

## **Essex Junction Independence**

### **Departmental Analysis**

This is simply a starting point. It is something on paper to analyze, question, challenge, and change. The goal is to be able to get to a point where we can show how things could be organized and staffed to efficiently support the work of the City. This will allow for a responsible potential budget to be drafted, so that voters understand the potential financial implications of creating an independent city. Ultimately, the City Manager will propose a budget, hire personnel, and organize the staff as they see fit. The City Council and voters will get to vote on the proposed budget. Community members and staff should view this document as a draft.

Below is a summary of conversations with Village department heads, consolidated department heads, and key Village staff. There is also data from two separate surveys – one to Village staff and one to Town staff of consolidated/co-located departments.

The organizational chart and staffing recommendations are based on the information ascertained from this data.

#### Conversations about Independence

Over the last few weeks, I have either met or corresponded with the following individuals:

##### Village Department Heads:

- Chris Gaboriault, Fire
- Jim Jutras, Wastewater
- Ricky Jones, Public Works
- Robin Pierce, Community Development
- Wendy Hysko, Brownell Library

##### Key Village Personnel:

- Chelsea Mandigo, Stormwater and Village Association President
- Linda Mahns, Administrative Assistant
- Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager

##### Consolidated Department Heads:

- Dennis Lutz, Public Works (note public works is funded in a consolidated way but not managed as such)
- Karen Lemnah, Assessing
- Rob Paluba, Information Technology
- Ron Hoague, Police
- Sarah Macy, Finance
- Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk's Office
- Travis Sabatano, Human Resources

##### Co-located Department Head:

- Ally Vile, Essex Parks & Recreation

#### Village Employee Independence Survey

A survey was sent to 53 Village employees. 19 responded. Employees had 6 days to complete the survey (4 business days).

The results are on the following pages. There were more results to analyze vs. the Town employees of consolidated/co-located departments survey. Village employees see a lot of opportunities in independence. They talked about how having a smaller employee base and organization will be better and allow for them to feel like a close-knit group. Many see the pursuit of independence has providing a clear focus on the future and providing a direction for employees. There were several concerns and challenges, but no clear themes. Some they mentioned included limited opportunities to expand tax base and increased costs. For the new municipality, there were several mentions about the importance of communication and listening, and how a smaller organization solely focused on the Village will better serve staff and the community. The notion of a “Village culture” came out of conversations with department heads and was a question on the survey. There is a clear sense of pride Village employees share about their positive attitude and work ethic – one that goes above and beyond to serve the community. If the independence effort fails, there was a range of answers, but many came back to achieving tax equity. However, the way of getting there was different for many. There is a clear sense that separate is better when they were asked what would be best for each department. The only ones that had a majority of “shared is better” were assessing, police, and recreation & parks.

#### Town Employees of Consolidated/Co-Located Departments Independence Survey

A survey was sent to 19 Town employees who work for consolidated or co-located departments. 6 responded. Employees had 3 business days to complete the survey.

The results are on the following pages. There are not a lot of results to analyze. Three of five responses saw no opportunities in independence. There were no clear themes throughout the other questions. There is a clear sense that shared is better when they were asked what would be best for each department, with 4, 5, or 6 agreeing shared is better for each department. Libraries were the only split vote, 3 for separate and 3 for shared. Respondents generally did not see value in independence.

#### Village Department Heads (Community Development, Fire, Library, Public Works, Wastewater)

There were some clear themes amongst Village Department Heads. They feel that there is a different culture in the Village. Some describe it as the “Village way” or the “Village difference.” They are excited about the prospects of an independent Essex Junction and preserving that special appreciation and approach to their work and community. They have felt that efforts to work towards alignment and consolidation have been holding them back and delayed decisions. The movement towards independence will allow them to focus more on their departments and services. For many, it is a breath of fresh air.

#### Consolidated Department Heads (Assessing, Clerk's Office, Finance, HR, IT):

There is a bit more variety in the sentiments of consolidated department heads. Several did not express a clear position on merger or separation. Some have been working really hard towards alignment, consolidation, and merger, and the effort to separate is effectively undoing several years of work and could result in breaking up established teams. The general frustration though is a lack of clear direction. There are too many uncertainties of if separation will pass or not, and what should be done in the meantime – continue to align, consolidate, and evaluate decisions as what is best for both communities? Or, start separating things and evaluate decisions about what is best for each individual community?

Clarity on direction would be valuable for these consolidated departments. The Trustees and Selectboard would serve employees best by creating a clear path forward as it relates to municipal departments and services, whether it is in independence or the current governance structure. The Trustees should make it known sooner than later whether or not they are interested in returning to a place where they have more Village departments and personnel, and work with the Selectboard towards a shared vision. This would help these departments make decisions now that support that future state, and do not result in wasted energy or more things to change and untangle.

#### Department Head Conversation Takeaways Related to the City Organization

Here are the key general takeaways from the conversations.

The Wastewater Treatment Facility is consolidated in the sense of the tri-town agreement with the Village, Town of Essex, and Williston all paying their share of usage. The facility is a department of the Village and there is no recommendation to change that.

Departments that currently are separate and do not see value/practicality of becoming consolidated:

- Brownell Library, Community Development, Fire, Public Works

Departments that are currently consolidated but do not see practicality of staying consolidated if there are two separate communities, two boards, and two managers:

- Clerk/Treasurer, Human Resources, Information Technology

Departments that see value/practicality of staying/becoming consolidated:

- Police, Recreation & Parks

The Assessing and Finance departments did not have an opinion or recommendation which would be better, separate or shared. They did think that either option could be accomplished.

To be determined: Stormwater. Jim is doing a further analysis of this, and we will share at a future date.

### Department-by-Department Analysis

On the following pages, there is a department-by-department analysis. There is a department head feedback summary from the conversation and/or correspondence with the department head. The summary has been shared with each department head. To be fair, some have not had the opportunity to respond yet. If they do with edits, I will share those with you. The recommendations related to department status and positions are mine. They are not from the department head. They are simply recommendations and a starting point for our conversation.

### Organizational Charts

There are two organizational charts. The first follows all the recommendations contained in the department-by-department analysis. The second assumes that the only shared department is police. After our discussion, we hopefully will know which departments/services the Trustees want to share with the Town of Essex. What we will not know and/or have any control over is the Selectboard's interest in doing the same. We need to prepare as such – at least to see what the financial impacts could be. While the approach related to police services with the Town is similarly up in the air, everyone loses in any other police arrangement – the Village, Town, and the Police Department. This should be the first conversation that the Trustees bring to the Selectboard.

### 2 Lincoln as City Office & Information Technology

The Village Office is not really set-up to be a functioning space for customers and community members to use and for a team of personnel to function, especially in a post-COVID world. Customers are in the middle of the office when they come in for a service. With mostly a full city office potentially being there, there will be meetings, HR discussions, and the day-to-day interactions and happenings of an office environment. The way it is currently set-up essentially gives customers access to several staff who can be seen, heard, and summoned by anyone walking in. It certainly does little in the way of good health and hygiene practices and exposes everyone in the office to anyone walking in. While the Village Office has historically functioned as more of a government place of business in its current state, most of the clerk related activity has always been at 81 Main Street. The new city would be taking on dog licenses, birth certificates, marriage certificates, property records, and more. This will increase the volume of people coming to the office.

Additionally, the Village will need to stand-up an IT system. This will come with a significant cost. The majority of the current Town infrastructure will need to stay in place. The Village Office does not have all the servers, accounts, storage, firewalls, switches, etc. to support an IT infrastructure.

While the amount and restrictions on the federal money coming to municipalities is unknown, it is recommended that the Village give serious consideration to using some of those funds to update 2 Lincoln to be a functioning government office and build the IT infrastructure necessary to support the City.

### **Village Department Heads / Key Personnel Questions**

By separating, are there any existing consolidations/collaborations with the Town that could be lost for your department? What would those impacts be to staffing, services, or costs? Would the Village be better off trying to preserve those relationships in some way or doing things on their own? Explain.

In separation, what opportunities do you see for your department moving into the future?

What challenges do you believe need to be addressed in the separation conversation, charter, or planning for your department?

While the Trustees are pursuing independence, do you think there is value in your department consolidating with your counterpart department in the Town of Essex (one department, two communities, two boards, two managers)?

What future considerations should be given in the long-term (10-20 years) planning for your department serving a separate Essex Junction (budget, staffing, capital, etc.)?

Beyond your department, what are some things that you hope the new municipality will address (for employees, the organization, budgets, benefits, etc.)?

If separation occurs, a lot could be different and re-imagined. What are some strengths that you possess that you think/hope/want to leverage in light of a potential separation? Are there other capacities that you could be helpful in, duties you could assume, etc.

