



TOWN OF ESSEX VERMONT

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SELECTBOARD & TRUSTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, July 12, 2018

81 Main St.

Essex Junction, VT 05452

8:30 AM

1. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG [8:30 AM]
2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES
3. APPROVE AGENDA
4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
5. BUSINESS ITEMS [8:35 AM]
 - a. Elect chair and recording secretary
 - b. Establish ground rules
 - c. Discuss questions from board members about governance
 - d. Brainstorm available resources
 - e. Discuss budget availability and constraints
 - f. Sketch out anticipated timeline
 - g. Next steps
6. EXECUTIVE SESSION
 - a. No executive session is anticipated
7. ADJOURN

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the Chair.

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Certification: _____ 7/10/14 _____ JP _____

TOWN MANAGER	PARKS AND RECREATION	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	PUBLIC WORKS	ASSESSOR	FINANCE	TOWN CLERK	LIBRARY	POLICE
878-1341	878-1342	878-1343	878-1344	878-1345	878-1359	879-0413	879-0313	878-8331

1 Selectboard and Trustee Subcommittee on Governance
2 July 12, 2018 Special Meeting Minutes
3 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT
4

5 Committee Members Present: Max Levy
6 Elaine Sopchak
7 George Tyler
8 Irene Wrenner
9

10 Staff Present: Evan Teich (joined the meeting at 8:50 a.m.)
11

12 Members of the Public Present: Jerry Fox
13 Dawn Hill-Fleury
14 Margaret Smith
15

16 1. CALL TO ORDER

17 Irene Wrenner called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.
18

19 2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

20 3. APPROVE AGENDA

21 There were no agenda additions.
22

23 4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

24 There were no comments from the public.
25

26 5. BUSINESS ITEMS

27
28 a. Elect chair and recording secretary

29 Max Levy moved and Elaine Sopchak seconded to nominate George Tyler to be chair of the
30 committee. The motion was approved 3-0-1 (Mr. Tyler recused himself from the vote).
31

32 George Tyler moved and Irene Wrenner seconded to nominate Elaine Sopchak to be recording
33 secretary for the committee. The motion was approved 4-0.
34

35 b. Establish ground rules

36 The committee established some ground rules:

- 37 • They will review a variety of perspectives.
38 • They will assume members' good intentions.

- 39 • They will seek to understand.
40 • All options are on the table.
41 • These meetings are more conversational than formal and so speakers do not need to be
42 formally recognized.
43 • No member will advocate for either the Village or the Town; this does not preclude
44 members from pointing out the pros and cons of a particular option as it relates to
45 either community.

46

47 Members agreed that they will not prioritize any of the options but will instead provide
48 guidance to the two full boards on how they may impact the community. If in the course of
49 research a particular option is determined not to be legal, that option will be removed from the
50 table.

51

52 c. Discuss questions from board members about governance

53

54 Questions were submitted by Elaine Sopchak, George Tyler, and Irene Wrenner. No other board
55 members submitted questions. Copies of these questions are attached and made a part of
56 these minutes.

57

58 Mr. Levy suggested the conversation begin with a high-level discussion of various options, and
59 that specific details be avoided at the outset. The committee then discussed a variety of
60 possible governance scenarios. These are outlined below.

61

62 Potential Governance Options

63

64 Scenario A:

- 65 • Retain the Village Board of Trustees as long as there are Village-specific needs (5
66 members).
67 • Create an equivalent Town-outside-the-Village (TOV) entity for TOV-specific needs (5
68 members).
69 • Also maintain and expand existing Town Selectboard (SB) to include the membership of
70 both the above boards, so that the SB has 10 members.
71 • This model would entail 3 separate charters, one for each board.

72

73 Scenario B:

- 74 • Dissolve both Village and Town charters, and write a new, single charter for one
75 community.
76 • Form a new board of 5 to 7 members, all elected at-large.

- 77 • Create a Rural Essex advisory board and a Village advisory board, the members of which
78 would be appointed by the elected board.

79

80 Scenario C:

- 81 • Create a single, consolidated board but maintain 2 charters.
82 • Each charter adopts the same amendment to allow this to happen.

83

84 Scenario D:

- 85 • Consider overlay districts, and whether they apply outside of the realm of planning.

