

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
December 11, 2018**

**TRUSTEES PRESENT:** George Tyler (Village President), Andrew Brown, Lori Houghton, Elaine Sopchak. (Dan Kerin not in attendance)

**ADMINISTRATION:** Greg Duggan, Deputy Town Manager; Sarah Macy, Assistant Finance Director; Darby Mayville Economic Development/ Community Relations Assistant; Lauren Morrisseau, Assistant Manager and Village/Town Finance Director; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director; Harlan Smith, Grounds & Facilities Director, EJRP; Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Kirsten Santor, Program Director – Community Recreation

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Kristin Humbarger; Todd Odit; Cathy Shearer; David Voegele; Irene Wrenner

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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**

Mr. Teich added a memo from Andrew Brown to agenda item 5f and a memo to be added to item 8b for an executive session to discuss a real estate matter.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

**MOTION by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Andrew Brown to approve the agenda, as amended. Voting: unanimous, (4-0); motion carried.**

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. **Comments from public on items not on the agenda.**

None

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. **\*Interview Catherine Shearer for the Bike Walk Advisory Committee**

Mr. Tyler invited Ms. Shearer to share her interest in serving on the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee. She described herself as a dedicated walker in the Village and a physical therapist invested in getting people out to walk. Ms. Sopchak asked if there is anything, in particular, Catherine would like the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee to pursue. She said she would like to see Essex Junction recognized as a Walk-Friendly Community. Ms. Shearer is concerned by childhood obesity and is interested in making sure that the community has walking opportunities to promote physical and emotional development. She also thinks there are opportunities to create interestingly designed bike racks in the Village. Ms. Houghton, Mr. Brown and Mr. Tyler acknowledged that the addition of a walker onto the committee would add an important perspective.

**MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Andrew Brown to appoint Cathy Shearer to the Bike Walk Advisory Committee. Voting: unanimous, (4-0); motion carried.**

**b. Annual Presentation Essex CHIPS**

Essex CHIPS Executive Director David Voegele gave an overview of his organization. Mr. Voegele explained that Essex CHIPS works to support, inspire, engage and empower young people so they may be productive members of the community. He described the non-profit's core programs, included in the 2018 Annual Report to the Trustees of Essex Junction. Mr. Voegele highlighted Essex CHIPS opportunities for young people to engage in afterschool programs, community service, highschool transition summer backpacking, mentoring and on the organization's support line. He also described their family-friendly badminton event. Mr. Voegele shared that Essex CHIPS will soon be a national credentialing entity through their Quality Youth Development (QYD) initiative. The goal is to begin credentialing municipalities, counties, etc. who are providing "substantive, measurable, and sustainable community actions that support, engage, inspire, and empower youth," contributing to strengthened internal and external developmental assets in young people. He hopes Essex Junction will become the first municipality credentialed.

Mr. Tyler asked how the Village of Essex Junction could be helpful with the QYD initiative. Mr. Voegele encouraged downtown businesses to poster their welcome of youth and asked the Trustees to consider providing opportunities for youth to serve on municipal committees, as interns or as employees. Ms. Sopchak asked who the national licensing body of the QYD credentialing would be and Mr. Voegele explained that there is no other licensing body, but QYD is an incorporated program that will utilize three other neutral professionals, independent of VT, for the review process.

**c. Talking points for arts/culture committee and Review of steAmfest —Kristen Humbargar**

Kristen Humbargar presented a proposal to initiate an Arts & Culture Committee. She said that the Village of Essex Junction has a growing creative economy, through Essex Hub, Main Street Studio and steAmfest; with the development of a sustainable and interesting Village Center, the community has the potential to be a destination for arts and culture. The committee would strategically work toward a community vision of creativity and culture. She has researched other arts economies in VT, including looking at innovations in the South End Arts District in Burlington. Ms. Humbargar said she is engaging a high school student intern, to create an arts & culture survey for envisioning a direction and that the community would benefit from an arts and culture community assets mapping project. She would like the committee to be intentional about inclusion of diverse art and cultural experiences with New American residents.