What other thoughts, questions, concerns, or comments do you have that were not discussed already?

### Consolidated Department Head Questions

Please consider what would go in the different boxes of the chart below:

|  | <b>Disadvantages/Challenges</b> | <b>Advantages/Opportunities</b> |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>One Department<br/>Serving Separated<br/>City of Essex Junction<br/>and Town of Essex<br/>(two communities,<br/>two municipalities,<br/>two boards,<br/>two managers)</b> |                                 |                                 |
| <b>One Department<br/>Serving the City of<br/>Essex Junction Only</b>  |                                 |                                 |

If the Trustees wanted a Village department that only served the Village and they asked you to design it, how would you design your department? What would be the positions/structure? What would be the same? What would you change?

If the Trustees wanted to explore keeping a consolidated department that serves the city of Essex Junction and Town of Essex, what are some of the trickle-down implications that should be taken into account (policies, personnel, finances, technology, etc.)?

By separating, are there any existing consolidations/collaborations with the Town that could be lost for your department? What would those impacts be to staffing, services, or costs? Would the Village be better off trying to preserve those relationships in some way or doing things on their own? Explain.

Are there any functions in your department that the Trustees/future management should consider contracting out i.e. to a private firm/provider/service, etc.?

In separation, what opportunities do you see for your department moving into the future?

What challenges do you believe need to be addressed in the separation conversation, charter, or planning for your department?

Considering that a transition could take place as early as 7/1/22 for some departments and 7/1/23 for others, do you anticipate any staffing/structural changes between now and then?

What are some physical space considerations that should be taken into account in thinking about separation?

What are some of the direct costs of separation (equipment, subscriptions, software, etc.)?

What future considerations should be given in the long-term (10-20 years) planning for your department serving a separate Essex Junction (budget, staffing, capital, etc.)?

Beyond your department, what are some things that you hope the new municipality will address (for employees, the organization, budgets, benefits, etc.)?

Based on everything you have thought about, if the Trustees were to ask you for your recommendation for the City of Essex Junction's provision of services for your department, would you advise that they create a stand-alone department or one that is consolidated with the Town of Essex? What are the three primary reasons why?

If separation occurs, a lot could be different and re-imagined. What are some strengths that you possess that you think/hope/want to leverage in light of a potential separation? Are there other capacities that you could be helpful in, duties you could assume, etc.

What other thoughts, questions, concerns, or comments do you have that were not discussed already?

### Village Employee Independence Survey

**How would you like to be involved/provide input in the effort to create an independent city of Essex Junction (check all that apply)?**

**If you indicated a desire to meet above, would you prefer to meet:**

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time, A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule, A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend   | Have both options available |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time, A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule, A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend   | Have both options available |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule, A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend   | Have both options available |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time  | In-person                   |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time  | In-person                   |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule   | In-person                   |
| Just this survey is enough for me, A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time   | In-person                   |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time, A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule, A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend   | Have both options available |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule, A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend   | In-person                   |
| Just this survey is enough for me   |                             |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time, A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule, A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend, it's pretty important to have town employees and managers involved | Have both options available |
| A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend  | In-person                   |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule   | In-person                   |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time, A large group forum for any Village employee who wants to attend  | In-person                   |
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| Just this survey is enough for me   |                             |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other Village employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time, A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule   | Have both options available |



|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Just this survey is enough for me, A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule | Have both options available |
|--|-----------------------------|

### What opportunities/advantages do you see for the Village in independence?

|   |
|---|
| Clear focus for future. Discover our niche in the Chittenden County landscape.  |
| Get back to the "village difference"  |
| community and customer service focus rather than merger focus   |
| Autonomy to provide services for the Village community. Better connection with Village employees.   |
| It depends on if we have our own city manager or we have to continue on with a single manager for both town and city. I feel like a number not a name with this group running things now. I don't like having to sign in on my computer as a Town employee, I have been working for the Village for 37 years not the Town.  |
| Answered in my interview  |
| A smaller employee base will provide opportunities to connect on a more personal basis. We got to know each department during annual parties and we're able to walk into the Village office if we needed quick answers to our questions, whether that was borrowing the credit card, hr questions or mail pick up.  |
| I think the village has a good culture both as a place to work and live and it will be easier to keep that intact when it is just the village. It will be great to have all of the village tax payers money staying inside the village limits.  |
| We can chart our own destiny and retain the words Essex Junction in our city name. Opportunity - make Lincoln Hall the true center of our community and bring back the manager's office, tax collecting, water billing, etc. to Lincoln Hall. I would like to see the entire building filled with municipal offices. That may mean moving the senior center to Maple Street Park and moving the Teen Center to the high school. Something to think about.   |
| I think the village has unique concerns and some different values than the town, and I think it would be nice as a village department to focus on services that address these. Including the town muddies the waters.   |
| This would be best for an in-person or in-meeting discussion  |
| Working closer with village staff and departments. Having village employees questions and concerns answered directly from village officials. Being able to put together are very own Employee contract not trying to align with Town  |
| Pro Clearly defined needs for a smaller entity. Con loss of easy daily opportunity to work thru challenges with like minded co-workers.   |
| Flexibility, creative solutions to old problems, a more homogeneous group of citizens to support  |
| Bringing back more of the close knit community feeling. Allowing management and other departments to focus on the day to day and other special project and not be caught in the merger back and forth. Allow creativity to be brought to form a municipality that meets the wants and needs of the residents.   |
| For years employees have talked about the Village way of offering exceptional service. Over the past several years when management has worked towards aligning the Town/Village some of that feeling (exceptional service done by excellent employees) has been lost. We can return to the Village Way. Staff morale has been down since aligning and I think independence will bring back staff morale. It will more clearly define boundaries of what the Village is. It's surprising how many people do not know if they live in the Village or Town. If the Village is independent then residents will for sure know where they live. Tax payers complain about having to pay taxes twice. Independence gets rid of 1 tax. I think both merger and independence have many more opportunities/advantages than continuing on as a Town/Village community. |
| Ability to move forward with growth opportunities as we'll have a better focus and direction  |
| I know a lot of Villagers complain about paying for services the Town uses, so I suppose it'll be good to only have to pay for Village services.  |

### What challenges/disadvantages do you see for the Village in independence?

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| Proper planning for a healthy community in a confined space that works well into the future. |
| None   |

|   |
|---|
| resistance from the town despite the merger rejection   |
| Increased costs and personnel needed. Continued confusion for residents about where they live.  |
| The challenge is to not have the same people that tried to merge us still in charge of separating us. Then nothing will change for us workers.  |
| Answered in my interview  |
| The transition to independence will be a challenge, especially working out the police. The librarians are very happy with the police response when issues with patrons arise and would hate to see that lost in transition.   |
| I mostly see it as a positive. Working out how to separate all the merged departments is tricky and trying to stay on good terms with the TOV. It would be great if parts of the TOV were given an option to join the new city. The people living over near Susie Wilson could be a great asset to the new city. Some how I think Irene Werner will still be the biggest challenge, not sure how but I wouldn't put it past her.                                  |
| Possible limited opportunities to expand our tax base because of our limited land area. There will still be confusion as to the difference between the Village (City ) of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex. We would not save money, at least for several years, because to become independent will involve spending money to bring back what we have already consolidated, as well as pay for services we don't provide for ourselves (police, clerk, etc.). |
| I think theres a lot to figure out as far as municipal infrastructure. I have no idea the extent to which we will be providing our own administration or services like the police department, are we hiring new people, what will the cost be? How much will these changes impact the work that I do?   |
| This would be best for an in-person or in-meeting discussion  |
| Could we afford to be on are own?   |
| If at all possible I would like the shared telephone system to remain in place so that it easy to get calls to the right place by transferring, if the customer calls a wrong department.   |
| Minimizing diversity limits opportunities. Growth in recreation, particularly with the tree farm property operation and programs that happen in EWSD facilities, is limited and detrimental to village residents  |
| Residents understanding which community they live in. Maintain a positive relationship with the Town. Determine structure of departments.   |
| May lose access to a library & parks/rec. Undoing alignment/sharing work that has been done.  |
| Learning some new methods of doing things, but nothing too difficult.   |

