

## 5/11 Trustee Work Session on Essex Junction Independence

On May 11, the Trustees held a work session on Essex Junction Independence. The following is what was discussed.

The Trustees will be using approximately the first hour of each of their regularly scheduled meetings to have a work session to discuss Essex Junction Independence. The public will be given the opportunity to speak at the start of each work session.

The Trustees reviewed a timeline of meeting dates and discussion focal points, leading to a November 2, 2021, vote on a new independent charter.

Representatives Houghton and Dolan joined to discuss the legislative process for the charter if it passes in November. The Representatives would then introduce a bill in the House. Representative Houghton stressed it is not just the new charter which is important but also a transition plan from the status quo to becoming an independent city. Since there will be tax implications for both the Village and Town municipalities, the House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee will need to review and approve of the charter and transition plan. It will need to pass through two House committees, the entire chamber, two Senate committees, the full Senate, and be signed by the Governor.

The Trustees reviewed feedback surrounding the level of discussion and engagement needed on the initial 52 sections of the charter. They identified 5 items in the charter that are of the highest importance for engagement and weigh-in from the community. These items included: form of government, the election of officials, governing body composition, term of office, and an annual day for meetings and elections. They will discuss how to engage the community in these conversations at the next meeting.

Trustee George Tyler will begin by using the failed merger charter that the Trustees and voters approved in 2020 as the baseline for the new city charter. He will track changes and start updating the document to reflect the city of Essex Junction and feedback from the Trustees. The Trustees will begin to review the revised charter at the next meeting.

The Trustees discussed outreach and engagement strategies for the overall initiative. Work session summaries will continue to be shared with the community and staff, along with updating materials at <https://www.essexjunction.org/independence>. The Trustees consented to using Placespeak, an online forum for citizen engagement that will help ensure respondents are from the Village. More information to come soon on how citizens can engage in this way. Additionally, the Trustees are considering direct mailing postcards to homes, hosting coffee chats, and sponsoring community forums. These strategies will be discussed further next meeting.

If you have feedback on the work session, you are encouraged to share your thoughts here: <https://forms.gle/NtuFtz79hEf4EP7X7>.

If you missed the work session, but would like to watch it, you can find it here (starting at minute 24:40 and ending at 1:53:30): <https://youtu.be/79gB1q6uqh0?t=1480>.

The next work session will take place as the first item on the agenda at the May 25 Trustees meeting, which starts at 6:30p.m. The meeting agenda and link will be posted a few days before the meeting here: <https://www.essexjunction.org/boards/board-of-trustees>.

**Memo**

To: Village Trustees

From: Brad Luck, Director, EJRP

Date: May 5, 2021

Re: Work Session: Essex Junction Independence

**Essex Junction Independence**

Goal

To create an independent Essex Junction, ensuring that it: has a foundation that provides for economic and political stability, reflects the Village character, has opportunity for growth, and looks towards the future.

How we will get there

This will be a Village led process that is future-oriented. We will steer clear of distractions and act with civility, transparency, and deliberateness. The Trustees will work to develop consensus and speak with a consistent voice. We will engage with, bring together, seek input from, and work to inform our community. We will work with the Selectboard and maintain a healthy relationship with our neighbors in the Town.

Tonight, we will be discussing:

- A. Timeline leading to November 2 vote
- B. Charter legislative process with Representatives Houghton and Dolan
- C. Charter items
- D. Charter writing process
- E. Outreach strategies

- A. Timeline leading to November 2 vote

Below please find a potential/draft timeline.

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Focal Points</b>
Trustees Meeting	27-Apr	Meet with attorney. Trustee goals and operating norms. Community Conversations. Budget/source of funds. Timeline and scope of work. Outreach strategies.
Trustees Meeting	11-May	Timeline. Charter legislative process with Representatives. Charter items. Charter writing plan. Outreach strategies.
Trustees Meeting	25-May	Charter walk through. Charter items discussion. Charter engagement.
Trustees Meeting	8-Jun	Charter review. Charter engagement.
<b>ADDED</b> Full Day Work Session	BETWEEN 6/9-6/21	Full day work session on personnel, organizational structure, and budget. Options with attorney. MOU's. Assets/buildings. Approach/plan for working with Selectboard. Transitional Provisions.
Trustees Meeting	22-Jun	Charter review. Committees. Intergovernmental/Health & Human Services. FY22 independent org chart and budget based on planned service delivery/organization.
Trustees Meeting	13-Jul	Charter review. Organization and budget. Transitional Provisions.
<b>ADDED</b> Work Session	27-Jul	Transitional Provisions.
Trustees Meeting	10-Aug	Community booklet content. Village Summit plan and promotion.
Trustees Meeting	24-Aug	Community Conversations presentation.
<b>ADDED</b> Work Session	31-Aug	Charter, organization, budget review for alignment with community.
<b>ADDED</b> 11-Sep		VILLAGE SUMMIT: Community conversations, charter, organization, and budget. Resident feedback opportunity.
Trustees Meeting	14-Sep	Charter, organization, budget review for alignment with Summit feedback. Charter approval.
	15-Sep	Charter filed with clerk at least 10 days before first public hearing
<b>ADDED</b> Public Hearing	28-Sep	First public hearing (between 9/25-10/3 – at least 30 days before vote); approval of warning of charter vote for November 2
	29-Sep	Vote warned (9/23-10/3 - not less than 30 or more than 40 days)
Trustees Meeting	12-Oct	Second public hearing on charter. Last chance for charter revisions (actually 10/13, 20 days before vote).
	13-Oct	Last day for any charter revisions (20-days before vote)
Trustees Meeting	26-Oct	No work session on Essex Junction Independence.
Trustees Meeting	2-Nov	Vote. TRUSTEES BUDGET WORKSHOP DAY.