Ms. Sopchak thanked Ms. Humbargar for her participation on the recent Animated Arts Council Grant and suggested that the Animated Arts group evolve into this Arts & Culture Committee. She also encouraged Ms. Humbargar to include the Town of Essex. Ms. Houghton and Mr. Brown discussed with Ms. Humbargar other areas with arts economies to research (Mystic Connecticut, Brattleboro, etc.) as well as networking and funding opportunities. Mr. Teich requested that Ms. Humbargar develop a mission statement, committee strategy and structure to present to the Trustees. Mr. Tyler suggested the Trustees consider Ms. Humbargar's request for \$10,000 for this initiative when determining the Economic Development budget.

Ms. Humbargar described some of the successes of this year's steAmfest, which was funded, in part, by the Village of Essex Junction. This year's event included an opportunity for community members to engage with artists at a free "make and take" activity; strong social media presence; and increased sponsors including Dealer.com. The rainy weather, on the day of the event, posed a host of

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challenges that will play into planning the logistics for next year. Ms. Humbargar requested \$6,000 for the next steAmfest.

**d. EJRP Accreditation Process—Kirsten Santor, Program Director**

Essex Junction Recreation & Parks (EJRP) is currently seeking accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) for the department. The general fund budget implication is \$6,340. Ms. Santor explained what CAPRA is, and its accreditation process, which includes implementing measurable strategies to achieve 151 standards. These standards are considered best practices for parks and recreation and the accreditation would be for 5 years, then upon measured success, could be renewed. She pointed out that this accreditation could be a point of pride as Essex Junction would be a leader in the state and in the nation. Ms. Santor explained the steps for accreditation in terms of timeline.

Ms. Sopchak asked if this accreditation would include childcare and wondered who would be in charge of compliance. Mr. Brown and Mr. Tyler wondered how EJRP's co-location with Essex Parks & Recreation (EPR) would impact this process. Ms. Santor said EJRP's accreditation would be for programs already established (including childcare), but new programs would not need to be created in order to comply. She noted that all of EJRP would be teaming up to ensure compliance. If co-location with EPR takes place they would either be added on as a new program to the EJRP accreditation or they would need to apply for their own accreditation.

**e. Memo from Darby Mayville re: Pickleball Grant**

Ms. Mayville presented the issue of whether or not the Village should authorize staff to submit the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Collaborative Community Grant. The Village of Essex Junction Recreation and Parks Department (EJRP) would like to convert tennis courts into six pickleball courts at Cascade Park, as well as public restrooms. The total project cost is \$146,000; \$100,000 from the grant and the remaining \$46,000 from the EJRP Capital Plan. Grounds and Facilities Director Harlan . Smith explained that the project is sound and would have support, considering the many entities who are using Cascade Park. He stressed the importance of establishing a bathroom facility with the increased use of this park for Little League as well as the pickleball initiative. Ms. Sopchak explained that this grant, from the state of VT, comes on the tail-end of a study of VT amenities by a task force appointed by the governor.

**MOTION by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Andrew Brown that the Trustees Authorize staff to submit the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Collaborative Grant. Voting: 3-0 (Elaine Sopchak recused); motion carried.**

**f. Request to amend Sidewalk Policy—Evan Teich**

Mr. Teich reminded the Trustees that the petitioner, Todd Odit, requested the Village change the sidewalk plowing on Rivendell Drive . The staff researched answers to questions from the Trustees and shared their responses and recommendations with the Trustees in the Meeting Packet. Mr. Teich said that Village Engineer Rick Hamlin, Public Works Superintendent Rick Jones and Mr. Teich discussed that instead of defining "key school connector" they would prefer this clause be removed from the policy and the language be changed so the Trustees determine the plowing needs on a case-by-case basis. The staff also determined that the school is not aware of a map that directs children to walk specific routes to school and they clarified that it would take 6.5 minutes to plow the extra distance, not including snow blowing, if plowing were to include both sides of the road.

