of outreach. But, most crucial of all, we must accept that if we want to be the best community in the state of Vermont that we can only do so as one community.



Evan Teich, Unified Manager

Fire – Town and Village

- A. Top challenges of the status quo:
- a. Maintaining adequate staffing of paid-on-call volunteers
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
 - b. Funding – Village taxpayer pays towards both departments.
 - c. Strategic Planning
 - Lacking from Management / Boards down
 - Duplication of items, we are still two independent agencies
 - d. Two independent management styles
 - e. Two Departments with unique identity
- B. Top challenges to overcome between here and merger:
- a. Maintaining adequate staffing of paid-on-call volunteers
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
 - b. Funding Mechanism to equalize tax burden across all taxpayers.
 - c. Informing / Educating taxpayers as to how we have been operating for decades already as more joined than independent.
 - d. Continuing work required to align operational policies
- C. Top things that are going well because of the work we've done so far:
- a. Operating policies and procedures
 - b. Equipment similarities

Police Department

ISSUE:

What affect would Town/Village consolidation/merger have on the Essex Police Department operations both short term and long term?

DISCUSSION:

The Essex Police Department already provides police services to both the Town and Village of Essex since 1980. The police department already operates daily in a consolidated format and essentially provides the same services to both Town and Village residents. It is our belief that there will be are very few operational impacts on the police department in a fully consolidated/merged municipality.

One of the largest challenges for the police department in a fully consolidated/merged model will be that the Town and Village have many of their own separate municipal ordinances, enforced by the police that in many cases differ significantly. Different ordinances (or standards) for different areas can often times be difficult & problematic to communicate and enforce.

Examples of such ordinances include;

- Regulations of Alarms
- Regulations on Firearms & Bow & Arrows
- Regulations on Dog (Animals)
- Regulations of soliciting
- Regulations of Noise
- Regulations of Motor Vehicles
- Regulations of Public Indecency
- Regulations of Public Nuisance
- Regulations of Public Streets
- Regulations of Public Parks

RECOMMENDATION:

One of the police department's goals in the next few years is to recommend updated ordinances that will, if possible, be the same for both the Town and Village. We believe this will make compliance easier and enforcement more equitable in many cases.

Public Works – Town

Positive Public Works Consolidation Efforts

- 1) Town and Village crews successfully working together when opportunities arise, such as but not limited to:
 - Town/Village support for Memorial Day Parade
 - Joint safety training
 - Sharing of equipment and facilities– Village water break, vector truck; Town mechanic; landfill disposal area; water meter equipment
 - Catch basin repairs
- 2) Shared contractual work:
 - Joint paving contract
 - Inspections of certain Village projects (paving inspection, storm water grant project inspections) by Town Inspector
 - Development/management of grant applications for the Village by the Town staff
- 3) Joint storm water permit activities

- Joint NPDES Phase 2 permit
 - Joint educational efforts to schools and other groups
 - Joint grants and compliance work
 - Joint summer programs with interns
- 4) Trustee and Board Involvement:
- Elected officials have overall supported the consolidation efforts completed or ongoing to date
 - Consolidated numerous Purchasing Policies into one
 - Financially supportive of budget needs
- 5) Transfer of leadership from previous to new Town Manager
- Accelerated the progress of consolidation at the staff and employee level; currently at a higher plateau
 - Ongoing attempts to change the existing culture (“Village way” or “Town way”) to the “New or Right way” through greater integration of staff and more activities to foster closer relationships and greater understanding of differences
- 6) Organizational improvements
- New HR position has made enormous strides for consistency in policy changes, employee assistance, standardization of procedures, new hiring and employee “onboarding”,
 - Restructuring of Finance. new budget formats, new procedures
 - Increased aligned processes
 - Cultural and communication changes; improved focus

Town/Village Public Works Consolidation Issues/Perspective

1. Direction is needed from the elected officials on a number of issues to include:
 - a) Are further actions to consolidate Public Works on hold until a merger vote is taken?
 Amendment #1 to the Memorandum of Understanding on Public Works consolidation left open the timetable for further consolidation of Public Works. Staff is developing a consolidation plan per the terms of Amendment #1 that can be reviewed and implemented whatever the form of merger that occurs or even if merger of the communities doesn’t occur. Please refer to general organization chart number 1
 - b) How are key vacancies that are currently occurring filled in the interim between now and merger without direction on future structure of the Department?
 - c) The Town and Village have experienced, smart and knowledgeable staff that day in and day out have one element in common – they solve problems. However, to solve a problem it needs to be defined and not constantly moving or changing. The elected officials need to trust staff input but provide clear direction and clear questions so staff can use their time effectively to provide the needed answers. Inaction or delay can create missed opportunities.

