

7/13 Trustee Work Session on Essex Junction Independence

On July 13, the Trustees held a work session on Essex Junction Independence. The following is what was discussed.

The Trustees reviewed the three statutory options for contracting services with another municipality, which include an interlocal contract, forming a union municipal district, or through an intermunicipal police services agreement. The specific statutes are: 24 V.S.A. § 4801-4933 and 24 V.S.A. § 1938.

There was consensus to use interlocal contracts for any contracting of services or other agreements with the Town of Essex.

The Trustees discussed some of their goals in creating a contract with the Town of Essex for police services. Their goals include: a contract for law enforcement, dispatch, community justice, and the police facility. A long-term, interlocal contract – however, they would be open to discussing a union municipal district sometime in the future. To ensure that the work of the equity and inclusion group is incorporated. Have a say in police influence and oversight. Not have a financial relationship that is based on a fee for service or on calls for service, but something more formulaic that is consistent - the grand list seems most appropriate. Align ordinances as best as possible with the Town. Discuss shared revenues and grants.

The Trustees discussed that if the independence effort fails at some point along the way, they will have to examine when and why. However, they currently are on a path towards separation. They want staff to prepare as such and begin to look at unraveling consolidations. They do not want to continue another fiscal year of co-location of the recreation departments at 75 Maple Street without sharing the expenses of the facility.

Elaine Haney provided an update of the Our Village, Our Voices initiative. They have a website: <https://www.ourvillageourvoices.org>. There are a number of FAQ's for people to learn more about independence. They are hosting a free evening of swimming for Village residents at the Maple Street Pool on Thursday, July 22, from 6-8p.m. There will also be an Essex Junction Trivia Night at Firebird Café on Wednesday, July 28, from 6-8p.m. with free chips & salsa.

The Trustees updated their meeting schedule and discussed outreach plans for the fall.

The Trustees reached consensus on conversing with the Selectboard to create contracts for the following:

- Long-term sharing: police, senior services (bus, senior center), Tree Farm
- Short-term sharing: finance (no longer than 6/30/26)

They agreed that if the Selectboard is interested in a contractual relationship regarding assessing services, they are open to reviewing a Selectboard proposal.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.essexjunction.org/independence>

If you have feedback on the work session, you are encouraged to share your thoughts here: <https://forms.gle/FwzHL4y8ZFUwudMH6>.

If you missed the work session, but would like to watch it, you can find it here (starting at minute 15:47 and ending at 1:39:28): <https://youtu.be/q4SgfcYcmA8?t=947>.

The next work session will take place as the first item on the agenda at the July 27 Trustees meeting, which starts at 6:30p.m. at 2 Lincoln Street. The meeting agenda and link will be posted a few days before the meeting here: <https://www.essexjunction.org/boards/board-of-trustees>. There are also joint meetings with the Selectboard to discuss independence on July 19 and July 26, starting at 6:30p.m. at 81 Main Street.