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Mr. Brown opened a discussion with the Trustees about staff's recommendation of, instead of defining "key connector to a school," removing the term altogether. He preferred not to accept the recommendation but, instead, make a motion that the Village of Essex Junction plow both sides of Rivendell, as suggested in the policy for key school connectors. The Trustees discussed the importance of how to best invest resources into ensuring the Village is a walkable community. Mr. Teich pointed out that the recommendations enable people to safely walk to school. He suggested that by having a walkable community and then setting a precedent like "key connector" there is the risk of snowballing increases in plowing operations, equipment, manpower and expenses. Mr. Brown and Ms. Houghton did not feel that the recommendation allowed for the best opportunity/solution to walkers.

Mr. Tyler stated that the recommendation would leave plowing on Rivendell as is for this winter, then a crosswalk would be established in the spring and, thereafter, from the point of the crosswalk to Maple street plowing would take place on the other side of the street, which is the school connecting side.

Ms. Sopchak felt that the recommendations were a good first start and wanted to give them a try. She said they were a good midway point between what was being asked and what is doable. Mr. Tyler found it uncomfortable to change a whole policy at the request of one resident.

**MOTION, by Elaine Sopchak, that the Trustees approve the recommendations made by staff.**

- Lori Houghton requested a friendly amendment to clarify that the issue can be taken up again with a petition from the street residents.

**MOTION, WITH FRIENDLY AMMENDMENT, by Elaine Sopchak that the Trustees follow the recommendations of the staff with the understanding that, as is already written in the sidewalk plan, "Residents of a Class 3 Residential Street can request that the village switch sides for plowing if all households on the street sign a petition and submit it to the Village Manager"; if that happens the Trustees will revisit it. SECOND by Lori Houghton.**

Community Discussion: Todd Odit noted his surprise that when he requested that the Village of Essex Junction plow both sides of Rivendell, by defining the road as a "key school connector" as written in sidewalk policy H4, staff would then recommend removing the whole phrase "that provide key connections to the schools" from the policy. He said it changes the rules of the discussion. He pointed out that Essex Junction already plows 32 out of 38 miles of the sidewalks in the Village of Essex Junction so adding the other side of Rivendell accounts for an extra 2% of the sidewalks. He said that this throws doubt on the thought that if the recommendation is approved it could set a precedent that may result in a significant increase in manpower. Mr. Odit also asserted that the Village may be in a harder position if the clause "that provide key connections to the schools" is removed because then the Trustees would need to decide each request with no criteria.

Ms. Houghton noted that Part B of the recommendation revises the policy, but that the Trustees had requested that the review and revisions process on this policy, in its entirety, take place at a later date. Mr. Teich said the policy would only be revised in this one section, with this recommendation.

**MOTION WITHDRAWN by Elaine Sopchak.**

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**MOTION, by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, that the Trustees adopt the recommendation of staff in section A, C, D and E and should there be a petition of all residents the Trustees will reassess the situation.**

Mr. Brown requested clarification of this motion; would the intention be to keep the petition process at 100% of all residents of Rivendell? Ms. Sopchak noted that, because the policy is not being changed, it would remain at 100%. Mr. Brown reminded the Trustees that currently, in other policies, a Block Party requires 100% of signatures and a Speed Bump requires 70%.

**MOTION WITHDRAWN by Lori Houghton.**

Community Discussion: Mr. Odit requested clarification of where the plowing would take place with the recommendations from staff. Mr. Tyler and Mr. Teich explained that the plowing would be from Maple St. to the intersection of Woods End Drive, on the west side of the Street, and then the east side plowing would be from beyond that point to the end of the street. This would change the location of where people are crossing the street, and a crosswalk at that location would be installed.