2. Current Public Works management/administration, engineering, water quality (wastewater treatment facility), and field operations covering roads, utilities (water and sanitation services), storm water systems are impacted significantly by both consolidation (in the absence of merger) or merger based on the size of the combined community being served. Please refer to the attached table #1
 - a) The Village land area is relatively small (4.7 square miles), has concentrated development and is mostly built out. The utility infrastructure is generally older than the Towns; the primary emphasis is on maintenance and repair, all the roads are paved, most of the infrastructure is in place; new development is primarily redevelopment of existing sites.
 - b) The Town is relatively large (39.3 square miles), has both concentrated and dispersed development, has significantly more road miles and 1/3 of the Town's road mileage are gravel roads with unique problems; besides routine maintenance and repair, new infrastructure and development continues to occur with little redevelopment of properties.
 - c) Size matters as does the type of management needed to provide quality services!
3. Staff has a concern that many of the elected officials do not have a full understanding of how Public Works actually operates in each community; how lack of adequate facilities impacts operations; how contract services are used and when and why it is appropriate to do so; how current and past "cultural and operational differences" impact current and future operations and why this needs to change to enable a successful consolidation or merger. There needs to be a "new way" defined and drop the terms "Village way" or "Town way"
4. There are issues that must be addressed prior to providing residents with the appropriate answers so that they can make an informed decision on merger. Answers are needed now and not in six or 8 months if a merger vote is to occur in November of 2020. Public Works, Finance and the Unified Manager currently have the experience and background needed to provide direction/input on issues such as:
 - a) Merging of rolling stock funding
 - b) Capital planning consolidation and joint funding of capital projects
 - c) Utility management and operations merger and methods to achieve a common basis for rate structures
 - d) Utilization of impact fees to reduce taxes
 - e) Adoption of common standards for construction
 - f) Development of a contract services agreement for the designated Village engineer (i.e., job description)
 - g) A Public Works organizational plan that works with or without merger and incorporates succession planning for a smooth consolidation/transition

Development of action plans on these issues take time and a lot of collective effort. We all have day jobs that need to be done to meet the immediate needs of the community. Work on these issues needs to be recognized as a priority over taking on new issues over the next 6 to 12 months.

Public Works – Village

- We get to use Essex landfill for dumping (we had to find other spots to dump stuff)
- Paving bid (we do bids different and it is taking some adjustment)
- More employees if needed (Memorial Day parade)
- Share equipment (ss5000 saves town \$, added hours on the machine)
- Engineering
- AP more work now with new stamp, takes a lot longer to fill out. We have part time employees help out.
- Two offices (not a one stop shopping any more)
- More management to deal with
- Different expectations for employees (and pay)
- I.T. (internet, computer and copier issues)
- Share information for making decisions in village (communication with me could be better)
- Village shares water meter equipment with town

Libraries – Essex Free and Brownell

Essex Free Library and Brownell Library Alignment Progress

Essex Free Library and the Brownell Library have formed a very positive working relationship. Communication has greatly improved, and the libraries are taking more opportunities to collaborate.

Successes

- Communication and collaboration continue to grow between the libraries.
- Together, Essex Free and Brownell applied for and received a rotary grant to fund our joint “Welcome Baby” program. As part of this program, each new baby born in the community receives a free board book. In September 2019, the libraries plan to co-host a Welcome Baby event for all new babies born in the community. The libraries hope to make this an annual event.
- Essex Free and Brownell collaborated with Essex Cinemas to run a book swap. The funds and books donated during the event benefited both libraries.
- The libraries will be sharing some programming expenses for the 2019 Summer Reading Program.
- Together, the libraries applied for a grant from the rotary club to fund a joint library event with the Vermont Institute of Natural Science.

- During Essex Free's difficult transition after the passing of Ann Paietta, the Brownell staff and board generously offered their support if needed.
- There is greater communication between the library boards. The chairpersons of the two library boards have been in regular contact.
- As Essex Free has been developing its procedures manual, it has adopted some of Brownell's established operational and safety procedures. The libraries have also briefly discussed aligning certain departmental policies such as social media and a library-specific dress code.
- The library directors communicate often, either in person or by phone or email to provide updates or simply to touch base with one another.
- Sharing Sarah Macy as a supervisor has helped the library directors work together and communicate more effectively.
- Essex Free and Brownell continue to hold library hours on alternating evenings in order to make certain that community members always have a library they can visit during evening hours. Brownell is open on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings. Essex Free is open on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- The libraries share the expense and service of one electronic resource. There are other potential opportunities to share electronic resources in the future.

Challenges

- The libraries have different governing structures and are run by two separate boards.
- The libraries receive additional funding from separate sources. Brownell receives funds from the Brownell Library Foundation, and Essex Free receives funds from its Friends of the Library group.
- Job descriptions and titles may be challenging to align as librarian duties vary.
- There is a slight discrepancy between staff members' salaries and grades/levels.
- The pay rate of substitutes is much higher at Essex Free than Brownell. This difference in pay makes it difficult to share substitutes.
- Technology is run very differently in each library. Brownell has more administrative privileges in its technology and has been given the opportunity to develop and maintain its own website. Essex Free should be given the same rights.

Libraries - Brownell

We have worked towards a more productive relationship with our fellow library Essex Free Library (EFL) for several years.

In 2013, EFL migrated to the shared ILS (Integrated library System) that Brownell has been on since 2010. As we both use this shared system (along with 58 libraries in Vermont), we have a lot of similar procedures due to our agreement with the VOKAL/Green Mountain Library Consortium, and the same ILS.

Our communication has improved exponentially with EFL. In 2015, our communication was enhanced with 3 regular part-time staff from Brownell taking on substitute assistant hours at Essex Free. We also have worked to compliment services to reduce costs, like Essex Free paying for Mango languages since 2013, an online language learning service paid for by population. Previous to 2013, Brownell and EFL both paid for the Mango service separately. In 2017, we also worked together to share a collection development tool that Brownell previously had purchased in print format, and we now share an online Ebsco Core Collections database, which benefits both libraries with ease of access and being more up to date.