The timeline is presented for the Trustees to discuss. If there is interest in a full day work session, preferred days/times to explore should be discussed so a Doodle poll can go out. Additionally, it is advisable to begin working with the Selectboard in mid-June, after the Trustees have had preliminary conversations about the charter and future organization. Should you agree, the Trustees should discuss if and how you would like to communicate this to the Selectboard, so they have an understanding of the timeline and recognition that you anticipate working with them soon.

B. Charter legislative process with Representatives Houghton and Dolan

Representatives Houghton and Dolan will join us to discuss the process for advancing the charter through the legislative process should the voters pass it.

C. Charter items

As George has stated, charters are pretty boiler plate. However, there are a variety of items that will be worthy of discussion, debate, and engagement with the community. At the meeting we will review Trustee survey feedback and discuss what items belong on this list.

D. Charter writing process

Below is a suggested approach to writing the charter:

Today:

- identify high priority discussion items
- discuss what materials people would like to review prior to 5/25
- determine how we want to discuss the charter on 5/25 – work off from existing/'99/merger/other charter, or have one/two members provide a draft document to walk through on 5/25
- discuss how, when, and on what we want to engage with citizens on charter related items

Between 5/12 and 5/25:

- review distributed materials
- Trustee survey to help identify alignment, questions, etc.
- Citizen engagement (if deemed appropriate)

5/25:

- Discuss Trustee survey results
- Discuss citizen engagement received
- Discuss charter items list
  - Things to add
  - Things to remove
  - Things that can be narrowed down
- Walk through charter for clarifications, observations, suggestions
- Citizen engagement next steps

Between 5/26 and 6/8:

- Two members write/edit draft charter
- Citizen engagement next steps

6/8:

- Walk through charter updates for clarifications, observations, suggestions
- Citizen engagement next steps

The Trustees should discuss and develop a plan for writing the charter.

#### E. Outreach strategies

We will continue to distribute work session summaries on Front Porch Forum, the Village website, and social media. It also is being e-mailed to all Village and Town staff.

We will continue to update and add materials to the website.

**Placespeak** – Below is a brief summary about Placespeak. You can learn more at [placespeak.com](http://placespeak.com).

How do you conduct online consultations within a specific geographic region, and then prove the people responding are actually from that area? Enter PlaceSpeak, a pioneering location-based citizen engagement platform that is designed to facilitate high-quality, defensible public input processes.

At the meeting we will review the start of our project site and discuss if this is a platform that we want to use to engage the community. Placespeak also has features that includes polls, surveys, discussions, noticeboards, interactive maps, events, and resources. Should we not proceed with Placespeak, these are some other strategies we may want to use separately.

**Direct Mail** – Mailing to all residences seems to be one of the most effective strategies to get the word out. Here is a possible schedule of mailers:

- May – postcard to inform about the initiative, goals, operating norms, work session schedule, website, contact information, and other opportunities adopted (i.e. placespeak, coffee chats, forums, etc.)
- Late August/Early September – postcard Summit invite and details
- Late September – Essex Junction Independence booklet: charter, organization, budget, timeline, FAQ's, vote information, etc.

**Coffee Chats** – The Trustees could consider holding coffee chats with residents as informal opportunities for them to ask questions and make suggestions. If this is of interest, the Trustees should consider if these will be in-person or online (or both), if on-line will they be recorded and shared, the format/plan, frequency, days, dates, times, etc.

**Forums** – The Trustees could consider holding a/some public forums that could provide education, discussion, and information gathering from participants. At this juncture, they could be more general about governmental structure, municipal services, budget, etc. This could also be considered in the future as things are more developed i.e. if the Charter makes a fair amount of progress and you want to get feedback on how things look so far, that could happen in July/August.

Attachments:

- Trustee survey results pre 4/27 work session
- Community feedback from 4/27 work session
- Vermont cities summary & chart

# Trustee Survey

Hi- it would be great to get your thoughts on the following by the end of the day Monday, 4/26, so that we can share the results and discuss on Tuesday, 4/27. The information will be consolidated and made public, but we are not asking for your name on the survey. If you have any questions, please let me know. Thanks.  
-Brad, [bluck@ejrp.org](mailto:bluck@ejrp.org), 802-310-4067

As we pursue independence, what are the top 3-5 outcomes you hope will be reached by the conclusion of this process?

1. SUCCESS – which means having a stone cold sober understanding of the profound challenges we face having the Government Operations Committee and State Legislature approve a separation charter.
  2. CONTROL – of our own economic destiny – no longer having a substantial portion of our financial resources used to subsidize the cost of municipal services outside the village.
  3. PEACE – to have our local government’s business detached from the non-stop political drama, disruption, public records investigations, and vitriol that have come to characterize the Town government over the last decade.
  4. STABILITY – to have created the legal/governance foundation for long-term political, economic, and developmental stability.
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As we engage in this process, what are 3-5 operating principles you think we should abide by?  
i.e. We should make sure that we do.....or We should make sure that we do not.....etc.