**MOTION, by George Tyler, to continue to plow only on the East side of Rivendell, to stay consistent with current policy and practices, but if the Trustees receive a petition of 50% or more of the homes on the east side of the street they will reconsider.**

**MOTION WITHDRAWN by George Tyler.**

**MOTION, by George Tyler, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to continue to plow on the East side of Rivendell, to stay consistent with current policy, unless the Trustees receive a petition of 50% or more of the households on Rivendell Drive, then they will reconsider the decision. Voting: 3-1 (Andrew Brown dissent); motion carried.**

**MOTION, by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Lori Houghton, that the Trustees implement the recommendation of staff in section C, D, and E and that the Trustees revisit the entire policy at a later date. Voting: 3-1 (Andrew Brown dissent); motion carried.**

**g. Update on progress of Unified Manager Goals—Evan Teich**

**MOTION, by George Tyler, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to amend the Agenda to move item G to the bottom of the New Business items. Voting: unanimous, (4-0); motion carried.**

After item K, Unified Manager Evan Teich provided the Selectboard with an update on his four main goals (paraphrased below), along with a summary of personnel changes during the 2018 calendar year.

- Policies and Procedures alignment in consolidated departments;
- Increasing community awareness of Essex messaging over multiple platforms;
- School district relationship-building;
- Aligning budgets, hiring and processes within the two Essex municipalities.

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Mr. Tyler commented on the website consolidation goal and the trustees discussed the importance of working carefully with the Brownell Library because their system is very important and complex. Mr. Teich detailed ways the schools and the Village are collaborating and coordinating resources.

**h. Contract for Building Needs Analysis**

Mr. Duggan brought the issue of whether the Board of Trustees would authorize the Unified Manager to execute a contract with Scott + Partners Architecture to conduct a Building Needs Analysis. This was a follow up from a proposal to the Trustees months prior to conduct a study of the Town Fire Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Town and Village Public Works Departments. Before issuing the RFP the Town and Village decided to expand the study to also include Village Fire and Recreation and Parks. An RFP for the project brought in two bids, one from Scott + Partners and one from Wiemann Lamphere Architects. Staff from the involved departments reviewed and evaluated the proposals and preferred the proposal from Scott + Partners. The bid was over the \$40,000 expense threshold, which is why the request came back to the Trustees for approval to enter into the contract.

Ms. Sopchak requested a copy of the bids and wondered what criteria led the committee to choose Scott + Partners. Mr. Duggan agreed to send the bids to the Trustees and described the score sheet used by staff to determine the bid. He noted that although the two bids had similar scopes of work, one thing that stood out was that the bid from Wiemann Lamphere Architects exceeded \$100,000 while the chosen bid was about \$46,000. Mr. Tyler restated his concern with this study, noting that the resulting capital suggestions may be at odds with current capital projects that are more urgent and running behind. Ms. Houghton pointed out that the proposed projects resulting from this study would go through the Capital Review Committee for ranking of priority as do all projects. The Trustees discussed the value of the study for determining future needs and whether another discussion with the Selectboard about this issue is in order. Mr. Duggan reminded the Trustees that the study should be valid for 30 years and the funding for the study is already in the budget. Mr. Teich noted that the study can help prioritize and inform capital expenses, action steps and timelines.

**MOTION, by Andrew Brown, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, that the Board of Trustees authorize the Unified Manager to execute a contract with Scott + Partners for a Building Needs Analysis. Voting: unanimous, (4-0); motion carried.**

**i. Assignment of Fund Balance—Lauren Morrisseau**

Ms. Morrisseau brought the issue of whether the Trustees would assign an additional \$39,699 of fund balance for Building Maintenance. She noted that there was a small surplus for FYE18 beyond the 10% if fund balance allowed. The Village General Fund had a total fund balance of \$828,301 at 6/30/18. Of this amount, \$149,991 was either non-spendable (Inventory and Prepaid Expenses) or already assigned. Amounts already assigned are:

- For Library \$6,177
- For Termination Benefits \$91,965
- For Health Reimbursement Arrangement \$10,000
- For FYE19 Tax Reduction \$35,000
- Total Currently Assigned \$143,142

Ms. Morrisseau said that the assigned and non-spendable fund balance equals \$293,133, leaving unassigned fund balance of \$535,167 at 6/30/18 (equal to 10.8% of the FYE19 Budget). This leaves \$39,699 over the permitted 10% allowed by the voters. Staff recommends the \$39,699 above the

limit be assigned for Building Maintenance due to the maintenance needs of our many buildings. Mr. Teich explained this may be used for doors, ADA compliance an older building maintenance.