#### **What questions do you have regarding Village independence?**

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|---|
| None at the moment.   |
| How long will this take?  |
| none  |
| Will the legislature allow the Village to separate completely from the town?  |
| Can we get a group of management thats just for us? The unified manager wouldnt even know me if he saw me. I used to know everyone when the office was at lincoin Hall and they knew me.  |
| Discussed during my interview   |
| Are we able to get our own village manager back, and not share one with the town?   |
| Honestly the communication about the whole process has been so much better then we ever got with merger which has made it really easy to stay informed. The summaries that have been sent out after the working sessions means if you don't have the time to watch you can still have a sense of what is going on. But the fact that the video is included with timestamps and a feed back form is incredible. Merger felt very top down. While the trustees are still the decision makers this feels way more inclusive of the community and the employees. At the moment I don't really have any questions. |
| How you plan to educate Village residents. I prefer mailed information versus zoom or other technical media.  |
| See above.  |
| too many for this survey.   |
| Would we have 1 Village Manager. Would we have 1 village HR person.   |
| Specifically how will the finance/HR departments be set up ie duties, personnel.  |

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|---|
| Timeline if approved. There was a roadmap for merger created what does the roadmap for Village independence look like if approved by voters and legislature?  |
| What will that look like for all current employees?   |
| What rec will look like   |
| All of the questions! Will everything be fully independent? What about services that have been shared for decades? I would love a trustworthy breakdown of what an independent Village would look like, and I haven't been able to find one anywhere. |

**How do you think Village independence will affect your department in the short and long term?**

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|--|
| Short term, not much change. Long term I believe the department could see expanded responsibilities.   |
| Improve it!  |
| no   |
| I am currently in charge of both Village and Town departments working out of the Town office. There would have to some changes made to relocate the Village part back to the Village office.   |
| Nothing but good effects   |
| Long term, the Manager's Dept. will separate. Short term, we are struggling to find our place and determine the best way to lend support to perform "status quo" until an official separation.   |
| It will help with patrons realizing where they live and who gets library cards at Brownell. Less confusing, which will save librarians time. We will still welcome town residents as patrons as part of our home card system. There may be some expenses that are shared now that would have to be funded by just city residents, which could drive taxes up or we could lose some services.   |
| It shouldn't affect the department I work in at all.   |
| I'm not sure. I hope that it will not affect our budget but am concerned it may. I think it could provide an opportunity for village employees to have more of a voice, and I think it could create more meaningful services for village residents.  |
| not feeling super positive about this in the short term. Unsure about long term.   |
| By being independent we could keep are village way alive. I think by keeping the current pay structure that the village employee association and management agreed on it would encourage employees to work hard and strive to be the best they possibly can be. Versus how its done in the town.   |
| Short run-Chaos will happen amongst those both within and outside of municipality employees... re: who is responsible for what? and who are the contacts? My workload will go up immensely as the only actual Village finance person (also with some HR knowledge) currently plus training anyone else brought on board in the office and finance areas.   |
| We're already laboring under the weight of the town rec departments shortcomings and financial irregularities, I expect that to continue in the short term. In the long term I worry that those positions within town rec, who are overpaid and underworked, will be inherited to our detriment.   |
| short-term- wastewater will be unchanged. Stormwater will have to create its own budget as most is paid through the town especially for project implementation for permit requirements. Long-term- The current staffing level works but some adjustments could benefit the municipality especially with the increasing workload to meet permit requirements. Having dedicated stormwater person like almost all other Chittenden County towns rather than having the duties split between two people. Especially if we no longer share interns with the Town which helps with summer stormwater inspection work free up staff time. Consider moving Stormwater Coorindator/Wastewater Operator to Stormwater Coordinator. This may also require wastewater operator to be added as that person would no longer have their time split with operator duties. |
| I think independence will have less of an affect then merger would. We may lose shared services, but that will mean a minimal increase in cost/staff time.   |
| I think we'll see great improvements in efficiency in our dept   |
| I can't see where it would affect us at all  |
| I imagine that things will stay relatively similar to the way they are now in both the short and long term; the Brownell has always been separate from the Essex Free, so it's not like services have to be divided up.  |

**What are some things that you hope the new municipality will address (for employees, the organization, budgets, benefits, etc.)?**

|  |
|--|
| A closer look at how all department decisions could effect other departments and organize a working together model to minimize conflict  |
| Better Communication   |
| better choices of consultants for related work and studies   |
| For employees: smaller organization means better access to management. For the organization: getting back to working with Village employees. Budget: more local control.   |
| New management or nothing will change  |
| A plan for growth in the organization to properly support the new structure. Allow manager/staff (not the board) to determine the best methods, software, policies and processes within their departments to provide the best quality service to residents that balances with employee satisfaction. With changing departments, changes in "how things have always been done" may need to be explored and updated.   |
| I hope a smaller municipality will mean easier negotiations and a more intimate knowledge of what staff actually does. We shouldn't have to align our benefit package with the town. I hope we can hold on to our culture of hard work rewarded by good pay and benefits.  |
| Taking a serious look at the pay grades. Village starting salaries are pretty low for the area and it makes it hard to recruit. The most recent contract started this process a little. Keeping the employees involved and included in the process. The village has been a great place to work, and that work has usually felt appreciated. The last few years it has felt like village employees kind of got forgotten in the merger in favor of town employees. In 2019 the village employee appreciation party was almost entirely forgotten until the association asked if it was happening. Comparing how building upkeep has been handled in the village in the past versus now with the buildings manager might be worth something. It seems like the village has historically done a fairly good job keeping up with building maintenance but is that just because dept heads have been good at it? What would have happened if a dept head wasn't good at it? But what are the benefits of having someone who is in the building all day thinking about it? How we handle IT could be looked at. Would it be worth contracting out or having in house? A mix of both? Someone in house to do the day to day stuff of helping when things wont print but then contract out to people who really know what they are doing for setting up and managing security. |
| Because I am a part time employee only working a few months a year with no benefits, I really can't offer any suggestions.   |
| I think the biggest thing I've sensed during merger discussions is the need to listen to village staff and understand that village residents chose to live in a place where they have to pay more taxes but they get more services as a result. Hopefully independence will ease the tax burden, but not at the sacrifice of services. Hopefully we will have an administration that listens more to the unique needs of village departments.  |
| This would be best for an in-person or in-meeting discussion   |
| Team building. Listen more to employee concerns about benefits/ect. Keeping a more of an open door environment like it used to be regarding issues   |
| Equity in pay/benefits between all Village departments.  |
| I hope that opportunities for advancement can be created for village employees.  |
| COMMUNICATION! There are a lot of things that are found out by watching especially during merger conversations at the Trustee meetings that seemed to be important to be conveyed to the employees but they were not until very far down the line. Employee moral=this may come as part of independence as the path for this seems more clear vs. merger where people were worried about their positions. Organization-making it clear especially for Management/Admin/Finance who we go to for what which could also help with communication. More awareness of what other departments are doing or working on to create that community feeling   |
| The past couple of years there has been a big push to align Town/Village. From the Village perspective it has been trying to make change everything to the Town way. There have been instances when management has started things from scratch for new policies/procedures when something has been in place for decades for that same thing in the Village. Village employees have lost their identity as Village employees. I would hope a new municipality would look at things and choose what's best for the Village.  |
| not having to negotiat our contract with town management   |

I hope the new municipality recognizes the Brownell's importance to the community; as far as I know, it seems to be a pretty independent department with no real ties to the Town, so I don't even know what sorts of changes would be on the table.

**Several people have talked about the "Village culture," "the Village way of doing things," "Village identity," and "the Village difference." How would you describe what any of those means to you?**

The Village is tight knit, caring & practical. They look out for the entire community and are generally not self motivated. This means for me, that it is a comfortable place to live and raise a family.

Going above and beyond for the residence

Customer service and doing whatever it takes to get the job done. This was starting to wane during the merger discussion where we all became silo'e

The "Village way" reflects the attitude the Village personnel display when working with the public. We used to have residents tell us we were the "nice" office.

It used to feel like a family now its too big , We dont even take new employees out to introduce them anymore.

When we were a village, before we were putting so much effort into merging, we had more power over our choices. We didn't have to get a copier, dress code, vendors and cleaners that worked for town management, but could focus on what worked well for us and our patrons. There was a good working relationship between departments and we looked out for each other. I feel that we were often overlooked in decisions when we started merging with the town, because of the top down management style, rather than the let's do this together attitude.

As an employee it is about working together. The departments try to work well together and support each other. Employees count on each other to work hard and treat each other with respect. Not just within a department but between departments. Communication is also really important, keeping all employees informed of major changes and decisions helps people feel included. If this is by keeping dept heads informed so they can tell their employees or directly to employees could depend on what the situation is. As a tax payer as well I can see the results of employees who are respected and treated well in the quality of service I am getting. I could also repeat everything I said in the question about if I have questions. The communication and involvement with how this is being handled versus merger is part of the way the village does things. Community and costumer services focused.

I have been a resident of the Village of Essex Junction for 48 years and have worked for the municipality for 32 years. All of the above sayings mean a great deal to me primarily because I have always felt that the Town didn't think of the Village as equal in many respects. Also, paying more to the Town municipal budget than to the Village municipal budget has always been a sore spot for me.