1. DON'T PUT STAFF IN THE MIDDLE --- We, trustees and selectboard, unanimously created a unified manager and administration and we, trustees and selectboard, unanimously instructed the manager and administration to set the two governments on a course for consolidation. They did a magnificent job in helping us bring a complex merger process to conclusion. They did what we asked and much, much more. We have a moral responsibility to respect their neutrality and to be sensitive to the stress and disruption they've been put through over the last year and the incredibly stressful situation we're putting them in now. They're human beings, not pieces on a political chessboard; they're career professionals supporting families; they've committed themselves to this "community" which is now coming apart. Don't ask them to take sides and do give them reassurance that we are looking out for them.
  2. DON'T LET EMOTIONS CLOUD OUR JUDGEMENT --- We should assume that the anti-merger, anti-village disinformation machine will now transform into the anti-separation disinformation machine. The aim, as always, will be to stir up hate and polarization, confuse voters, insult staff and board members, and disrupt the process. We can't let the urge to strike back distract us from the task at hand. The people in the TOV are good people; the hate-mongers don't represent them. The fact that the TOV didn't want to merge doesn't make them our enemies. Each side – village and town – simply wants to go their own way. We need to be community leaders with nerves of steel, good humor, compassion, and intelligence.
  3. GET READY FOR SOME LONG MEETINGS --- We're bound to have disagreements, but we need to go forward as a unified board. So, we need to be respectful of each other's differences and be ready to do the hard work of finding compromise, which can make for some long nights. We shouldn't have any illusions that this is going to be a relaxing summer. At the same time, we need to be merciful to our staff. I suggest to Andrew that if and when disagreements arise at board meetings, we isolate the disagreement and defer further discussion until we complete all other board business. This would allow some staff members to leave the meeting. I urge Andrew and Evan to confer about other ways to operate meetings that won't require staff and other visitors to sit through long segments of discussion that don't concern them.
  4. DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL --- Separation and merger are closely related in the same realm of municipal law. The governance subcommittee, with much assistance from Dan Richardson, did a ton of research about relevant municipal law, governance, and municipal charters. We – the Village – paid for this information and we should use it. I would be happy to work with staff to sort through and reorganize the governance subcommittee data to produce a packet of information for each trustee. Also, I don't wish to put Evan in the middle on this, but he interacted with Dan quite a bit to help the subcommittee and can probably answer a lot of our legal/legislative questions.
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What are the most important aspects you want addressed in the Charter (language, principles, concepts)?

This question concerns me a little because I believe municipal charters are fairly boilerplate, having reviewed many of them for the last three years. I wouldn't characterize a charter as an opportunity for exploring novel language, principles, and concepts. All "aspects" are important or they aren't included. That being said, I think the core question(s) we must wrestle with asap in creating a city charter are 1) Do we want a mayor? 2) If so, do we want a strong or weak mayor model? 3) What are the powers of the manager?

The present Essex Junction charter is actually a pretty cool document relative to other charters. The language is up to date and elegant. Dave Barra's expertise shines through. I would suggest we cannibalize it along with the merger charter we approved last November to create a draft charter which we could amend and improve fairly quickly at one or two board meetings with a bit of guidance and review by the Village attorney.

As we consider the future provision of Essex Junction government services, what is most important to you?

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES --- We have far too many roads and sidewalks that have deteriorated -- particularly in the Indian Acres neighborhood -- during the many years that our resources were siphoned away to help pay for road/sidewalk repairs in the town. This is the number one reason I pushed for merger and it is now the number one reason I would support separation. We absolutely cannot continue to subsidize road repairs in the town while our own roads collapse. It's insane!

FIRE DEPARTMENT --- We must do everything we can to maintain its "volunteer" status. I've studied the municipal budgets of other small cities in Vermont and they're getting killed paying for professional full time fire departments. This also speaks to why we must come to agreement with Essex Town to maintain the EPD in its present configuration. The EPD has 24/7 state-of-the-art dispatch which is comparatively cost effective and would be hugely expensive to re-create, and I would not feel comfortable relying on another community's dispatch. This is one of those boring nuts and bolts issues that's profoundly important.

In this entire process of seeking independence, what opportunities do you see for the Village?

We could become the coolest little city in northern New England. Our municipal plan + Design Five Corners vision are solid and forward-thinking. To quote Julie Campoli, we have great bones. Our identity and tax base is as a desirable, walkable, family-friendly residential community and transportation hub. We're never going to be a commercial/industrial powerhouse. We need to see Global Foundries as an add-on benefit and not an anchor. Our opportunity is to really focus on and strengthen our identity as a diverse, dynamic, high-quality-of-life, desirable place to live in the heart of Chittenden County.

In this entire process of seeking independence, what are the biggest challenges you see for the Village?

DEALING WITH THE TOWN --- When the selectboard and its supporters in the TOV fully comprehend the financial impact of separation and that no town services can be scaled back to cut costs, they're likely to do all they can to prevent separation from happening. Based on previous behavior, this will probably include expressing sudden, new found, deep concern about the well being of their constituents in the Village and the "whole community." I believe this effort will follow two tracks: 1. "The town provides important services for the village that they can't provide themselves." This is easily countered by pointing out that the village pays nearly half the cost of those services; 2. "The Village has no room for growth and will therefore face stagnant grand list growth and rising property taxes." This is trickier to counter because it plays to most peoples' erroneous belief that economic growth depends on creating new businesses on undeveloped land. We will need to craft an easy-to-communicate narrative which explains that there are many ways to achieve economic development and the village is starting from a financially strong and viable position.