We have united efforts for a number of programs. We've applied jointly and coordinated Vermont Reads grants and events since 2014. Our youth departments have worked together for Rotary funding for programs in the past year. This summer there is a concerted effort to complement summer reading program schedules.

In 2018, EFL went through a difficult transition with their Director Ann Paietta dying. This ultimately has been a bonding experience with our libraries. Brownell staff supported EFL through this tough transition assisting in providing expertise in a number of areas to help them move forward with better documentation and alignment of procedures when possible. Our libraries continue to serve different populations with Brownell being a community hub that residents of the Village across generations can access without relying on vehicle transportation, unless they choose to.

As of now, our communication has never been better with EFL, with Directors Wendy and Caitlin in regular touch – some times daily, generally weekly – about different library topics.

Pro and cons of alignment, from the Brownell perspective:

Personnel

- Pay equity – salaries for different responsibilities really needs an equity study between libraries. Substitute rates at EFL are significantly higher, which has resulted in some recruitment and hiring difficulty for Brownell for this similar role. From studies throughout Vermont, there is a lot of pay disparity among library staff. As libraries have

evolved, there are differing roles and responsibilities for each position and how much traffic libraries see - we expect this this is the case for Brownell and EFL as well.

- If the municipalities were to merge, there would likely be additional costs as we have part-time employees who work at each library and their combined hours would result in receiving additional benefits.

Information Technology

- Brownell plans and manages technology for both library staff and the public, EFL does not. Both nationally, and with libraries within the Chittenden County area, libraries either have in-house staff, or plan technology internally with implementation assistance from municipal IT or outside vendors. It is a significant concern of Brownell staff, and the Brownell Library Board of Trustees that there is not a more collaborative relationship with EFL and Town IT. The backbone of library services is technology, from checking books in and out, to digital services. Providing library services through technology requires a different approach than standard office technology.
- Brownell continues to struggle with customizing 2 copy/printers that were replaced with a joint Town/Village contract, and pays at least \$1000 more annually for this new contract, which is time and funding that could have been saved with better collaboration from Town IT.

Governance

- Brownell and EFL have different Board structures. Brownell's Board of Trustees acts in an advisory role overseeing Brownell, strategic planning and setting Brownell policy. The EFL Board has full power to manage the library (per 22 V.S.A. § 143).

Administration

- Changes in Finance from 2 separate departments to one unified department has been bumpy, but improving. More in depth coding of invoices was turned over to Village departments in 2016. When Finance moved to 81 Main St., new workflows were developed and we experienced a slight increase in invoices disappearing. Another hurdle will be migrating to paperless invoicing, but we also expect the disappearance of invoices to end with this new system.
- With the creation of a unified Human Resources position, there have been benefits from having someone dedicate time to improving the unified employee experience. There has also been significant time invested among staff and department heads in providing feedback to align policies and procedures for hiring, dress code and background checks. Brownell has appreciated many aspects of how the Village has managed HR policies and procedures, and would like to see that aspect of Village culture preserved as new policies and procedures are implemented.
- Communication continues to be a work in progress, from internal to external communications, between departments, municipalities and with the public. The Administration has made progress with an employee newsletter, weekly updates from the Unified Manager, and more interaction from the Administration Management Team.

- It would be helpful to be given better timelines and more coordinated deadlines for any alignment projects or requests from Administration staff to departments that are already working hard to provide expected services.
- Brownell Library under Village oversight has a positive relationship among staff, Library Board of Trustees and Village departments. It has impacted morale and productivity investing time in alignment efforts when ultimately what we are working for is an unknown and what we have works so well.

Essex Junction Recreation and Parks (EJRP)

Things Going Well – Related to Consolidation

- Town/Village in-service opportunities
- Preparation for co-location
 - Conversations, meetings, socials, joint work, committees
- Shared funding for Communications Coordinator
- Shared funding for joint strategic plan and facility feasibility study
- Joint management of Essex Area Senior Center/Program Director – Senior Services
- Forthcoming proposed parks ordinances for Village & Town

Current Challenges – Related to Consolidation

- Having some in Essex be residents and other non-residents
- Breaking down the barrier of “us” vs “them” and “ours” vs “theirs” mentality by all – community, elected officials, staff
- Tax inequity related to recreation
- Coming up on some significant capital needs (beyond capital plan) in next few years
 - Maple Street building 20-years old
 - Maple Street pool 20-years old
 - Skatepark life ending – replace or not?
 - Maple Street basketball & tennis court underlying surface in disrepair
 - Maple Street parking lot heaving

Future Opportunities – Related to Consolidation

- To have conversations about parks and recreation using a holistic view of the entire community
- To identify recreation facility needs for our community and seek funding to support those needs/infrastructure

Essex Parks and Recreation (EPR)

Alignment/Consolidation: Things going well

- Online timesheet system

- Co-Locating to one working office (Fall 2019): one phone number, website, admin. office location.
- Creating work-flow efficiencies with streamlined customer service and increased work focus for those not at the front desk
- Creating one set of transaction policies and procedures (refund, cancellation, scholarship, facilities, etc.)
- One brochure, one registration timeline/schedule
- Three positions co-managed by both department directors (communications, front desk, PD-Senior Services)
- Teambuilding initiatives to bring both department staff together – everyone on board, feeling like we are moving in the right direction as one larger unit
- Sharing resources: from equipment to staff coverage
- Unifying park ordinances along with EPD
- Merging recreation & maintenance software accounts & databases