**MOTION, by Lori Houghton, SECOND by Andrew Brown, that the Trustees assign \$39,699 of fund balance for Building Maintenance. Voting: unanimous, (4-0); motion carried.**

**j. Proposed Transfer of Rolling Stock Fund to Street Department—Lauren Morrisseau**

Ms. Morrisseau reminded the Trustees that the Town had been discussing how to eliminate the Highway Tax and acquainted the Trustees with a proposal by unified staff to do so. There had been incremental decreases to the highway tax since 2016 and the suggestion is that now would be a good time to eliminate it altogether by concurrently moving the Village yearly transfer of funds to the Rolling Stock Fund for Street vehicles out of the Misc. Transfers department and into the Street Department. This would be in line with the Public Works Consolidation Committee's suggestion that there be only be one rolling stock and it would mostly balance out the elimination of the Highway Tax. The recommendation from staff is that the Trustees consider moving forward with putting the transfer to the Rolling Stock Fund in the Street Department budget. This informative discussion was prepared for a discussion and vote to take place at the next joint meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard. The memo for the joint meeting will decouple the two calculations to be clearer.

Ms. Houghton said that, with this proposal, the Village would still make decisions about the rolling stock fund but expressed concern that this decision will require a change to the current MOU between the Town and Village. The Trustees discussed that the continued use of MOUs between the Village and the Town is not a permanent solution. They discussed their hope that a more consolidated form of governance continue to be the goal. They discussed the benefits of the fact that the Highway Department of the Village and Town are splitting the maintenance of the roads and that this decision will allow the town to split related equipment costs 50/50. No changes are being made about what would be purchased to cover the Village road needs or when. This MOU amendment would allow a transfer of the rolling stock funding into the Street Department and a permanent amendment around use of these funds.

**k. Budget Day Menu—Lauren Morrisseau**

The Trustees decided to order the budget day lunch at Martone's Market

**6. CONSENT ITEMS**

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

- a. Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting 11/27/18**
- b. Check Warrants #17123 – 11/21/18; #17124 – 11/30/18**

**7. READING FILE**

**a. Board Member Comments**

Lori Houghton said that the Farmers Market board made a difficult but good decision to dissolve and they will be donating their Farmers Market fund balance to local worthy missions. She noted that the Farmers' Market was successful in many ways but it was very challenging to maintain a 16-19 week event during the summer. The Trustees shared their disappointment in hearing this. Ms. Sopchak expressed concern for how residents would still be able to procure local foods. Ms. Houghton noted the great increase of CSA options and hoped that others will step up to use the space in new and interesting ways.

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- b. Upcoming Meeting Schedule
  - c. FYE 19 Budget Status Report November 2018
  - d. Minutes from other boards/committees:
    - Joint Subcommittee on Governance 11/28/18
  - e. Town Meeting Preparation Training
  - f. Chittenden County Pre-Budget Meeting

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to enter into Executive Session to discuss a real estate negotiation. Voting: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.**

**MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to enter, right after, into a second Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. Voting: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.**

**MOTION by Andrew Brown, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to exit Executive Session for real estate matter. Voting: Unanimous (4-0); motion carried at 9:30 p.m.**

(Executive Session continues for purpose of discussing personnel matter)

**MOTION by Andrew Brown, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to exit Executive Session for personnel matter. Voting: Unanimous (4-0); motion carried at 9:46 p.m.**

9. **ADJOURN**

**MOTION by Andrew Brown, SECOND by Lori Houghton, to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.**

The meeting Adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Cathy Ainsworth