But – we must not underestimate the anxiety that many Essex Junction residents will likely feel about separation, which is why our public outreach will be critical. And – this is also why I believe we should make a sincere attempt to open a dialogue with the selectboard as soon as possible. Perhaps we can convince them that, while separation will cause a TOV tax increase, collaborating with us could mitigate its impacts. Separation might compel the TOV to really think about where they're going as a suburban/rural community and what they want to be. It could be an opportunity for a healthy, productive, and long overdue dialogue in the TOV.

Also – a dialogue with the selectboard could improve our chances for success with the Government Operations Committee, which is the next biggest challenge.

DEALING WITH THE GOV OPS COMMITTEE --- We must get it into our heads that the Gov Ops committee is not going to welcome the controversy and potential turmoil of a separation charter on their doorstep, particularly if the Town is opposing it. We must get it into our heads that they aren't going to care about our enthusiasm for creating a new city, our fed-up-ness with the Town, the history, the political bickering, etc., etc. They are only going to care about the facts in front of them: Have we thought everything through? Have we done a financial analysis? What about community services? What about the impact on the Town? And – most important – could this in any way have an impact on the state's most expensive school district (i.e. Essex-Westford)?

Within this setting, it should be obvious to all of us that our chances for success would be infinitely improved if the Town was supporting us. Is it a longshot to garner their support? Yes, but it's not impossible and the benefits vastly outweigh the risks. The selectboard understands that we have a mandate from village voters to put a city charter on a ballot in November. We won't be deterred from doing this. Within that framework I strongly urge us to consider sitting with the selectboard asap to test whether we might have a willing partner. Gaining their support or, at least, convincing them to not actively oppose us would be the most important step we could take to help our cause.

DEALING WITH VILLAGE VOTERS --- Don't let the overwhelming support for the separation resolution cloud our judgement. Most Village voters don't closely follow the issues and they are about to be bombarded with disinformation about separation. They will be skeptical about our economic viability and the anti-separation disinformation machine with play this up. This is where the citizen committee we're putting together will

play the crucial role of providing reassurance and accurate information, and growing the grass roots movement required for success.

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What are some questions you would like to have answered (either through discussion as a board, conversation with the public, with staff, or with an attorney)?

1. When did we decide we weren't going to discuss separation with the selectboard? I don't recall making that decision yet it suddenly seems to be a foregone conclusion. I'd appreciate some dialogue on this question.
  2. Who is going to do the necessary financial analysis that will provide the data backbone for public outreach? As Sarah Macy has explained time and again, the potential costs and savings from separation totally depend on whether and how many services we might share with the Town. If we're to have no dialogue with the Town, then should we assume no cost savings for shared services, other than police? Has anyone looked at those numbers? Wouldn't it be wise to see those numbers right away before we firm up our decision not to collaborate with the Town? My apologies to all other staff but I only have confidence in Sarah's numbers. I can't support asking voters to approve a charter based on our own or another staff member's inexpert calculations, and I'm really not happy about compelling Sarah to do this kind of work. This could implicate her in a political struggle and that's not her job. We need to discuss this.
  3. When do we start talking to the town about the police? Who will do the talking? What if they say no?
  4. Shouldn't someone approach the Gov Ops committee concerning our prospects for success and what they might like to see or, at the very least, to let them know what we're up to? Might be a good idea folks! You can bet that the anti-separation people will be reaching out to them.
  5. Should we develop a timeline asap? There's no local, state, or federal election in November that I'm aware of so, with due respect for the non-binding resolution authors, is it necessary to stick to a November ballot? If so, we'll need to have things wrapped up by October, which is six months from now. I doubt we can make that deadline by only working during routine trustee meetings, so should we consider scheduling some additional meetings or weekend workshops?
  6. I'm aware that certain anti-merger activists in the town were touting a "separate and share" plan and I suspect the resentment towards those folks might have had something to do with the separation petition urging us not to pursue any shared services with the town. Is this true? Can we discuss this? Because if this is true then we need to smarten up. First, there's no copyright on the words "separate" or "share." We can use those words too and they don't have anything to do with the someone else's plan. If we can save our taxpayers some money by sharing services with the town AND improve our chances for success with the Gov Ops committee, why would we not do it? This is an example of what I mean by not letting emotions get in the way of good judgement.
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There is a group of citizens who are interested in helping with community conversations - informing the community of what is happening, getting their feedback, and developing values and a vision for the Village. What are some things you hope this group will come back to the Trustees with?

I've got ideas about this and the remaining questions below but I've said enough already. I'm sure the other trustees will have plenty of constructive things to say about these things and you don't need my verbiage. I'm mostly concerned with the nuts and bolts of a separation agreement with the town and creating a solid charter.

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I am most excited about:

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

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Google Forms

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-Brad, [bluck@ejrp.org](mailto:bluck@ejrp.org), 802-310-4067

As we pursue independence, what are the top 3-5 outcomes you hope will be reached by the conclusion of this process?

1. Community understanding of what is being voted on
2. A City designed for the future and not just doing what has always been done the way we have always done it
3. Local options tax
4. As little sharing with other municipalities as possible

As we engage in this process, what are 3-5 operating principles you think we should abide by? i.e. We should make sure that we do.....or We should make sure that we do not.....etc.

