

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 26, 2013**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: George Tyler (Village President); Andrew Brown, Dan Kerin, Elaine Sopchak, Lori Houghton.
ADMINISTRATION: Lauren Morrisseau Co-Manager & Finance Director; Susan McNamara-Hill, Co-Manager & Village Clerk/Treasurer; Robin Pierce, Village Development Director.
OTHERS PRESENT: Diane Clemens, Bridget Meyer, Linda Costello, Paul Dame, Fred Duplessis, Mary Morris, Mary Jo Engel.

BOARD OF ABATEMENT MEETING

The Board of Abatement meeting was held prior to the Board of Trustees meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Village President, George Tyler, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Under 'Old Business':

- Review/Approve Revised Annual Meeting Warning (reflects needed charter amendments)

3. GUESTS, PRESENTATIONS, & PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

There were no comments from the public at this time.

b. Public Hearing: Charter Changes

The public hearing on proposed charter changes was opened at 6:32 PM. George Tyler explained the charter changes include making the language non-gender specific and properly numbering sections. There were no comments from the public. The public hearing was closed at 6:34 PM.

c. Presentation: FY12 Audit by Fred Duplessis

Fred Duplessis with Sullivan & Powers gave an overview of the FY12 audit report noting the following:

- The village is in full conformance with generally accepted accounting principles. There is no change from last year. It is a clean opinion and consistent with government auditing standards.
- Information in the Management Decision & Analysis is the same as in the audit.
- Assets at the end of FY12 were \$608,000. Liabilities were \$112,000.
- The unassigned fund balance is \$238,187 or approximately 7% (minimum amount recommended) of the FY13 budget allowing for about 25 days of expenses.

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- There is \$92,000 better than budget on the revenue side. Less was spent than budgeted on the expenditure side. There is a positive variance in both directions.
 - The enterprise funds have good fund balances and net assets. The report includes budget/actual statements on each enterprise fund.
 - There is a positive balance of \$307,000 in the waste water fund which showed a deficit last year.
 - The footnotes in the audit report contain village information and the schedules provide detail on the smaller funds.
 - There were no findings of noncompliance in grant management and there are no internal control issues.

There was brief discussion of the terms used in the audit versus in the village budget. The terms in the audit report represent general categories. George Tyler asked if the village should be accruing more funds each year for employee retirement. Fred Duplessis stated most communities do not fund compensated absences. The amount being funded by the village is not excessive. The liability is approximately \$200,000. The amount is about \$60,000 for employees close to five years to retirement and there is about \$60,000 remaining after the expenditure for the former village manager, David Crawford.

Dan Kerin commented positively on the audit report being a testament of the good work by the Finance Director, Lauren Morrisseau.

d. Public Hearing: Re-Adopt Comprehensive Plan

The public hearing on the comprehensive plan was opened at 6:50 PM. George Tyler explained the plan to postpone update of the comprehensive plan while the Heart and Soul process is ongoing. The outcome of Heart and Soul could influence revisions to the plan. The proposal is to readopt the current plan at this time. Robin Pierce, Development Director, added Heart and Soul and the ECOS project are both influences on the plan. Assistance from Regional Planning has been requested with the plan. It is hoped to have the work done by the end of 2013.

Mary Morris urged considering what is happening in Essex Town while updating the village plan. Lori Houghton said it was hoped the comprehensive plans from both municipalities could have been done in unison, but this has not happened outside of Heart and Soul. Mary Morris said encouragement from both village and town boards would be helpful to continue the cooperative efforts. Lori Houghton mentioned a joint meeting with the Trustees and the Essex Selectboard is planned.

Diane Clemens stated the comprehensive plan is different from Heart and Soul, but what has been learned from the Heart and Soul process can be utilized to benefit all. Diane Clemens will present a proposal to the village planning commission regarding update of the plan and public input.

There was mention of the town and village planning commissions discussing their comprehensive plans (the two planning commissions have met under the umbrella of Heart and Soul in the last month). At the very least the village zoning map should be

included on the town map. Regional Planning requires that consideration be given to the zoning on the periphery of a municipality to ensure there is compatibility.

There were no further comments. The hearing was closed at 7 PM. A second public hearing on the comprehensive plan will be held on March 12, 2013.

e. Update on First Phase of Heart and Soul Project

Liz Subin briefed the Trustees on progress with the Heart and Soul project noting the following:

- There were 45 neighborhood conversations to help identify the values of the community and draft action ideas and implementation.
- Thirty nine (39) affinity groups were identified including people, businesses, elected and appointed groups, artists, faith groups, sports organizations, and others.
- The town and village are well aligned.
- Six clear priorities for the community or key values were identified including education, community connections, safety, thoughtful growth (open space), local economy, health and recreation.
- Issues were separated from values.
- Next steps include a set of recommendations and action ideas to tie into the key values.
- A survey is being created to gather feedback from the community, confirm values, generate action ideas, and try to reach others who have not yet participated in the process (i.e. senior citizens, veterans, and the working class).
- The community action summit will be held June 1, 2013 to share ideas, outline the vision, values, priorities, action ideas, and provide opportunity and resources to move to action.
- The formal decision making boards of each community (Trustees and Selectboard) plus community members in general will be involved so the process can move forward on all levels.

Elaine Sopchak urged looking at what is in place already for ‘thoughtful growth’ and contacting the school boards regarding the education value. Education was defined as all levels of learning, not just classroom learning, and improving services for learning at all levels.