Alignment/Consolidation: Current Challenges

- Different office hours: 7:30am – 4:30pm vs. 8am – 4pm + late childcare needs
- Different holiday/snow day schedules: what days are we open?
- Union vs. non-union employees between Town and Village in the same building
- Fee schedules
- Afterschool Enrichment (EJRP) has their own transportation VS. Extended School Program (EPR) has to contract out one-way transportation
- Fees will never align/match for affordability purposes
- (R) = Resident: all Essex community VS. (V) = Village only resident VS. (NR) = Outside of Essex community
- Constant feeling of divide: how can we pretend to work together in “all” aspects but still remain separate for the long-term?
- What happens to EPR if co-location doesn’t work? Where will we go? How will we “go back” to working without their counterparts?
- Potential of “un-merging” recreation & maintenance software account/database back to two
- Two separate accounts = constant splitting of pennies
- Continued competition
- Low staff morale regarding fairness, work load struggles
- Who are we in the end? If we stay as two, in one main location, do we continue to hold two separate identities? How do we re-establish trust in the communities we serve?

Community Development – Town

What will alignment look like?

The important elements of aligning the Town and Village Community Development Departments are:

- Dissolve 2 Planning Commissions
- Dissolve 2 Zoning Boards
- Create 1 Planning Commission
- Create 2 Development Review Boards
- Develop one Town Plan with one “Vision”
- Create a Unified Development Code
- Co-locate in one building
- Align the fee structures
- Align the application forms
- Align policies and procedures

The main tasks were recommended in the Thoughtful Growth in Action (TGIA) process. Many of these will be complicated, political and expensive. The entire process will take a number of years. There will be many subtasks to the above which will demand time and attention too, as the years go by.

When we talk about ‘hitting a wall’ with alignment I feel it in our Community Development Department a lot. Even when we try some low hanging fruit, such as aligning the application forms, we soon hit problems because our regulations are completely different from the Village’s, as are our fees.

The Essex Community Development Department is being required to pursue alignment initiatives, some of which the organization hasn’t yet established readiness. At least not from where we sit. We sense mixed messages.

For example, Department Heads are required to do 5-Year Strategic Plans. In my mind, that would be an ‘alignment’ Strategic Plan with the Village Community Development Department. We would lay out a plan to achieve the above-bulleted items. We would work closely with Robin Pierce and his department on this task.

However, contrary to a push for alignment, I have recently been told to do a 5-Year Strategic Plan just for the Town Community Development Department. ‘Going backwards’ on something like a Strategic Plan creates confusion and stress for our department.

The Good News

For several years, the Town Community Development Department has made a point of sending the Village Planning Commission all our agendas and encouraging them to come to our meetings. A few times a year we organize joint meetings. They are always invited to events where there is food, movies, and outside speakers.

In the past year, we have done a joint Records Retention Plan, a joint Housing Needs Assessment, and a joint Energy Plan. These efforts have been challenging because we are two quite different organizations and we have different timetables. Planning can take twice as long under the current structure.

Community Development – Village

- No consolidation occurring in Community Development.
- The Village is (currently) doing a Comprehensive Plan ‘Lite’ to set up the opportunity to merge the two Municipal Plans into one when the Town Plan is up for renewal.
- There is some uncertainty, especially with the ZBA, as to what will happen if the Municipal Plans are merged. This would mean one Planning Commission for the two entities, and two DRB’s. One for each municipality. Not everyone is in favor of that model.
- The satellite nature of the Village offices means that sometimes changes decided at the Town offices that affect processes that are also handled at the Village may not be communicated ahead of changes going into effect.
- One of the main challenges is that there are not enough employees in the Village offices to maintain 2 staff at all times, which is the staffing protocol for the office.
- Residents are confused by the changes and sometimes aggravated that they can’t take care of all their business in the Village office.
- 2 Lincoln Street is an important and very visible building at the heart of the Village. We should ensure that activities occurring in the building are commiserate with this fact.

Assessing

The Assessing Department for Essex is accountable, by statute, for maintaining an assessment system that develops fair and equitable values for all classes of property for both the Town and Village. Values are listed each year in the Grand List to ensure that property owners of such property all pay their fair and equitable share of the tax burden based upon the values. The property valuations are relied upon to set tax rates necessary to raise the money to operate both the Town and Village.

An Assessor does not create the changes in property value, they simply are legally charged to recognize changes as they occur. In order for an Assessor to recognize these changes; they rely heavily on zoning permits.

With that said, the Town and Village Community Development Departments work cohesively with the Assessing Department to ensure that all copies of applications for zoning permits and/or copies of zoning permits are submitted to the Assessing Department. As well as the Assessors are invited in attending zoning permit and/or certificate of occupancy certification inspections.

What is considered a challenge in regards to having two different Community Development Departments is, the different requirements for zoning permits and/or certificate of compliance certifications that pertains to any construction or structural alteration of any building or structure buildings, accessory buildings, decks, pools, interior alterations to living space, etc.

Due to these differences, values are not considered fair and equitable.