1. This is a Village run process with input from SB only when we need to discussing sharing something
2. Quickly come to consensus on the board of what to share, governance model, representation model
3. Keep the community informed and counteract any misinformation
4. Trustees have a consistent voice

What are the most important aspects you want addressed in the Charter (language, principles, concepts)?

1. Keep it flexible to not hamstring future boards or innovation

As we consider the future provision of Essex Junction government services, what is most important to you?

1. Eye towards the future of continued population growth and aging
2. "Cultural" services which attract so many families to thenVillage (Rec, library, etc.)
3. With a densely (by VT standards) populated community not pricing out the average person/family and mental health/substance use services

In this entire process of seeking independence, what opportunities do you see for the Village?

1. Redefining ourselves
2. Mayor for increased clout in Montpelier
3. Better communication and engagement with residents

In this entire process of seeking independence, what are the biggest challenges you see for the Village?

1. Combating "we are too small", "what about when GF leaves"
2. Not getting bogged down in minor details which can be fixed later

What are some questions you would like to have answered (either through discussion as a board, conversation with the public, with staff, or with an attorney)?

1. Does the Village want a mayor (not necessarily a BTV mayor)
2. Do we want a district based representation system
3. How can we share police services with another municipality as equals

There is a group of citizens who are interested in helping with community conversations - informing the community of what is happening, getting their feedback, and developing values and a vision for the Village. What are some things you hope this group will come back to the Trustees with?

Many of these same questions we are being asked

I am most excited about:

Creating an independent Essex Junction

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

None at the moment but they will arise as we continue through this process.

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As we pursue independence, what are the top 3-5 outcomes you hope will be reached by the conclusion of this process?

- \* Existence as an autonomous community focused on the specific needs of our unique community now and into the future.
- \* Immediate tax relief instead of waiting 12 years.
- \* No longer having to pay taxes for duplicative services, other than any services that we agree to share such as police services.
- \* Financial from the burden of future capital improvements in the outside the Junction.
- \* A smaller more streamlined work environment that doesn't require Village staff and employees to answer to multiple people in different locations. There will be less confusion for staff and citizens in our community.

As we engage in this process, what are 3-5 operating principles you think we should abide by? i.e. We should make sure that we do....or We should make sure that we do not.....etc.

- \* We should engage with the citizens and poll them with specific questions for suggestions.
- \* A timeline must be created. It has to layout when specific tasks will have to be completed or accomplished in order to move this process forward for a vote in November.
- \* We should work out an amicable agreement(s) with the Selectboard regarding police services and any other services the two municipalities may deem mutually beneficial to maintain sharing into the future.
- \* We must not get caught up in petty banter or lengthy discussions with Selectboard or members of the community. This behavior is divisive and will distract us from accomplishing our goal on time.

What are the most important aspects you want addressed in the Charter (language, principles, concepts)?

\* I'm most concerned that the Charter contains the best system of governance for the community now and into the future.

As we consider the future provision of Essex Junction government services, what is most important to you?

I believe it's most important for our local government to continue the high level of services the people of Essex Junction have come expect over the years. This higher level of service has come to be known as "The Village Way."

In this entire process of seeking independence, what opportunities do you see for the Village?

We can become a more attractive community to live in and do business in now, and into the future. As an independent community we will no longer be distracted by the needs of the community outside the Village, and we can focus our efforts on our unique needs and desires.

In this entire process of seeking independence, what are the biggest challenges you see for the Village?

Our biggest challenge will be to keep focused on our goal of independence and not being distracted by individuals or groups opposed to separation. We will also have to make sure we maintain an amicable relationship with our neighbors outside of the Village. It will be difficult to get approval of the Vermont Legislature if we don't work with the Selectboard and establish an amicable separation.

What are some questions you would like to have answered (either through discussion as a board, conversation with the public, with staff, or with an attorney)?

Local option tax?  
City Mayor or City Manager?  
Districts?

There is a group of citizens who are interested in helping with community conversations - informing the community of what is happening, getting their feedback, and developing values and a vision for the Village. What are some things you hope this group will come back to the Trustees with?

I would like to hear from community members and business owners who may not live in our community regarding their vision of the community moving forward. They may have suggestions on how to save or reduce taxes without reducing the level of services. Maybe we contract out some more services like we do with the engineering services in the Village unlike the Town paying to maintain an engineer on the staff.

I am most excited about:

I'm excited to have the opportunity to move forward as an independent community focused on our unique needs and desires.

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

We must remain engaged with our legislators during this process.

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As we pursue independence, what are the top 3-5 outcomes you hope will be reached by the conclusion of this process?

Maintain village character; bring us closer together as a community; efficiency.

As we engage in this process, what are 3-5 operating principles you think we should abide by? i.e. We should make sure that we do.....or We should make sure that we do not.....etc.

Civility; focus on the present/future, not the past.

What are the most important aspects you want addressed in the Charter (language, principles, concepts)?

Charter is pretty straightforward.

As we consider the future provision of Essex Junction government services, what is most important to you?

In this entire process of seeking independence, what opportunities do you see for the Village?

In this entire process of seeking independence, what are the biggest challenges you see for the Village?

Hiring of staff; timeline for completion

What are some questions you would like to have answered (either through discussion as a board, conversation with the public, with staff, or with an attorney)?