4. OLD BUSINESS

a. Whitcomb Farm Conservation Project Easement and Funding

There was discussion of the recommended amount from the Land Acquisition Fund to support the Whitcomb Farm conservation project (\$20,000) and the need for voter permission to withdraw and use the funds. Benefits of supporting the farm conservation project include:

- Continued public access per the tax stabilization agreement;
- Open land on the farm and a buffer from development by the river;
- Continued drainage of storm water runoff from the village;
- Increasing capacity for wetlands;

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- Preservation of natural habitat;
 - Continued land application of biosolids;
 - Support of the farm economy by keeping the farm in operation.

Essex Town is supportive, but does not have land acquisition funds to contribute. Vermont Land Trust will be fund raising and will draft a case statement for the project. An information table and a handout will be available at the village annual meeting.

Lauren Morrisseau asked about easements on the property for public use. Allen Karnatz, Vermont Land Trust, explained easements through the Land Trust are difficult to change or amend. Also, the Whitcombs prefer public access as outlined in the tax stabilization agreement to avoid overuse by the public and potential interference with farming operations. Also, the farm could be sold to another party and that party may not want public access so having permanent public access could impact the sale.

b. Discussion/Action on Charter Amendments

Susan McNamara-Hill reviewed the memo, dated 2/22/13, regarding further changes to the charter to include gender neutral language and renumbering as needed. Further investigation will be done to determine whether wording referring to sections in the charter as “repealed” must remain.

c. Adopt/Sign Annual Meeting Warning

MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to adopt and sign the annual meeting warning as presented and including the changes to the charter as proposed. VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carried.

d. Annual Meeting Preparation

Plans for the annual meeting include:

- Discussion under ‘Other Business’ of capital projects that need to be done in the village and how these should be funded (bonds, tax increase, dedicated tax, other ideas). A list of projects and corresponding cost will be available.
- Childcare will be available at the meeting (provided by Essex Jct. Parks & Recreation).
- A buffet dinner will be held at 6 PM followed by the annual meeting at 7 PM. The caterer will be a local business if the cost is reasonable. (Staff will further research a local caterer for the meeting.)
- Student volunteers will ask questions at the meeting as occurred last year. Students will also do a poster and write letters to the *Essex Reporter* to encourage attendance at the meeting.
- Channel 17 will provide live online coverage of the meeting (not interactive).
- Heart & Soul will have an information table at the meeting.
- Vermont Land Trust will have an information table at the meeting to explain the Whitcomb Farm conservation project.
- Tri-fold posters of the crescent connector project will be displayed.
- A local poll similar to the Doyle poll will be distributed at the meeting. (Dan Kerin and Elaine Sopchak will draft the survey questions.)

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- The public will be reminded to sign up for the village newsletter and Front Porch Forum to stay involved in the community and volunteer for groups.

5. NEW BUSINESS

None.

6. VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Meeting Schedule

- March 12 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- March 26 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- April 9 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- April 23 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- May 14 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- May 28 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting

Special Meetings/Events:

- April 3 @ 7 PM – Annual Village Meeting
- April 9 @ 7 AM – 7 PM – Australian Ballot Voting
- May 25 @ 10 AM – Memorial Day Parade

b. Year End Surpluses

Staff reported a surplus is anticipated at the end of the fiscal year in the Street Department (\$42,000), Administration (\$15,000), and Planning Department (\$9,000). Fire and Lincoln Hall will show a deficit (\$13,000 and \$2,000 respectively). Revenue from planning and zoning permits and highway aid is strong. The common level of appraisal (CLA) for the village was successfully appealed by the town to 100.96 which will have a positive effect on school taxes.

c. Meeting Schedule

March 26, 2013 is proposed as the joint meeting with the Prudential Committee. The Trustees need to cancel or reschedule the April 9th regular meeting which conflicts with Australian ballot voting on the same day.

d. Vacations

Susan McNamara-Hill will solely assume the duties of village manager while Lauren Morriseau is on vacation.

7. TRUSTEES COMMENTS/CONCERNS & READING FILE

a. Board Member Comments

- George Tyler reiterated support for coordinating the comprehensive plan process with the town's planning commission. The Trustees and the Essex Selectboard need to initiate the conversation between the respective planning commissions. Regional Planning must be made aware of the proposal. Regional Planning approves the comprehensive plans.

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- Dan Kerin commented on the advantage of having both the town and village governments operating in one building. Consideration should be given when the new police facility is being built.
 - Lori Houghton suggested adding the joint meeting between the Trustees and the Essex Selectboard as an agenda item on the Essex Selectboard meeting agenda in order to move forward on the matter. George Tyler volunteered to talk to the Chair of the Essex Selectboard after town meeting.
 - The village newsletter will include the warning for the annual meeting and other pertinent information.
 - The information brochure on the water rates will be posted on the website and Front Porch Forum.

b. Reading File

- ❖ Minutes
 - Capital Program Review Committee 2/5/13
- ❖ Information from Vermont Gas Systems
- ❖ First Public Hearing: Draft 2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan 3/20/13

8. CONSENT AGENDA & READING FILE

MOTION by Andrew Brown, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- 1. Approve Minutes of Previous Meetings (2/12/13)**
- 2. Approve Warrants including Checks #10046620 through #10046695 totaling \$830,056.22.**
- 3. Approve Trustees Report for Annual Report.**

VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carried.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION and/or ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

RScty: M.E.Riordan