Clerk/Treasurer

What is going well so far related to consolidation of the two communities:

- Cooperation among staff and getting to know each other
- Establishment of teams and clearly defining who each department head reports to
- Combining the property tax bills, Excellent!

Challenges under the current status quo are

- I am a Village employee supervising two full-time town employees, different union contract, personnel regulations, etc. than I am used to.
- Payments. All payments to the town and village end up at the clerk's office at 81 Main Street. During tax collection time this process can result in thousands of dollars being carried daily between 2 Lincoln and 81 Main.
- Water billing. Village water bills and town water bills are mailed out two weeks apart in May and November. It is cumbersome to have to track different due dates, different late penalties, etc.
- Finding time to perform "Village Clerk" duties and remain involved in Village office has been difficult –staffing issues at the town office kept me from being able to work out of 2 Lincoln at all.
- Not having all administrative staff in same building all of the time.(Finance, manager, planning & zoning, etc.) leads to communication issues.
- Elections: Going from running one election per year to six in 2020 is a big jump. Even this year with just town meetings was not easy. Finishing one election in March and getting a second one ready for April was challenging.

Information Management

- The commitment by the boards to meet jointly on a more frequent basis has sent a positive message to employees and residents about our intention to work together and do the right things for the taxpayers and the employees, regardless of the outcome.
- The IT function serves all entities within the Village and Town as one—not from a political standpoint but because those that truly understand information technology, information security, or anything about the current state of cybercrime know that IT is infrastructure that needs to be diligently maintained, updated and safeguarded to preserve our data and assets.

- I would like to see our board members collectively deliver more positive, consistent messages to the public and the employees of both entities to present a strong and united front about the veracity of the unification process—again, whether the decision is ultimately to fully combine or not.
- In doing so, I believe we will neutralize the "us and them" attitudes that, while expected during times like this, can also be mitigated for the benefit of all involved.
 - The lack of active efforts to neutralize negativity has led to obstructionist attitudes, which saps morale and drains productivity.

Administration

What is going well

1. Buy in. A majority of the departments, employees, and all of the senior management team has bought into merger. Town and Village employees are really starting to get to know each other, working well together and are looking for joint projects. They want to provide excellent services and see that this is one way to be able to do it. Examples include In-Service Day, town-wide planning (energy, housing, etc.), stormwater.
2. We have found areas for new savings, new ways to increase productivity (Paperless AP), and increased our cooperation amongst departments
3. The 2 boards get along, are not fighting, and generally want this to work. They have chosen a date to work towards (November 2020), which makes for a more tangible goal.
4. We have seen a real spirit of collaboration amongst departments. Departments that have consolidated have integrated people and personalities and are working collaboratively, despite facing challenges of efficiency (see below).

Challenges

1. *Running two separate municipalities and trying to manage the merger process; budgets, boards, board meetings, culture, contracts, history, goals, etc.
2. Establishing a unified organization without 17 (departmental) exceptions to everything
3. *Time: working in the time and availability of 10 elected officials who have full time jobs and families while trying to keep the momentum of such a large endeavor. Finding the time to take on additional projects (expected and unexpected) while trying to meet the deadline of November 2020 (really April 2020) for a massive project to potentially overhaul two governments.
4. Thinking; it takes a whole lot of thinking and coordinating. The tasks at hand are complicated and there is the fear of unintended consequences. Example: how does doing X effect Y
5. We need both boards' buy-in and it is a challenge to get 10 people to agree on issues that are very complicated and emotional such as taxes, service levels or identity.
6. Not having one person who is the driving force, ie. a Village President, Selectboard Chair or a Mayor who has the authority and/or will to be the force leading the effort
7. Dealing with history, lingering feelings, and ambiguity

8. Potential for burnout. Running two separate municipalities (see above) is hard and takes a lot of time, lot of extra meetings, etc.
9. *Uncertainty. Long-term planning is hard when we don't know the future of our organizations. For example, when we have job openings in a department, are we hiring for that one department's needs, or for the needs of a department that may be consolidated in a year or two?
10. *Answering to two bosses (aka boards). Usually the boards are on the same page, but there have been some instances – and there is always the potential – that boards could give differing directives to the manager and organization.
11. Focusing on the end result of governance change vote in 2020. No plan will be satisfactory to everyone, and if people oppose the entire plan because of one detail or another, there will ultimately be no plan. We need to know what are “deal-breakers” that would prevent successful governance change.

Human Resources

Things going well

- Unions and Associations understand that we are moving towards a goal of one community and as such one employer and they have taken pro-active steps towards aligning contracts and policies.
- Town and Village departments such as recreation, library, and community development have begun working and planning together to align needs, staffing resources, policies.
- Town and Village benefits are being administered through one staff member which improves consistency and allows for opportunities to pursue joint ventures and identify inequities such as rate discrepancies.
- Items such as workers compensation and leave administration are now being administered in a unified manner across the Town and the Village.
- The joint safety committee has been very successful so far and has already worked towards creating efficiencies in SDS and tier 2 requirements, joint safety trainings, and aligning and interpreting policies and benefits such as safety equipment reimbursements.
- The employee newsletter and joint department head meetings, as well as Evan's email updates have been very helpful in increasing transparency and communication around a variety of issues including HR.
- We have overall seen buy in across the organizations and we have seen collaboration amongst Town and Village departments. Departments are receptive to learning how their counterparts operate and finding efficiencies among varying methods.