I'm still relatively new to the village, but I think the village is more progressive than the town, but still very family oriented. I think there may be a tendency to look for solutions in an organic way - like talking with stakeholders to understand needs and create appropriate solutions, rather than imposing outside solutions that work for others.

I don't have any real understanding or have ever heard of these phrases.

The Village Difference is making a difference in how something at work is done or addressed. Doing things that are not asked to do. Working extra to complete a task with out being asked or compensated for. Going the extra mile to address/ make a difference in a residents concerns.

The "Village way" has always seemed to me to be heavily leaned toward exceptional customer service and making sure we go above and beyond what is expected in the Town- I think this might have something to do with alot of elderly people have homes in the Village and they need additional help ? I've worked here 10+ years and when we consolidated I noticed that I knew alot more about my customers then my counter parts in the town.

The village departments seem to have a progressive culture focused on continual improvement with an eye towards efficiency.

Flexibility, teamwork, well-rounded, friendly, hard-working individuals. The Village does a great job supporting each others departments especially if their is a problem. Also trying to coordinate with other departments to try and complete a task once while considering all aspects. Support from your co-workers and department heads

|   |
|---|
| Most Village employees know each other. It's a small pool of employees. Employees have chosen to leave higher paying jobs to get a job in the Village because of the Village way. We have good benefits and are known to be an excellent workforce and produce top quality work. We are small enough to have a yearly staff appreciation ceremony and it's meaningful to employees. |
| The village culture is forward thinking and innovative, always trying the best way of serving the community and not getting stuck in a "that's how it's always been done" mentality.  |
| I feel like the Village is a much more closely-knit community than the Town, probably due to its density and compactness. That tight relationship with neighbors definitely contributes to an identity separate from the Town.  |

**If, for some reason, the Village independence effort fails, what do you think should be the next step(s) for the Trustees?**

|   |
|---|
| That's hard to answer not knowing where the failure may happen. Failed vote, I think they find out why. Surveys, independent research why would the residents not want this. Failed state approval, figure out why and work for independence again.   |
| Tax equity for the residence, have control of all village departments and have a village manager  |
| contractual arrangements or formalized, topic specific MOU's with the Town on sticking points   |
| Continue consolidation efforts with the Town of Essex through mutually beneficial agreements. We have come a long way in consolidating services. We should continue with the departments that have not been combined yet. Maybe we could bring some of the "Village way of doing things" into the town departments.   |
| I don't know  |
| I hope this doesn't happen, but we should move to separate all the departments and try again with the legislature another year. Eventually they have to see that tax equity is really important to village residents. We can no longer continue on this merger path forward, now that it has been voted down several times.   |
| Go on a vacation.<br>I feel like merger/separation needs to be dropped for at least a generation. I have only been through one cycle of this and I am already exhausted. Each time people have to go through it emotions just get more heated and there is more and more bad feeling built up. The legal ways of going about all this don't ever seem to work in the Village's favor so I am not sure what the options would even be.                                   |
| They should look at giving up the charter for the Village. It seems that the Village voted to merge, but the Town didn't. And how many times can we bring this question to the voters. If we can't be independent, then we should give up our charter and become one with the Town of Essex.  |
| Establish some boundaries on how much the village has to look like the town. I understand that it is easier from an administrator's point of view to make things the same, but they are two distinct places with different perspectives and values. Make sure the employees feel heard and not like they are being forced to accommodate changes from an administration that hasn't taken the time to understand what makes them unique.                                |
| The next step ought to be the first step, in my opinion - which is trying to find tax equity and bring a divided community together. Bringing 2 very divided boards together in an effort to negotiate and work towards standardizing tasks, processes, procedures, policies seems to be much better in the long run. Really meant for a longer discussion and better way to obtain feedback from the whole organization, since Town and Village work together so much. |
| Go back to being as separate as possible  |
| Have every same departments (1 from Village & 1 from Town) sitting near each other, even if not in the same building as other departments, that way if someone comes looking for a permit regardless of where they live they will be serviced quickly, (Many people do not know if they live in the Village or the Town!)   |
| Absolution of the village charter in favor of a shared and equitable town governance.   |
| Keep the status quo as it has been working for staff and the residents. Maybe make more official agreements for what has been consolidated or shared but leave it at that.  |
| Ask the state for help. Set up tax zones.   |
| Finding another permanent solution quickly - it is tough to be pulled in all different directions as an employee  |

I think that, now that the people have spoken and said that they don't want to merge, that any merger should be taken off the table completely. Taxes can still be reworked to be more equal for residents of the Village and the Town, and I think that if complete independence doesn't happen, then the Trustees should work to alleviate those concerns regardless.

**Do you have any other questions, comments, suggestions, or concerns that were not covered above?**

No

I believe merger is the best solution for the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction. However, if the Village separates and becomes its own municipality I will fully support the new municipality. If the Village were to separate we should be very careful about inter-municipal agreements (where allowed by statute).

With the way the vote went I feel like the town doesn't want us and we are trying to force a merge. I like it to The Town wants to continue to date us and spend our money but they made it very clear they will never put a ring on it.

It will be hard, but I think we have the momentum to make this happen now. Thanks to all who are putting so much work into this separation effort.

As an employee and a tax payer I am really excited about an independent Essex Junction. When I first started here I was more of a merger fan since it seemed to make the most sense. The more I got to know the community the more it was obvious that the Village just has something special and in the last few years it never really felt like management did much to learn about or appreciate what that was about the Village. Which even if it made financial sense as a tax payer didn't make me excited about merger as either a tax payer or an employee.

No at this time

Thanks for asking employees about their experience.

Lots! Please engage the two municipalities for these questions/concerns as well as the entire staff. We all have been working together and need to keep doing so in the short term and likely the long term to some degree.

I'll ask them as I think of them.

Appreciate being included in this vs. before with merger where employees felt very much in the dark

go back to the way it was before we started sharing managers just without being part of the town

I'm gonna be honest, I don't really understand the repercussions of independence or of the failed attempt at merger (sorry). I hear such conflicting information from everywhere, and every source I looked at before the merger vote was super biased towards one side or the other. I'm concerned about the level of misinformation that is able to spread through both the Village and the Town when there's no trustworthy information.

### Village Employee Independence Survey

| <b>Department/Service</b>      | <b>Separate is better.</b> | <b>Shared is better.</b> | <b>I don't know.</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Assessing                      | 4                          | 9                        | 6                    |
| Capital Budgeting              | 12                         | 3                        | 4                    |
| Clerk/Treasurer                | 11                         | 6                        | 2                    |
| Community/Economic Development | 12                         | 3                        | 4                    |
| Finance                        | 14                         | 7                        | 8                    |
| Fire                           | 11                         | 5                        | 3                    |
| Human Resources                | 15                         | 2                        | 2                    |
| Information Technology         | 11                         | 4                        | 4                    |
| Library                        | 15                         | 3                        | 1                    |
| Manager                        | 18                         | 1                        | 0                    |
| Police                         | 1                          | 15                       | 3                    |
| Public Works                   | 15                         | 4                        | 0                    |
| Recreation & Parks             | 8                          | 9                        | 2                    |
| Stormwater                     | 9                          | 6                        | 4                    |



## Town Employees of Consolidated/Co-Located Departments Independence Survey

**How would you like to be involved/provide input in the effort to create an independent city of Essex Junction (check all that apply)?**

**If you indicated a desire to meet above, would you prefer to meet:**

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Just this survey is enough for me  | N/A                         |
| Just this survey is enough for me  | N/A                         |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with other consolidated/co-located employees (any department); people could volunteer whether or not to participate and sign-up for day/time | Have both options available |
| A small group conversation/opportunity to ask questions with employees from my department; department head would schedule  | In-person                   |
| Just this survey is enough for me  |                             |
| A large group forum for any consolidated/co-located employee who wants to attend   | Have both options available |

**What opportunities/advantages do you see for the Village in independence?**

|  |
|--|
| None   |
| none   |
| more autonomy  |
| I see no advantages for Independence.  |
| Less confusion since there will be only a Village and a Town. The Village residents will not be residents of both. |

**What challenges/disadvantages do you see for the Village in independence?**

|   |
|---|
| Creating an entirely new Village office.  |
| increased budget / taxes  |
| difficulties with town/village divisions  |
| I am in the Finance Department. I prefer to have the Village and Town combined. It would make it much easier to have one payroll, one set of financials, one Utility module, etc. Two entities creates lots of different contracts, rules, procedures, financial statements, etc. |

**What questions do you have regarding Village independence?**

|   |
|---|
| None  |
| None  |
| How will this effect our Finance department? How will this effect me as a Village resident?<br>How will this effect my water and tax rates? |

**How do you think Village independence will affect your department in the short and long term?**

|   |
|---|
| We will only serve the Town and will need to sort out all records for the Village.  |
| not sure  |
| It will be a huge change since we were working to serve both the Town and the Village and now there's the possibility of switching gears again. |
| Our dept consists mostly of Town employees so it will affect one of us the most who is a village employee.                                      |

Will we be physically separated? It has been helpful to have Finance be in one physical department. There will have to be training as job responsibilities shift. There will be fewer employees to back each other up. Residents will learn which town they live in and which office to contact. You will lose the depth of knowledge of some long-term employees who will then either work in the Town or Village.