There has been a lot of discussion in social media and during public comment about whether or not the Town votes on separation - I'd that to be officially answered on the public record.

There is a group of citizens who are interested in helping with community conversations - informing the community of what is happening, getting their feedback, and developing values and a vision for the Village. What are some things you hope this group will come back to the Trustees with?

I am most excited about:

All of the opportunities!

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

The Village has a great group of employees who knowledgeable. It is important to not only include them in the discussion about separation and department structures, but it is also important to generally keep them in the loop.

This form was created inside of Essex Junction Recreation & Parks.

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# Trustee Survey

Hi- it would be great to get your thoughts on the following by the end of the day Monday, 4/26, so that we can share the results and discuss on Tuesday, 4/27. The information will be consolidated and made public, but we are not asking for your name on the survey. If you have any questions, please let me know. Thanks.  
-Brad, [bluck@ejrp.org](mailto:bluck@ejrp.org), 802-310-4067

As we pursue independence, what are the top 3-5 outcomes you hope will be reached by the conclusion of this process?

I'd like to start by expressing my hope that we take in as many different voices and opinions as possible. That said, we have a tight timeline so the "How we engage and receive that input" is critical. My primary hope is that when we finally get to the point of warning the vote, that our community feels heard and understood and that people know what they are voting on and for. It will be a massive challenge to help villagers navigate the negative and misleading messaging we all expect to see.

I hope we are successful in finding a balance between independence / tax equity and maintaining our relationship with the Town.

I hope we find the time to be innovative and to set up the village for long-term success.

If we learn / discover that separating is not the solution we thought it would be – in terms of achieving tax equity and preparing the village for long-term success – that we are upfront and honest about that fact with the community and feel OK with moving in another direction.

---

As we engage in this process, what are 3-5 operating principles you think we should abide by? i.e. We should make sure that we do.....or We should make sure that we do not.....etc.

Community engagement and visioning are key. We have the opportunity to re-imagine the Village, bringing what works and creating new opportunities.

The process should be transparent but deliberate, with plenty of opportunity for staff / trustees to work and planned "breaks" to communicate our work and to receive thoughtful feedback. These "breaks" should be spaced thoughtfully throughout the timeline.

This is not the village saying goodbye to the Town. This does not change our historic relationship and interconnectedness. This is strictly a change in governance and I'd like to make sure we stress this and the fact whenever possible. We will always be neighbors and work with the Town whenever possible.

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What are the most important aspects you want addressed in the Charter (language, principles, concepts)?

Consider wards or some other small district-based representation model

Codify a smoke-free village center and discuss other ways to ensure the village is a healthy place to live, work and recreate.

I'm not sure this belongs in the charter, but why not? I'd love to see the Village (City) consider creating the position of Equity Director as Winooski has done. Would love to see community feedback on that concept from the community conversations. It could be an area of sharing with the Town.

As we consider the future provision of Essex Junction government services, what is most important to you?

That the village is a welcoming, inclusive, livable and affordable community that values diverse residents and voices and that attracts businesses that reinforce our community values and vision. We should leverage our size and density to ensure we remain a walkable, bikeable community with interconnected neighborhoods and thoughtful growth.

In this entire process of seeking independence, what opportunities do you see for the Village?

We could take this opportunity to craft a representation / governance model that encourages participation and engagement and ensures that more voices are heard and at the table. We can re-imagine delivery of services, adding some, sharing others, not only with the Town. I'd love to look at how we might roll out broadband to the village for example.

In this entire process of seeking independence, what are the biggest challenges you see for the Village?

Time.

Remaining affordable, managing limited grand list growth.

What are some questions you would like to have answered (either through discussion as a board, conversation with the public, with staff, or with an attorney)?

The distribution of shared property and assets, how to handle occupancy of Town offices / Police department withing the village, how to distribute Town fund balance, capital funds etc.

There is a group of citizens who are interested in helping with community conversations - informing the community of what is happening, getting their feedback, and developing values and a vision for the Village. What are some things you hope this group will come back to the Trustees with?

Governance model including thoughts on district representation would be key. I have others, but I don't want to widen the scope so much that we can't get this work done in our set timeline. We can continue to craft our new city after it is formed.

I am most excited about:

The opportunity to work from within to reimagine aspects of our community and to begin a process of really identifying what is working and what needs work. I want to stress that we only have to complete enough of this work to get the new city off the ground by November.

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

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# April 27 Work Session Feedback on Essex Junction Independence

This survey will be available from 4/28 through 5/10.

This survey is for Village of Essex Junction residents and must include your e-mail, name, and address. Incomplete responses will not be given consideration.

Please note: this information will be used to inform the work and discussions of the Trustees. We will not be directly responding to any comments or questions posted below. If you have specific matters you would like a response to, you should e-mail the Trustees directly (<https://www.essexjunction.org/boards/board-of-trustees>).

Please be aware that the information provided below could be made public.

Email \*

kmaiberger@comcast.net

Your Name \*

Kim Maiberger

Your Address \*

5 Upland Road

On a scale of 0-10 (0=Very bad, 10=Excellent), how well do you think the process for creating an independent Essex Junction is going?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very Bad            Excellent

What did you hear that you are excited about?

Community Conversations

Did you hear anything that you are concerned about?

N/A

Do you have any comments, feedback, or suggestions?