Challenges

- Acting as the HR Director for two unique municipalities is a challenge. The Town and Village differ in pay scales, benefits, policies, hiring procedures, etc. Working in human resources in two very different environments can create major challenges.

- Creating a unified pay structure will be a major challenge. If we become one employer we will need to strive for pay equity and there are currently several departments where this does not exist. Without always going to the highest pay grade, annual pay increase structure, etc. this will be very challenging to align.
- Aligning benefits across the organization will be a major challenge. This is something we are working on now as contract negotiations occur. Similar to the challenges with pay structures it is difficult to align benefits without always going to the highest benefit. As with pay we will need to have similar benefits across the organization when we ultimately become one municipality.
- The unions and associations will be a challenge. Specifically it is unknown what will happen with both AFSCME in the Town and the local Association in the Village when we merge.
- Navigating two very distinct cultures while finding my place/role within each. Human Resources has historically been handled and utilized in very different ways in both the Town and the Village. The Town and the Village also have very unique cultures. Trying to find my footing within each municipality without stepping on toes has been a challenge.
- Creating joint policies and procedures has been a challenge. The Town and the Village in many areas have unique policies and procedures relating to Human Resources. In addition, due to the fact that the Village has not previously had a dedicated HR department, there are many department specific policies/procedures. Establishing joint policies and procedures without having multiple departmental exceptions has been a major challenge.
- Overall uncertainty will always be a challenge. There is no way of knowing how policies, procedures, benefits, pay structures, union/association status, etc. will play out. There are so many variables in play that will impact all of these items moving forward. I think fear of the unknown is a challenge for all of us.

Finance

What's going well:

- Finance is a great team – all support the vision, merger/consolidation/alignment efforts and each other.
- Finance has worked hard at and achieved redundancy for all finance tasks to cover for planned and unplanned leave time, and to support each other during busy time. This has been made possible by the increased number of finance staff available through consolidation.
- Some things have truly been consolidated: One operating cash account, one process for accounts payable, one accounting system, one purchasing policy.
- The move toward paperless invoice processing has been the catalyst for cleaning up the vendor list and making the process more efficient

Challenges of Status Quo:

- The vast majority of finance tasks are not consolidated – they are all processed by the one department but processed in parallel.
 - o Two payroll systems – Both are processed weekly for a Friday pay date which means the processing is happening in parallel. The two systems are set up differently – we are working to align paytypes and processes but it’s a slow process. We have to be mindful of three union contracts, two personnel manuals which contrast greatly in many areas (we have an ongoing list)
 - o Two water/sewer billing/collection systems – billing frequency is different (working to align that); different rate structures (usage only billing versus a combination fixed fee and usage fee); the two public works departments are sharing equipment which means they have to take turns; we have an ongoing list documenting differences
 - o Two charts of accounts in one general ledger
- In running the finances of two entities on the same fiscal cycle the major tasks all fall at the same time: two budgets, two audits, and two sets of financial statements (Sep-Jan); these are “all hands on deck” top priority tasks in one municipality – we are doing it for two.
- While some things are aligned and consolidated, those that are not contribute more and more to actual and perceived inequality. The feeling of this one thing has been consolidated, why hasn’t this other thing been done yet? Or more tangible issues like the inherent tax inequity cause by the Village paying 42% (on a grand list basis) of the Town budget. Every move we make with the money has a circular effect – it’s not a 1:1 impact of moving money out of the Village budget and into the Town budget, but it’s a start.
- Accounts Receivable – Town departments produce, mail and monitor their own misc. accounts receivable; Finance produces, mails and monitors those invoices on the village side.
- Grants Management – Finance has a varying level of involvement depending on the entity and the department; Stormwater grants are more frequently administering grants jointly which presents unique accounting complexity.
- Fixed assets are tracked and summarized differently between the two entities.
- The inherent complexities of governmental accounting combined with the complexities of the financial relationship between the Town and Village add to the challenge of explaining what’s happening with the finances. It’s so big, messy and intertwined that boiling anything down so it can be used in decision making is challenging.

Challenges to be tackled between here and merger:

- How do we accomplish tax equity? How do we boil down all the variables into understandable components, how do we make it palatable? How do we make it understandable

- How are we going to do (plan, fund, recognize, account for) capital together? Whether we merge or not?
- A new, consolidated chart of accounts – designing, implementing and learning will be a challenge for everyone.
- A merged budget – designing, implementing and learning will be a challenge for everyone.
- How do we move from two Employer Identification Numbers (EIN) to one EIN? Design systems for payroll that are most efficient and then move both systems onto one.
- Consolidating the two water/sewer systems – how do we merge them together in NEMRC? What would the plan be to equalize rates? What is the best way to do water/sewer?

Finance is a fundamental support function of the municipalities and any changes in Finance have ripple effects (similar to changes in HR, IT, and to a certain extent administration). Change will always be hard, managing the process will be key. Whether we revert to a prior state as two entities, stay as we are now, or move toward merger there will be significant changes coming from Finance. Merger is a great opportunity for Finance to look at every process (whether already consolidated or not) and define for the organization the best way to go forward, not just the preferred of the multiple current methods.