**What are some things that you hope the new municipality will address (for employees, the organization, budgets, benefits, etc.)?**

Employment reorganization & budgeting need to be addressed and transparent to the two communities.

would like to think there would be no more "us" and "them", but this will probably only fuel it

We were trying to have similar benefits/contracts but now that won't matter.

**If, for some reason, the Village independence effort fails, what do you think should be the next step(s) for the Trustees?**

all sides should work together to make the one community

Aligning taxes

Further consolidation / status quo for the time being.

Either do nothing and let this issue rest for awhile or make a push for merger again.

**Do you have any other questions, comments, suggestions, or concerns that were not covered above?**

I feel together we are stronger. Maybe the citizens need a break from this whole topic and it should be addressed again down the road.

### Town Employees of Consolidated/Co-Located Departments Independence Survey

| Department/Service             | Separate is better. | Shared is better. | I don't know. |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Assessing                      | 0                   | 5                 | 1             |
| Capital Budgeting              | 1                   | 4                 | 0             |
| Clerk/Treasurer                | 1                   | 5                 | 0             |
| Community/Economic Development | 1                   | 5                 | 0             |
| Finance                        | 1                   | 4                 | 0             |
| Fire                           | 0                   | 5                 | 0             |
| Human Resources                | 2                   | 4                 | 0             |
| Information Technology         | 2                   | 4                 | 0             |
| Library                        | 3                   | 3                 | 0             |
| Manager                        | 2                   | 4                 | 0             |
| Police                         | 0                   | 6                 | 0             |
| Public Works                   | 1                   | 5                 | 0             |
| Recreation & Parks             | 0                   | 6                 | 0             |
| Stormwater                     | 1                   | 5                 | 0             |

Department: Administration

Department Head: Evan Teich, Municipal Manager

Current status: Town Consolidated Department with some Village employees

Current positions: Municipal Manager 1.0 FTE (Town)  
Deputy Manager 1.0 FTE (Town)  
Assistant Manager 1.0 FTE (Town)  
Assistant to the Manager 1.0 FTE (Village)  
Administrative Assistant (Village)

Recommended department status: City

There are a few ways to consider the need and role of an assistant/deputy manager. I don't believe that the City needs an individual solely dedicated to management functions, and instead think that a department head should be tapped as being a director and assistant manager. The recommendation is for the HR director to be that person and oversee a few other departments heads. I think the fact that there is already an Assistant to the Manager position is part of this equation in terms of additional support for the overall work of a management team. I have re-named the Assistant to the Manager position to Communications & Strategic Initiatives. I think that this is a more accurate reflection of what is actually done in that position. This is not suggesting a change in functions, or individual in the role, or pay, but simply a re-labeling.

Another way to look at an assistant/deputy manager is if there is a particular function that you want the City to focus on i.e. economic development, community engagement, diversity/equity/inclusion, etc. Again, I would suggest it be titled in a similar fashion - Economic Development Director/Assistant Manager, to demonstrate the primary focus of the position is said strategic initiative and not management. It would be important to have this discussion now in terms of how the budget is developed, as this would be an additional position (whereas the HR Director will be built in either way).

Again, a future City Manager will make these decisions and we do not need to belabor the point or debate who should take on certain roles. What we want to do is build an org chart and budget that is a realistic representation of what the City will need to operate efficiently and support all of the expectations that the board and community will have.

Recommended position(s) for city: City Manager 1.0 FTE  
Communications & Strategic Initiatives 1.0 FTE (currently  
Assistant to the Manager)  
Administrative Assistant 1.0 FTE  
(in HR Department: HR Director/Assistant Manager 1.0 FTE)

Department: Assessing

Department Head: Karen Lemnah, Assessor

Current status: Town Consolidated Department

Current positions: Assessor 1.0 FTE  
Assistant to the Assessor 0.7 FTE

Department Head feedback:

In a separated or consolidated environment with the City and Town, the Assessing Department would not look any different than it does now. The Assessing Department works currently with both Zoning Departments regarding permits. There would need to be two equalization studies, instead of one currently. Serving two municipalities has been working and will only add some additional work.

## Karen K. Lemnah

Karen Lemnah, Assessor

Recommended department status: Shared Service with Town of Essex

The work of the Assessing Department is very standardized. There is not a lot of nuance in either working with external constituencies or serving internal masters. Having two managers and two boards will not change the nature of the work or how it will be accomplished. There are economies of scale, as reducing the number of parcels that a separate assessor would be responsible for in each community will still demand an assessor and some administrative support in both. Reappraisal is imminent and could be triggered to begin as early as this year. However, the actual process will take several years. The state pays the municipality per parcel per year for reappraisal and there is over \$800K reserved for this. If the Village left, it would seem logical that the Village would be entitled to its share of reappraisal funds based on the number of parcels that the state has been paying for. Essex has already been talking with Colchester about a potential shared RFP for a reappraisal. The concept of sharing those expenses with other municipalities would exist in separation or consolidation. It is recommended that the Trustees work with the Selectboard to develop a long-term relationship for shared assessing services.

Recommended position(s) for city: No Changes from Current

Future Considerations:

The Village does not ask for an e-mail address on their permits and thus reaching out to Village homeowners who have taken out permits for projects is more difficult in the Village vs. the Town. By asking for e-mail addresses, along with phone numbers, it not only provides more options for communication, but property owners tend to respond to e-mails quicker than phone calls. The zoning/community development offices should consider aligning this type of information to support a consolidated Assessing Department.

Department: Brownell Library

Department Head: Wendy Hysko, Library Director

Current status: Village Only Department

Current positions: Library Director 1.0 FTE  
Full-time 6.0. FTE  
Regular part-time staff: 7

Department Head feedback:

Brownell and Essex Free are two very different libraries. The best option is to keep the libraries separate because of the different size of the libraries and need for more rural Essex Town patrons to not have to go to Five Corners. The only way to combine libraries would be to have one be a branch, which would not be a popular option for residents who ended up with the branch location.

Brownell has an important relationship with Essex Police and the Howard Center outreach team. They regularly rely on both entities to help keep Brownell safe.

The Brownell building is in good shape.

This is the feedback that I heard from Wendy Hysko, Library Director.

Recommended department status: City

Recommended position(s) for city: No Changes from Current

Future Considerations:

Below are some items that came up in my conversation with Wendy:

Some staff at Brownell have significant IT knowledge and could be leveraged as tech support in some way with an IT department. There would need to be careful consideration related to access of IT admin rights to balance IT security and department support and goals, but this could be a model for additional IT supports.

Brownell would like their pay grades re-examined to stay competitive and honor employee qualifications.

It was suggested that the City could do more for supporting professional development of employees. While the Village has a tuition reimbursement benefit for taking college accredited courses, there are many other ways that staff can grow professionally – certificates, seminars, conferences, books, etc. It is recommended that a future city consider budgeting for a pool of professional development funds for all employees of the City to access.

Department: Clerk/Treasurer's Office

Department Head: Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk/Treasurer

Current status: Town Consolidated Department

Current positions: Clerk/Treasurer 1.0 FTE  
Assistant Town Clerk 1.0 FTE  
Assistant Town Clerk Class 1 1.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

"The clerk's office cannot be consolidated between two separate municipalities. I am not sure this set up is allowed - the city would have to have its own liquor control board, board of civil authority, etc. We would always have to collaborate and cooperate- but I don't see how the clerk's positions could be consolidated in two separate entities with the state record keeping requirements. I really believe that if the village becomes a separate city that the city clerk would have to be completely separate from the town clerk.

An opportunity in creating the City Clerk's/Treasurer Office is creating a new department that takes care of just residents of the City. I think residents will still be confused over whether they live in the town or the city. Some of the challenges would be starting a land record data base for city properties, as well as taking on responsibility for dog licensing, issuing marriage licenses, liquor licenses, etc. The disadvantage would be to the residents and title searchers who are used to going to the Town Clerk for all of these services regardless of whether they are in the Town or Village. This would also affect the way elections are run for general and statewide offices. Collecting taxes and water bills would have to come back under the roof of the city office (now handled by the Town). Costs the village has not had before, elections, land records database, map shelves, possible vault expansion, and office construction. I hope they would commit to either staffing or contracting a human resources department. I would have a full-time clerk/treasurer and a part time assistant clerk."