86

87 Scenario E:

- 88 • Create a single board of 7 to 9 members.
89 • Create two voting districts: Village and TOV.
90 • Elect 3 members from the Village, 3 members from TOV, and 3 at-large.

91

92 Scenario F:

- 93 • Dissolve the Village charter, keep Town charter.
94 • Adjust Town Selectboard membership based on geography.

95

96 Scenario G:

- 97 • Dissolve the Village charter, keep Town charter.
98 • Maintain 5 member, at-large Selectboard.

99

100 Scenario H:

- 101 • Form a city with a mayor and city council.

102

103 Mr. Tyler recommended the questions, What's missing? Are there other government structures
104 we haven't thought of? It was noted that the Essex Governance Group (EGG) Report
105 recommended neighborhood assemblies. The committee determined that these could be
106 considered regardless of what governance option is chosen. Committee members also
107 wondered whether it was required to have a governing board with an odd number of members.

108

109 The committee then compiled a list of what the boards want to achieve in forming a new
110 governance structure, as follows, and in no particular order. These goals may help narrow down
111 the governance options based on their ability to enable them.

- 112 • Tax equity
113 • Eventual single tax rate
114 • Eliminate duplication

- 115 • Equal representation (in a consolidated environment)
- 116 • Preserve identity (in a consolidated environment)
- 117 • Maintain a high level of service
- 118 • Maintain Heart & Soul values
- 119 • Maintain public safety
- 120 • Speaking with one voice, and having a seat at the table in relevant issues and bodies
- 121 • Better integrated planning
- 122 • Better relations
- 123 • Better transparency

124

125 d. Brainstorm available resources

126 The committee then considered the necessary resources to begin researching the options. The
127 Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), the Secretary of State's Office, and Legislative
128 Council were identified as organizations with the most relevant expertise to assist the
129 committee. Mr. Teich recommended that the committee also research legal challenges to the
130 mergers of other communities to help identify potential issues.

131

132 Mr. Tyler gave the committee members a preliminary list of financial data he would like to
133 compile, a copy of which is attached and made a part of these minutes. He also expressed
134 significant concern about the status of the Town's and Village's representation on regional
135 boards like the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), should they form a
136 single community. Investigating the representational and financial impacts of a merger on the
137 communities' membership in this and similar organizations is essential. Mr. Teich stated this
138 concern also applies to other entities that provide the Village and Town funding, such as FEMA.
139 Mr. Tyler requested that the committee and staff do an initial, internal analysis of potential
140 impacts before approaching CCRPC.

141

142 The committee asked Mr. Teich to instruct staff to provide the data Mr. Tyler requested, and to
143 identify any gaps in information the committee may not have considered yet. Mr. Teich also
144 suggested reaching out to other Vermont municipalities to learn about their experiences with
145 merger. The VLCT can also help gather this information.

146

147 e. Discuss budget availability and constraints

148 The committee considered whether funds need to be allocated to this work. At the moment,
149 they will rely on the free services of VLCT and Secretary of State. Mr. Levy suggested setting
150 aside funds in the FY20 budgeting process.

151

152 f. Sketch out anticipated timeline

153 The committee determined that at best, research can be completed in time to provide the
154 community with an update and overview at the 2019 annual meetings. For the purposes of this
155 committee's work, members decided to provide both boards with a report of their findings at
156 the October 11, 2018 joint meeting. Members will complete research by September 15th and
157 will draft a report by September 30th. Members will finalize the report and submit it to Town
158 staff for inclusion in the meeting packet for October 11th.

159

160 g. Next steps

- 161 • Ms. Sopchak will provide both boards with a verbal update at the next joint meeting on
162 July 18th.
- 163 • Ms. Sopchak will provide minutes of this meeting to Town staff for posting.
- 164 • Ms. Sopchak will combine the governance options with the questions submitted by
165 board members, and recirculate them to committee members for further comment.
- 166 • Ms. Sopchak will reach out to VLCT to request their assistance, provide them with the
167 documentation of this meeting, and help schedule a time when VLCT can come to a
168 committee meeting, hopefully in the first two weeks of August.

169

170 At this time audience member Jerry Fox asked questions regarding the Town and Village tax
171 rates. The committee provided clarifications and answers to his questions.

172

173 6. ADJOURN

174 Ms. Wrenner moved to adjourn and Mr. Levy seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.