Community Comparison Page 1 of 2

Item	Essex Junction	Essex	Combined	Williston	South Burlington	Colchester	Burlington
Daily water usage	.59MGD plus GF at 3.43MGD	.77MGD	1.36MGD plus GF at 3.43 MGD	.7 MGD	1.72 MGD	.73 MGD	
Municipal water lines	34.41 miles	59.01 miles	93.42 miles	61.56 miles	100 miles	77.5 miles 3 Fire Districts	110 miles
Municipal hydrants	379	474	853	653	668	714	
Municipal Sewer Pump Stations	8	16	24	10	35	10	25
Municipal gravity sewer lines	29.98 miles	30.08 miles	60.06 miles	38.20 miles	80 miles	16 miles	
Municipal sewer manholes	774	873	1647	937	1600	220	
Wastewater treatment facility	1	0	1	0	2	0	3
Municipal storm lines	28.44 miles	30.29 miles	58.73 miles	19.47 miles	97 miles	20.86	
Municipal catch basins	1335	1176	2511	839	3151	1019	
Municipal sidewalks	39.6 miles	52.9 miles	92.5 miles	Not obtained	Not obtained	Not obtained	
Municipal culverts	TBD	680	Minimum 680	690	664	188	
Total municipal paved road mileage	34.82 miles	52.54 miles	87.36 miles	63.59 miles	83.2 miles	79.60 miles	
Total gravel road mileage	0 miles	23.12 miles	23.12 miles	10.00 miles	.5 miles	12.70 miles	
Total municipal road mileage	34.82 miles	75.66 miles	110.48 miles	73.59 miles	81.40 miles	92.30 miles	94.63 miles
Municipal signalized traffic intersections	7	7	14	4	21	2	

Strategic Advance Planning WORKBOOK

Prepared for the Joint Board / Trustee
Work Session of June 22, 2019

The process of developing a responsive governance proposal and potential merger plan is a complex one. This “road map” identifies key conversations and work products prior to the merger vote on November 2020.

The following pages outline a phased approach and suggest key activities, responsible parties and timelines. Notice something missing? Make a note of it so that the group can “pin” the conversation within the outline and plan to return to the topic at a later date.

Instructions:

1. **Browse document to become acquainted with the different questions/tasks** that will need to be considered regarding potential governance *and* operational systems.
2. **Use this document as a workbook:** What key questions are missing? What additional conversations need to be had – and when is the best time to have them? Write in the margins so that entries may be updated and added.
3. **Next Step: The observations you share will be used to inform coordination efforts going forward.** Additional notes that are not shared at the Strategic Advance meeting may be turned in to Ann Janda.

<p>June 22 Strategic Advance</p> <p>A. Establish Planning Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to make Decisions Roles and Responsibilities Communication Plan – Internal Articulate Rationale / Why
<p>Summer 2019</p> <p>B. Strategic Planning, Public Research & Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete <i>Current</i> Shared Services Plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Priority: Complete PW Organizational <input type="checkbox"/> Review & Approve Tasks Public Research & Education-Outreach Plan – External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Gather public input on merger <input type="checkbox"/> Establish Web Page for information <input type="checkbox"/> Draft Public Education & Outreach Plan
<p>Fall 2019 – Winter 2020</p> <p>C. Develop Governance Proposal & Merger Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Plan(s) for unconsolidated Departments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Rec <input type="checkbox"/> Community Development Draft Governance Plan & Develop Transition Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Entity - determine <input type="checkbox"/> Representation <input type="checkbox"/> Voting Schedules <input type="checkbox"/> Governance Structures Develop Transition Plan for Finances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Equity Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Concepts for Single Budget Develop Contingency Plan if vote does not pass Further Engage Public Education & Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Information, Q&A
<p>Summer – Fall 2020</p> <p>D. Lead-up to November 2020 Vote</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare Question for Ballot Public Hearings
<p>Winter 2021 – FY23/25</p> <p>E/F. Transition / Post-Vote Steps</p>

A. Establish Planning Structures

Purpose: Create reliable and transparent decision-making processes, internal communication plans and expectations so that decision-makers can respond consistently and efficiently to developments.

Time Frame: June 22, 2019 Joint Board – Trustee Work Session

Task / Question	Responsible Parties	Next Step (date, time)
1. Establish structure & frequency of meetings		COMPLETE. Bi-weekly meetings have been set.
2. Determine internal decision-making procedures	Board / Trustees: decide	June 22, 2019 Work Session
3. Affirm Roles & Responsibilities	Board / Trustees: decide Staff: Inform	June 22, 2019 Work Session
4. Establish internal communication Plan	Board / Trustees: decide Governance Sub Committee: recommend Staff: Inform	Preliminary options to be discussed at June 22 Work Session, anticipated to be approved by Governance Sub Committee
5. Retain Resources / Expertise	Board / Trustees: decide Staff: Inform	COMPLETE.
6. Establish legal timelines for Merger Vote – assuming November 2020		COMPLETE. See Board / Trustee Packet of June 2, 2019.
7. Articulate Rationale / Why. Provides a foundation for many of the decisions and choice-points to follow in the merger planning process. Informs general messaging.	Board / Trustees: Inform and Decide Staff: Inform	June 22, 2019 Work Session – Initial Q's to be explored and discussed at the meeting; fine-tuning/editing of rationale for messaging purposes may need to be delegated.