This is the feedback that I heard from Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk/Treasurer.

Recommended department status: City

The requirements of the clerk make it best to simply serve the Village. All of the vital and property records that are currently in the vault at 81 Main Street will reside there. That is where they will stay. They originated from that office. Once the City is operating, new vital and property records generated from 2 Lincoln will stay there, in that vault. This should not be a problem for the next 5-10 years, when the vault will need to be expanded.

Recommended position(s) for city: City Clerk/Treasurer 1.0 FTE  
Assistant City Clerk/Office Coordinator 1.0 FTE

The Office Coordinator part of the Assistant City Clerk is a new role/function. It was suggested that a 0.5 FTE Assistant City Clerk would be needed. The position has been expanded to 1.0 FTE to provide central coordination of office functions related to routine building maintenance, deliveries, office supplies, small repairs, etc. With a larger city office, it would be better to centralize these things. It will also free up the Communications & Strategic Initiatives position from having to do some of these things, which are part of that role currently, allowing them to spend more time on communications, projects, and community events.

Department: Community Development

Department Head: Robin Pierce, Community Development Director

Current status: Village Only Department

Current positions: Community Development Director 1.0 FTE  
Zoning Administration 1.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

Community Development can see an opportunity in forming a City. They already operate independently for the most part, and separation would not prevent collaboration between Town and City when opportunity arises. There is no advantage to consolidation for Community Development as cooperation already exists at the Community Development level. With all efforts and departments solely focused on the City, there will be opportunities to collaborate with other City departments on a City centric vision. A separation would enable both communities to apply for grants independently, etc., which, in theory, doubles the opportunity for funding.

## Robin Pierce

Robin Pierce, Community Development Director

Recommended department status: City

Recommended position(s) for city: No Changes from Current

Future Considerations:

Economic development will be an important focus for the City in the future. The City may want to make that desire more explicit, which could include renaming the department "Community & Economic Development" and/or consider investing additional resources (human or financial) in economic development activity. Another strategy could be to form a city economic development commission.



Department: Finance

Department Head: Sarah Macy, Finance Director

Current status: Town Consolidated Department with one Village employee

Current positions: Finance Director 1.0 FTE (Town)  
Assistant Finance Director 1.0 FTE (Town)  
Accounts Payable/Utility Clerk 1.0 FTE (Town)  
Accountant 1 1.0 FTE (Village)  
Bookkeeper 1.0 FTE (Town)

Department Head feedback:

"I have agonized over how to answer this question with honesty, integrity, and professionalism. Ultimately, I think a third party is best suited to evaluate and make a recommendation and I would hope that party would consider my thoughts listed here.

Finance is technical, unique, and complex. Finance is a support department for the entire organization and for the entire community it serves. The team interacts with all other departments, all governing bodies, and external persons (vendors, taxpayers, utility customers, etc.). The structure of finance depends a great deal on the structure of the rest of the organization and has ripple effects throughout. The overarching goals of the organization(s) are also critical to the structure. What does the governing body want most and what is it willing to give up to get that? Does the governing body value collaborative processes and the technical proficiency that comes with access to multiple highly experienced employees? But also be willing to share those resources? Does the governing body value having fewer but dedicated resources?

There are a pros and cons to either configuration that are weighted differently depending on the values, goals and direction of the organization.

Consolidated

Pro: Leverage the experience of a larger team

Pro: Collaboration on process and policy

Pro: Ability to have backup and overlap, continuity for turnover, planned/unplanned absences

Pro: Efficiencies gained in batch processing some items – e.g. Accounts Payable Checks, Investments, Pooled Cash

Pro: Better able to leverage software and other resources with budgetary contribution from each entity

Pro: Increased ability to pursue special projects

Con: Focus of higher level staff members is split

Con: Multiple large projects all fall at the same time of the year

Con: Must accommodate two bosses – Managers/Boards that will sometimes have conflicting directives.

### Separated

Pro: All staff are focused only on the Village finances, processes and policies

Pro: Only one set of procedures and policies to follow

Pro: Only one boss – Manager/Board

Con: Smaller team has fewer opportunities to learn from each other, or to collaborate on improvements

Con: Continuity suffers on a smaller team with turnover, planned or unplanned absences

When I think about either structure, I see ways in which I would benefit personally either financially or otherwise. Therefore, I believe it to be inappropriate for me to give a recommendation. I am bound by and believe strongly in the GFOA code of ethics which states in part:

**"I, as a member of a public finance office, am in a unique position where my influence over the allocation of limited resources and the fiscal future of my community requires the highest standard of integrity and honesty. ... I act in accordance with my deepest values, I put principle ahead of my own ego, and I do the right thing even when it's hard. ... I will uphold the letter and the spirit of the law; avoid conflicts of interest; ... and not seek personal gain in conduct of the public's business. ... Judgment is the application of my knowledge, skills, and abilities. Sound judgment requires testing my intentions, motivations, and exercising constant self-awareness. By paying attention to the effect that conflicting demands, pressing deadlines, and other biasing factors may have on my decision-making, I am more likely to choose in the best interest of the community I serve rather than my own personal interest."**

In addition to actual or perceived personal gain, I am heavily emotionally vested in the team I manage and the work we have accomplished. My sense of self and my identity are tied inexorably to this team and the work we have accomplished. No matter what, my opinion will be anything but objective.

My ultimate answer is that an experienced business consultant should be hired to evaluate the two proposed finance configurations and make a recommendation that we can all rely on to be independent in fact and appearance."

## Sarah Macy

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Sarah Macy, Finance Director

Recommended department status: To be determined/discussed

As Sarah has stated, the best future of the finance department depends on the “values, goals and direction of the organization.” Here are four options for the Trustees to consider (maybe there are more):

1. The Trustees could weigh in on their values, goals, and direction of the organization and choose that a separate finance department is best for the City.
2. The Trustees could weigh in on their values, goals, and direction of the organization and choose that a consolidated finance department is best for the City and begin a conversation with the Selectboard to see if they want to do the same and how that could best be accomplished.
3. The Trustees could hire a consultant to evaluate this question. It would be advisable to discuss with the Selectboard if they are interested in considering a consolidated finance department before a consultant is hired and if they are interested in exploring this question, if they would like to share in the selection of the consultant and cost.
4. The Trustees could decide that a future City Manager should weigh in on their values, goals, and direction of the organization and make their own choice about whether to have a city finance department or consolidated one with the Town of Essex.

Recommended position(s) for city: To be determined/discussed

Department: Fire

Department Head: Chris Gaboriault, Fire Chief

Current status: Village Only

Current positions: Fire Chief  
Paid-On-Call Volunteers

Department Head feedback:

“By separating, very little will be lost. Separation will have no impact on staffing, services, or costs. There will be benefits of not spending time on aligning and adjusting policies with another department. There is an established mutual aid policy, and the two fire departments will work together in regard to dispatch issues, and collaborate on standard guidelines. The coverage area of the Village vs. the Town is very different as the Village is 100% hydrants, with a focus on urban fire attack. The high-density living spaces being developed in the Village is helpful for recruitment efforts, as they are attracting new young people.”

This is the feedback that I heard from Chris Gaboriault, Fire Chief.

Recommended department status: City

The fire department has the resources to provide fire services for the Village. There is no need for additional stations, equipment, personnel, or budgets.

Recommended position(s) for city: No Changes from Current

Future Considerations:

The fire station will need some upgrades in the future, which will help support paid-on-call volunteers. At some point full-time positions will be a conversation.

Department: Human Resources

Department Head: Travis Sabatasso, HR Director

Current status: Town Consolidate Department

Current positions: HR Director 1.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

Travis thinks it will be more efficient and practical for each municipality to have their own human resources department. He believes that if one department is serving both there would be concerns of conflict of interest, conflicting policies, differing benefits, varying procedures, and three organized labor units - none of which would be working towards alignment and consolidation. The work of HR is very much personal, and building a sense of trust, comfort, and support can best be accomplished by hiring an HR professional vs. contracting these services.

Travis acknowledged that in separation there is less flexibility to explore future health care options with fewer employees to bargain with and that there are economies of scale that won't be realized with some larger package benefits i.e. life, disability, etc. There will be a loss of historical knowledge related to bargaining, employee issues, etc.