Thank you to all for the hard week. We're off and running 😊

Do you have any questions?

N/A

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Please be aware that the information provided below could be made public.

Email \*

barney@barney.me

Your Name \*

Barney Matthews

Your Address \*

43 Maple Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

On a scale of 0-10 (0=Very bad, 10=Excellent), how well do you think the process for creating an independent Essex Junction is going?

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Very Bad                                                Excellent

What did you hear that you are excited about?

I like the charter. I like that we are going to maintain a healthy relationship with the town. The plan seemed well thought out too.

Did you hear anything that you are concerned about?

Nothing concerning.

Do you have any comments, feedback, or suggestions?

I would like clear communication before the vote in November. I dont want the separation to drag on for years. My hope is by this time next year we will be in a position to move forward. That being said, I would like it to be an amicable split.

Do you have any questions?

No

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Please be aware that the information provided below could be made public.

Email \*

bob11.burrows@gmail.com

Your Name \*

Robert Burrows

Your Address \*

8 Clems Drive

On a scale of 0-10 (0=Very bad, 10=Excellent), how well do you think the process for creating an independent Essex Junction is going?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very Bad            Excellent

What did you hear that you are excited about?

The excitement and desire to move forward as quickly as possible.

Did you hear anything that you are concerned about?

The tendency to get trapped in the 'weeds'. Disinformation from outside village and misuse of villagers' personal info.

Do you have any comments, feedback, or suggestions?

I think timing could be a major issue so I think we need to focus on the priorities to get ready to submit this to Montpelier.

Do you have any questions?

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Please be aware that the information provided below could be made public.

Email \*

meganjohnson1978@gmail.com

Your Name \*

Megan Dunston

Your Address \*

34 Countryside Drive

On a scale of 0-10 (0=Very bad, 10=Excellent), how well do you think the process for creating an independent Essex Junction is going?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very Bad            Excellent

What did you hear that you are excited about?

Child programs

Did you hear anything that you are concerned about?

Just how complicated it might be to get through the process

Do you have any comments, feedback, or suggestions?

No

Do you have any questions?

No

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Please be aware that the information provided below could be made public.

Email \*

cjcbeagles@aol.com

Your Name \*

Carmelle Terborgh

Your Address \*

2 Upland Rd, Essex Junction, VT 05452

On a scale of 0-10 (0=Very bad, 10=Excellent), how well do you think the process for creating an independent Essex Junction is going?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very Bad            Excellent

What did you hear that you are excited about?

Having Brad lead the coordination gives me hope. He is a great asset, and having served as a Trustee- he can relate to the work of the Board. Good choice!

Did you hear anything that you are concerned about?

The fact that the Town seems to think that they have more of a say so than they do.

Do you have any comments, feedback, or suggestions?

I hope that we keep things as separate as possible. Maybe only share police!

Do you have any questions?

Not yet!

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# April 27 Work Session Feedback on Essex Junction Independence

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Please be aware that the information provided below could be made public.

Email \*

grsmith12001@gmail.com

Your Name \*

Gabrielle Smith

Your Address \*

5 Woodstock Lane, EJ

On a scale of 0-10 (0=Very bad, 10=Excellent), how well do you think the process for creating an independent Essex Junction is going?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very Bad            Excellent

What did you hear that you are excited about?

The commitment of all five Trustees to pursuing separation and a successful process to create the City of Essex Junction. Excited about the citizen-led initiative, funding and staffing from the Village, and the desire for authentic input from Village residents.

Did you hear anything that you are concerned about?

The Trustees are early in the process and still have questions, unknowns and potentially different opinions, especially regarding sharing services. I believe that they should do what they reasonably can to come to consensus before or during meetings to present a unified, clear, and reasoned position on important points. Significant differences, even on seemingly less critical points, could open us up for distractions that could be potentially divisive and even harmful to the end goal of high turnout from informed voters who felt heard during the process.

Do you have any comments, feedback, or suggestions?

Definitely avoid holding executive session at the beginning of the meetings. Not good for public engagement.

Do you have any questions?

How can the Trustees and Staff employ additional strategies to publicize the Trustee meetings, especially the work session agenda item? Including the recordings.



## Vermont Cities Summary

There are currently 9 cities in Vermont. Below is a summary analysis of their government structure and system.

### **Form of Government**

The two forms of government are Mayor-Council and Council-Manager.

Strong Mayor - In the Mayor-Council form there is a strong mayor, whereby the mayor is the chief administrative officer (Burlington, Rutland).

Weak Mayor - There is also a weak mayor, whereby the chief administrative officer is the City Manager, hired by the council (Barre, Montpelier, Winooski, St. Albans, Newport, Vergennes). It should be noted that three of the weak mayor cities refer to their form of government in their charter as council-manager (Montpelier, St. Albans, Winooski).

Council-Manager – One city uses a council-manager system whereby the entire council is elected at-large and the council then elects a chair and hires a manager (South Burlington).

### **Election of Officials**

At-large – 5 cities (South Burlington, Rutland, Winooski, Newport, Vergennes).

Wards/Districts – 1 city elects 1 representative from each of 6 wards (St. Albans). 2 cities elect 2 representatives from each of 3 wards/districts (Barre, Montpelier).

Wards and Districts - 1 city has 1 representative from each of 8 wards and 4 representatives from overlaying districts (Burlington).

### **Chief Administrative Officer**

Mayor – 2 cities employ the elected mayor as the chief administrative officer.