B. Strategic Planning, Public Research and Education

Purpose: Includes preparation for activities leading up to the merger vote, including municipal planning and operational readiness. Outlines priorities, differentiates between pre-vote and post-vote tasks, develops materials to support public engagement and understanding of options.

Timeframe: Summer 2019

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Questions/Topics to Consider
1. Complete <i>Current</i> Shared Services Plans. Priority: Complete Organizational chart of Public Works	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	
2. Complete <i>Current</i> Shared Services Plans: Review & Approve additional tasks / asks if applicable. Any clarifications needed in order to proceed?	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	
3. Develop External Public Education and Outreach Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather public input on merger • Establish Web Page for information & FAQ's • Draft Public Education & Outreach Plan 	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	

Summer 2019 Strategic Planning, Public Research & Education *Continued...*

Task	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider

NOTES

C. Develop Governance Proposal and Merger Plan

Rationale: Complete components of the Merger Plan Proposal. This is will be articulated in draft charter proposal.

Timeframe: Fall 2019 – Winter/Spring 2020

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider
1. Develop Plans for Unconsolidated Departments – Library	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	
2. Develop Plans for Unconsolidated Departments – Fire	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	
3. Develop Plans for Unconsolidated Departments – Rec	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	
4. Develop Plans for Unconsolidated Departments – Community Development	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	
5. Develop Preferred Governance Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation • Voting Schedules 	Board / Trustees: Approve Public & Staff: Recommend & inform	

C. Develop Governance Proposal and Merger Plan, *Continued*

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider
6. Propose Name of Entity	Board / Trustees: Approve Public & Staff: Recommend & inform	
7. Draft Transition Plan for Governance post-Nov 2020 Vote if Merge is passed	Board / Trustees: Approve Public & Staff: Recommend & inform	
8. Develop Transition Plan for Finances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax Equity Plan • Concepts for Single Budget 	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	
9. Develop Contingency Plan if Merger Vote does not pass	Board / Trustees: Approve Public & Staff: Recommend & inform	
10. Engage Education & Public Outreach	Staff/Board/Trustees	

C. Develop Governance Proposal and Merger Plan, *Continued...*

Task	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider

NOTES

D. Lead-up to November 2020 Vote

Rationale: Follow due process per Title 24: Municipal And County Government Chapter 49: Merger Of Municipalities , to seek approval of a Plan to Merge. See : <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/24/049>

Time Frame: August – October 2020

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Next Step (date, time)
1. Prepare question Ballot	Board / Trustees: Approve Staff: Recommend & inform	Prior to August 2020
2. Get wording to Sec. of State for printing on ballot (TOWN)	Clerk's Office	Due August 21, 2020
3. Order Ballots for Village vote (VILLAGE)	Clerk's Office	Due August 24, 2020
4. Warn Public Hearings at a regular or special board meeting	Board/Trustees	By September 8, 2020
5. Notice of Public hearings published in Essex Reporter (§1484)	Staff	October 1, 8, 15, 2020:
6. Post copies of Plan of Merger in 3-4 public places	Clerk/Staff	By October 4, 2020
7. First Public hearing (TOWN) (VSA Title 24 §1484) NOTE- THIS DATE IS A TOWN HOLIDAY	<i>Note: Each municipality has their 1st public hearing at least two weeks before the second public hearing -- suggested two separate dates, but they could probably do it on the same date (different times).</i>	October 12, 2020
8. First Public hearing (VILLAGE) (VSA Title 24 §1484)	Board/Trustees	October 13, 2020
9. Second Public hearing (TOWN) (VSA Title 24 §1484)	Board/Trustees	October 26, 2020
10. Second Public Hearing (VILLAGE VSA Title 24 1484)	Board/Trustees	October 27, 2020

D. Lead-up to November 2020 Vote, *Continued...*

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider
11. Vote on Plan of Merger	Town and Village Voters	November 3, 2020
12. Notify Sec of State...	Clerk of each municipality to notify Secretary of State by this date	By November 13, 2020

E. Transition / Post-Vote Steps – After the November 2020 Vote

If vote Passes...

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider
1. Approval of Merger	General Assembly, State of VT	

If Vote Does Not Pass...

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider

F. Notes for Transitional Government Phase, 2020 vote through FY 23/25

Task & Status	Responsible Parties	Questions / Topics to Consider

Instructions: For individual participant use to organize thinking. Jot down questions / concerns that arise when you evaluate what it would mean for the Village and the TOV to become a single, unified entity. Raise ideas in group discussion where appropriate. If, by the end of the day, reservations remain that you have not discussed in the group, you are invited to share this document with Ann Janda, Project Manager, to incorporate into future planning discussions.

Q: What challenges / obstacles exist to bringing the Village and the Town-Outside-The-Village into a single, unified entity?

General	
Culture & Recreation	Public Safety
Public Works and Utilities	General Government (Clerk, Treasurer, Admin)
Governance	Economic Development

Worksheet from the Strategic Advance: June 22, 2019

Instructions: For individual participant use to organize thinking. Jot down questions / concerns that arise when you evaluate what it would mean for the Village and the TOV to become a single, unified entity. Raise ideas in group discussion where appropriate. If, by the end of the day, reservations remain that you have not discussed in the group, you are invited to share this document with Ann Janda, Project Manager, to incorporate into future planning discussions.

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