As was mentioned in the recent contract bargaining with the Village Association, the Village needs to do some work related to aligning their employment contract with other surrounding municipalities. In particular, the health care contributions from employees needs to come up and the pay structures need to be revised. The entire compensation structure should be overhauled and that work should be done by an outside firm. The current contract starts to work to fix the current issue of starting pay low, but accelerating it fast. More should be done in the next contract.

This is the feedback that I heard from Travis Sabatasso, HR Director.

Recommended department status: City

Travis is already overworked and arguably deserves a second full-time person in the current HR department. It currently works only because of Travis' skills and the fact that there is one manager who is controlling and helping policies and processes align as best as possible. As soon as that is not controlled, there really is no value in consolidating HR functions. While the Village did not previously have an HR manager, times have changed, the organization will be larger, and it came up in several discussions with other employees/department heads that it would be important/valuable for the City to have an HR department.

There are a few ways to consider the need and role of an assistant/deputy manager. I don't believe that the City needs an individual solely dedicated to management functions, and instead think that a department head should be tapped as being a director / assistant manager. The recommendation is for the HR director to be that person and oversee a few other departments heads.

Recommended position(s) for city: HR Director / Assistant Manager 1.0 FTE

Department: Information Technology

Department Head: Rob Paluba, IT Director

Current status: Town Consolidated Department

Current positions: IT Director 1.0 FTE  
Network Administrator 1.0 FTE  
GIS Coordinator 1.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

Rob reported that it would be challenging if not impossible to manage IT services for two separate municipalities through one IT department. He said that it would be difficult to be managed by two and to address conflicting decisions on IT decisions surrounding hardware and software preferences. It could only work if there was a very clear contract in place whereby both parties agreed to standardization of the IT services for both groups of personnel to follow. This type of contract would be complex. There would be a lack of flexibility. Essentially the hands of both managers would be tied and the departments would be less agile.

Rob believes that having an IT department and personnel is a better approach vs contracting for these services. By employing it gives you someone that is invested, knowledgeable, and is working and looking out for the best interests of the municipality in all IT arenas. A contract can result in inconsistent help and a lack of a 30,000' view. Rob thinks this could be best accomplished with 1.5 FTE.

The Village does not currently have the IT infrastructure to support IT services (servers, accounts, storage, firewalls, switches, etc.). It will be pretty expensive to stand-up the IT infrastructure. He will put together some rough estimates.

This is the feedback that I heard from Rob Paluba, IT Director.

Recommended department status: City

There are many benefits to having an in-house IT department. Rob enumerated many of those above. It is recommended that this is what is budgeted for. In the event that a contractor relationship is desired, some options include: the Tech Group, Symquest, and The Leahy Center. The Village used to contract IT services, but things are different in today's world vs. eight years ago.

The Leahy Center at Champlain College is currently working on a contract with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) to A) perform assessments for 10 municipalities on IT needs and recommendations and B) help to create a draft template RFP for municipalities who want to go to bid for contracted IT services. The Leahy Center is a resource that could be used to perform an assessment and pricing of the Village's needs. They also have a managed service center. Using contracted IT services would be less expensive vs. employing someone. Using an employee based IT system in the budget/plan will allow a future manager to determine the best course of action. If they choose a contractor, IT services will be less expensive than originally anticipated.

Recommended position(s) for city: IT Director 1.0 FTE

Department: Police

Department Head: Ron Hoague, Chief of Police

Current status: Town Consolidated Department

Current positions: Chief of Police 1.0 FTE  
Full-time 36.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

The Chief firmly believes that a city of Essex Junction and Town of Essex will be best served by a singular Essex Police Department. He is preparing a recommendation to both boards indicating as such. Some salient points from our conversation included:

- There is already a community discussion of citizen oversight. Maybe a contract between the two municipalities can incorporate this. Having this oversight be provided by board members or their appointees/designees is desirable so that there is an appropriate vetting process.
- A future funding formula is best not determined based on calls for service. This measure is too variable and evaluating it as a measure of funding will be volatile based on current community needs. Other methods such as grand list, per capita, or other should be evaluated by the boards and are more stable forms of calculation.
- Any police agreement should honor the history of the Village and Town police services relationship and carry that through into the future in terms of ownership, oversight, and funding. This includes the debt for the current police facility and future maintenance of the facility. Village and Town outside the Village residents have equally contributed, and this should be honored in an operations agreement.
- Whatever the arrangement, it should be long term and have a long lead of any chance any party could cancel, if there is even a cancellation option. There are several examples of police contracts with short terms that drastically impact the department's future on renewal or not (note: article references for Greensboro, St. Albans, and Sharon). This poses challenges in hiring new officers, if it is known that their employment could be terminated due to ongoing contract negotiations.
- Any contract should accept police services as all-encompassing to both communities, as assigned by the chief, who is overseen by two managers, and receives input from a joint oversight board. Contracts that specify number of hours of patrol, number of officers, etc. should be avoided. Essex Police should provide law enforcement to the two municipalities as deemed necessary and appropriate, and not be locked into expectations that could adversely affect police services.

## Ron Hoague

Ron Hoague, Chief of Police

Recommended department status: Shared Service with Town of Essex

It is recommended that the Trustees work with the Selectboard to develop a long-term relationship for shared police services.

Recommended position(s) for city: No Changes from Current

Department: Public Works

Department Head: Ricky Jones, Public Works Superintendent

Current status: Village Only; Financial Consolidation

Current positions: Public Works Superintendent 1.0 FTE  
Full-time 7.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

Village Public Works already operates independently. There will not be any changes necessary if the Village becomes a city.

This is the feedback that I heard from Rick Jones, Public Works Superintendent.

Recommended department status: City

The Village already pays for and maintains the Village streets, water/sewer, and assets. Village Public Works prides itself on the way they treat residents – by giving a little bit extra. The Village is also reputable for their street and sidewalk clearing.

Recommended position(s) for city: No Changes from Current

Future Considerations:

The highway garage will need to be replaced in the next five to ten years. This isn't new news, but important to consider in the future.



Department: Recreation & Parks

Department Head: Brad Luck, Recreation & Parks Director

Current status: Village Only; Co-Located

Current positions: Recreation & Parks Director 1.0 FTE  
Full-time 20.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

From Brad Luck, EJRP Director and Ally Vile, EPR Director:

“We see great value in breaking down structural barriers to truly become one recreation department that serves the future city of Essex Junction and Town of Essex.

With co-location, we have been able to see significant advantages for our community, recreation users, and staff. We have reduced the duplication of each department printing 10,000 brochures four times per year. We only use one license for our rec software. People now have one recreation website, social media, phone number, log-in and office to go to. There are economies of scale. There are cost savings. We have been able to restructure internally to have staff specialize and focus their attention on different types of recreation and/or age groups. For example, prior to co-location, there were three program directors between the two departments – two at EJRP and one at EPR. The EJRP program directors had split duties, as one was responsible for sports and fitness, and the other community recreation (pool, youth, adult, senior, community events). The EPR program director did all the above. Today, the EJRP program director for sports and fitness does that for all EJRP and EPR programs. The EJRP program director for community recreation now focuses on adult programming and community events for both communities and the EPR program director focuses on youth programming and community events for both communities. We are better able to focus on variety and quality. By planning together, we are not duplicating programs. Having a larger staff also gives us greater flexibility in spreading out events and taking on new initiatives. We have more people to brainstorm with, plan for, and staff events.

While the Village and Town outside the Village have clear boundaries; our parks, recreation services, and people, do not. Our schools are all a part of one district. Our kids and families share similar school experiences and schedules. Our schools are also very much our recreation centers in Essex. We rely heavily on our schools to provide space and coordinating that use through one department is far more effective than competing for it between two. Civic organizations (Lions, Rotary), non-profits (Essex CHIPS, Heavenly Food Pantry, Aung Dot’s, Essex Rescue), and youth sports organizations (Essex United Soccer Club, Essex Youth Football League, Essex Youth Hockey Association) focus on the greater Essex as their home and constituents, while many also serve beyond. Similarly, many youth sports programs offered through recreation have been developed to serve the entire Essex community. It gives the programs greater numbers, more flexibility in scheduling, and eliminates duplication of services between the two communities. This happens for fall soccer, youth basketball, Bolton Ski Program, and lacrosse. These programs serve hundreds of kids each year.

Senior services are very much intertwined and consolidated. The budget for senior services (senior program director, senior buses) is in the Town and shared equally by all residents. The Essex Area Senior Center is housed at 2 Lincoln Street, a Village owned property. The senior program enterprise fund is in the Village budget. These two important senior services, along with general senior programming, should continue to stay together and serve the City and Town.