City Manager – 7 cities have the council hire a City Manager.

### **Head Elected Member**

Mayor – the 6 cities that have a weak mayor system have a mayor, elected directly by the citizens (Barre, Montpelier, Winooski, St. Albans, Newport, Vergennes).

City Council Chair – the 1 city that has a council-manager system has council members elected at large, who then elect the chair of the council (South Burlington).

City Council President – the 2 cities that have a strong mayor system have a council president who is elected by the council (Burlington, Rutland).

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Elected Member (in charge)**

City Council Vice Chair – South Burlington

Deputy Mayor - Winooski

Council President - Newport

Senior Alderman - Vergennes

Unspecified/unclear if title – Burlington, Rutland, Barre, Montpelier, St. Albans

**Elected Member Titles**

Councilor – Burlington, South Burlington, Barre, Montpelier, Winooski

Alderman - Rutland, Newport

Alderperson – St. Albans

Alderman/Alderwoman – Vergennes

**Number of Elected Officials on Council**

12 – Burlington

11 – Rutland

7 – Barre, Montpelier, St. Albans, Vergennes

5 – South Burlington, Winooski, Newport

**Term Length**

Mayor 3 years / Councilors 2 years – Burlington, Winooski

Mayor 2 years / Councilors 3 years – St. Albans

(3) Councilors 3 years / (2) Councilors 2 years – South Burlington

Mayor & Councilors 2 years – Rutland, Barre, Montpelier, Newport, Vergennes

**Population Per Councilor**

Highest: 3902 (South Burlington); Essex Junction based on 10,852 population = 3 councilors

Average: 1649; Essex Junction based on 10,852 population = 7 councilors

Median: 1053 (Montpelier); Essex Junction based on 10,852 population = 10 councilors

Lowest: 371 (Vergennes); Essex Junction based on 10,852 population = 29 councilors

**Vermont Cities**

	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>South Burlington</b>	<b>Rutland</b>	<b>Essex Junction</b>	<b>Barre</b>	<b>Montpelier</b>	<b>Winooski</b>	<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Vergennes</b>
Form of Government	Mayor-Council (strong mayor)	Council-Manager	Mayor-Council (strong mayor)	TBD	Mayor-Council (weak mayor)	Mayor-Council (weak mayor)	Mayor-Council (weak mayor)	Mayor-Council (weak mayor)	Mayor-Council (weak mayor)	Mayor-Council (weak mayor)
Election of Officials	8 Wards & 4 Districts (1 from each)	At-Large	At-Large	TBD	3 Wards (2 from each)	3 Districts (2 from each)	At-Large	6 Wards (1 from each)	At-Large	At-Large
Chief Administrative Officer	Mayor	City Manager	Mayor	TBD	City Manager	City Manager	City Manager	City Manager	City Manager	City Manager
Head Elected Member	City Council President	City Council Chair	President	TBD	Mayor	Mayor	Mayor	Mayor	Mayor	Mayor
Head Elected By	Council	Council	Board of Alderman	TBD	Citizens	Citizens	Citizens	Citizens	Citizens	Citizens
2nd Elected	NA	City Council Vice Chair	NA	TBD	NA	NA	Deputy Mayor	NA	Council President	Senior Alderman
Elected Member Titles	Councilor	Councilor	Alderman	TBD	Councilor	Councilor	Councilor	Aldersperson	Alderman	Alderman/ Alderswoman
Number of Elected Officials on Council	12	5	11	TBD	7	7	5	7	5	7
Term Length	Mayor 3 years / Councilors 2 years	(3) 3 year & (2) 2 year	2 years	TBD	2 years	2 years	Mayor 3 years / Councilors 2 years	Mayor 2 years / Aldersperson 3 years	2 years	2 years
Population	42,819	19,509	15,074	10,852	8,528	7,372	7,333	6,801	4,589	2,596
Population Per Councilor	3,568	3,902	1,370	#VALUE!	1,218	1,053	1,467	972	918	371
Square Miles	10.31	16.49	7.56	4.57	3.95	10.06	1.43	2.03	7.63	2.55



## Memo

To: Village Trustees

From: Brad Luck, Director, EJRP

Date: May 6, 2021

Re: Formal Acknowledgement of Pursuit of Independence

As work sessions on Essex Junction Independence progress, there may be times that the Trustees would like to place an item on the agenda related to making formal motions by the board and taking official action.

Given there was consensus at the April 27 on pursuing Essex Junction Independence, it would be good to formally acknowledge this with a vote. This would provide both the public and staff with an official recognition of your efforts and desires. This will also help staff recognize that resources will be needed and called upon to support this effort.

This is the goal and set of operating principles that were consented to on April 27:

### **Essex Junction Independence**

#### Goal

To create an independent Essex Junction, ensuring that it: has a foundation that provides for economic and political stability, reflects the Village character, has opportunity for growth, and looks towards the future.

#### How we will get there

This will be a Village led process that is future-oriented. We will steer clear of distractions and act with civility, transparency, and deliberateness. The Trustees will work to develop consensus and speak with a consistent voice. We will engage with, bring together, seek input from, and work to inform our community. We will work with the Selectboard and maintain a healthy relationship with our neighbors in the Town.

Recommended Motion:

I move that the Trustees recognize Essex Junction independence as our top priority and we adopt the goals and operating principles from our April 27 work session.