While co-location has brought about many great changes and advantages for our community, it is not a sustainable strategy - to be two separate departments under one roof, sharing resources. We have employees who work for different unions/associations. Our pay scales do not align, nor do our benefits, holidays, or personnel regulations. We have two separate budgets and capital plans. We still are not looking at recreation and parks as a whole. We can better organize our staffs through a singular organizational structure, and better address the communities' program and park needs by evaluating them in their entirety.

The city of Essex Junction and Town of Essex will be best served through a singular recreation department. We encourage the Trustees and Selectboard to discuss how to make that happen.

Recommended department status:      Shared Service with Town of Essex

It is recommended that the Trustees work with the Selectboard to develop a long-term relationship for shared recreation and parks services.

Recommended position(s) for city:      No Changes from Current (Including Town Positions)

Department: Wastewater (not including Stormwater)

Department Head: Jim Jutras, Water Quality Superintendent

Current status: Village department; Tri-Town Water Facility

Current positions: Water Quality Superintendent 1.0 FTE  
Full-time 4.0 FTE  
Regular part-time 1.0 FTE

Department Head feedback:

There are no impacts on wastewater in creating the City. Wastewater services are consolidated and serving three towns.

**James L. Jutras**

Jim Jutras, Water Quality Superintendent

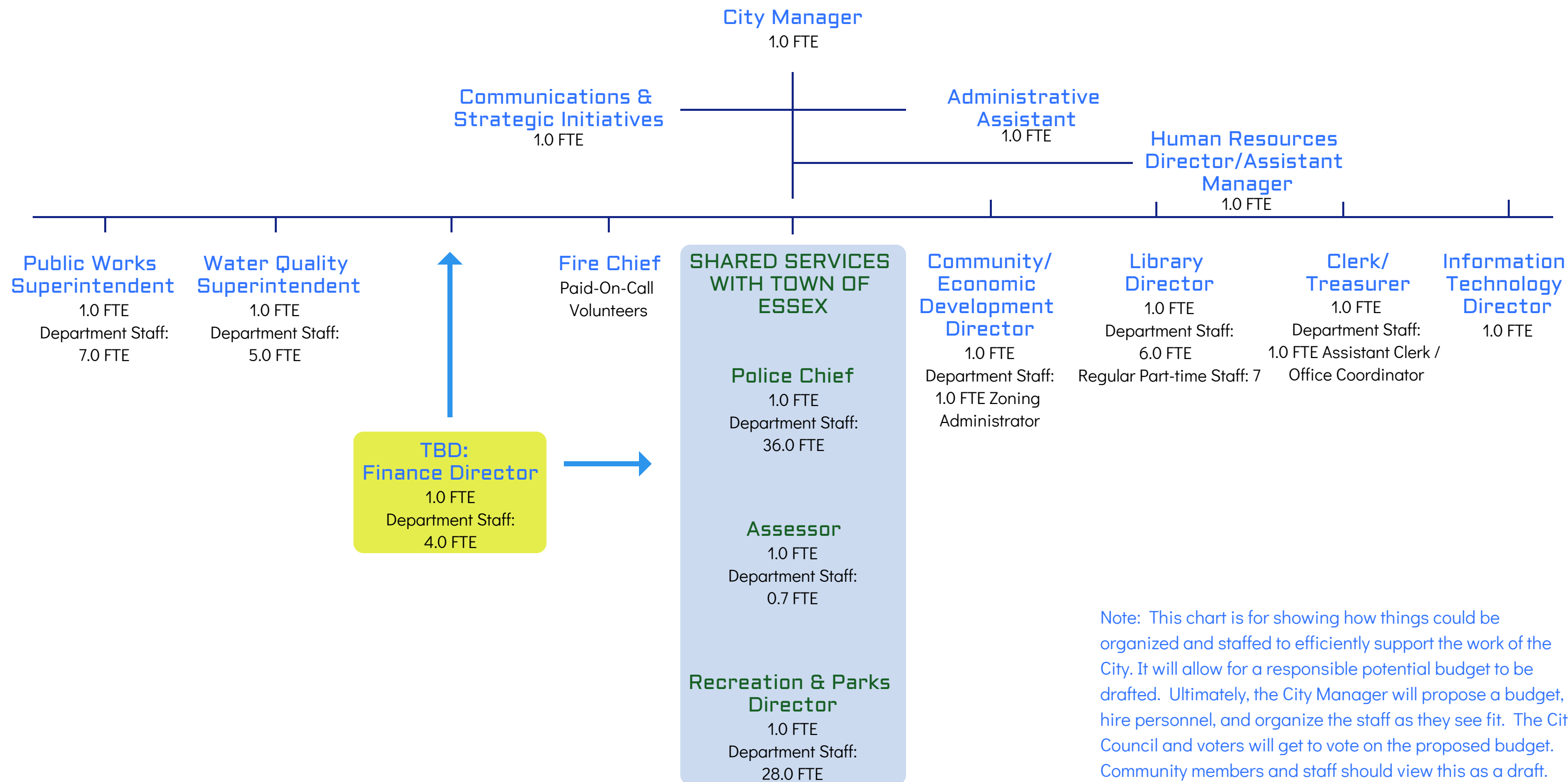
Recommended department status: City

Recommended position(s) for city: No Change from Current

# Organizational Chart

## City of Essex Junction

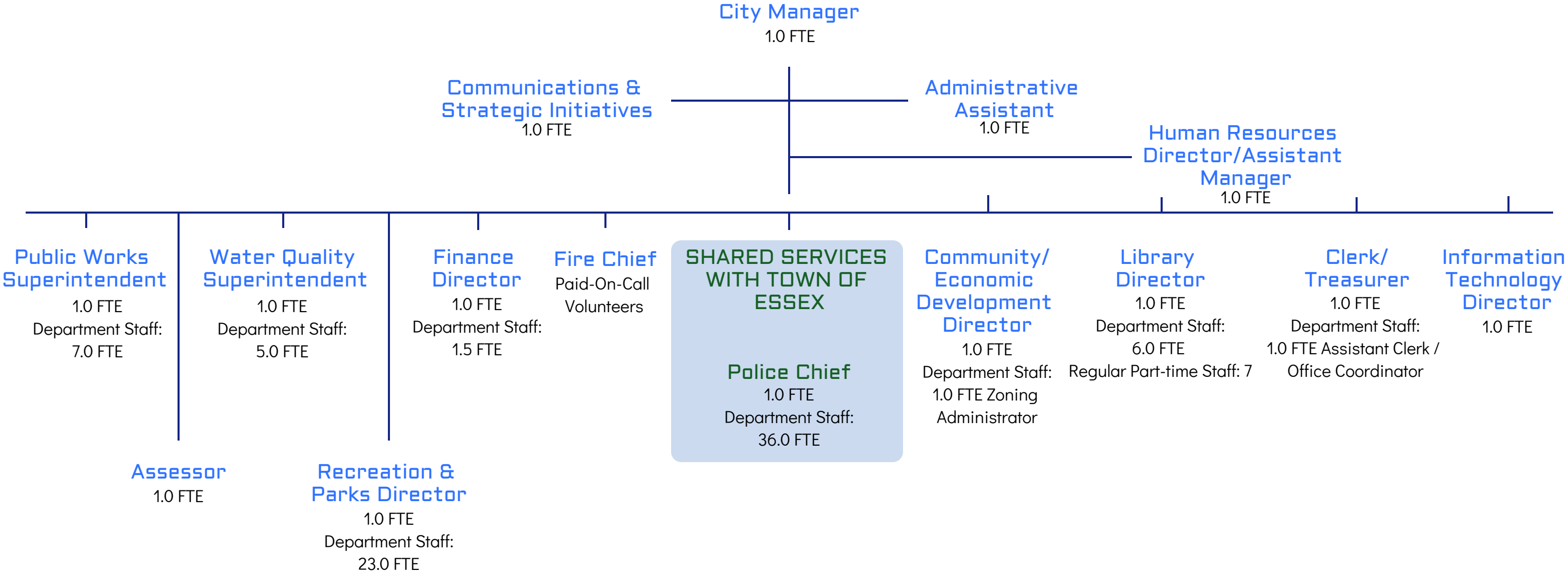
VERSION:  
SHARING 3 DEPARTMENTS  
WITH THE TOWN OF ESSEX;  
FINANCE TO BE DETERMINED  
IF VILLAGE ONLY OR SHARED



# Organizational Chart

## City of Essex Junction

VERSION:  
SHARING ONLY POLICE



Note: This chart is for showing how things could be organized and staffed to efficiently support the work of the City. It will allow for a responsible potential budget to be drafted. Ultimately, the City Manager will propose a budget, hire personnel, and organize the staff as they see fit. The City Council and voters will get to vote on the proposed budget. Community members and staff should view this as a draft.

DRAFT

City of Essex Junction

# From Charter to City

