

TRUSTEE & SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, February 6, 2019

SELECTBOARD: Max Levy; Michael Plageman; Elaine Haney; Andrew Watts; Irene Wrenner.

TRUSTEES: George Tyler; Lori Houghton (by call-in); Dan Kerin; Elaine Haney. Andrew Brown was not in attendance.

ADMINISTRATION: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Town Manager; Sarah Macy Finance Director; Rob Paluba, IT Director; Susan McNamara-Hill, Town Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT: John Alden, Village Planning Commission; Dustin Brusso, Town Planning Commission Margaret Smith; Brande Peters; Andy Suntup; Paul Hansen;

1. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Mr. Levy and Mr. Tyler called the special Joint Meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard and the Village of Essex Junction Trustees to order at 7:00PM. They invited all in attendance to rise and join in the “Pledge of Allegiance”.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

Mr. Teich provided two additions to the agenda: minutes, for the Trustees to approve, from the joint meeting of December 18th, as an addition to item 5g, and a Q&A on Governance to be added to item 6b.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

Dan Kerin moved, and Elaine Haney seconded, that the Trustees approve the agenda, with additions. The motion passed 4-0 (Andrew Brown absent).

Michael Plageman moved, and Irene Wrenner seconded, that the Selectboard approve the agenda, with additions. The motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

Brande Peters requested that the Essex municipalities consider being her fiscal sponsor for a \$10,000 grant, due the following day, to the Vermont Community Foundation or the Vermont Women’s Fund. She described various ways she thought the grant opportunity’s guidelines might connect to municipality interests, including promoting viable careers, non-pregnancy issues, economic services for low income women, economic vitality, Route 15 land use, fresh air, clean outhouses or community care packages. Ms. Haney, Mr. Tyler and Mr. Kerin suggested that she leave a copy of her application with staff, along with her contact information, and that she connect with Mr. Teich the next day.

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5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. **Discussion of shared website for Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction—Rob Paluba**

Mr. Paluba explained the IT department’s process for selecting a vendor to host a shared website for the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction. He said a committee of staff determined selection criteria and identified four top vendor candidates, with CivicPlus as the committee’s top choice. Mr. Paluba said CivicPlus stood out because of its extensive experience working with municipalities and because of the company’s configurable module options so Essex can to personalize the site to meet their specific website needs. He also discussed the system’s security, social media compatibility and outreach functions for emergency broadcasting.

Mr. Paluba explained that development and deployment of the new website will cost \$33,100 and, through this phase, IT will work with a CivicPlus project team. Annualized expenses, thereafter, will be \$1,174 more than Essex’s current spending on website services. Mr. Paluba is planning to conduct demos of the new website in June and that the site will launch toward the end of September. He said the website will have a Landing/Home page, a Town page, and a Village page, and one more main page which could be used for for recreation or as a joint Town and Village page. Mr. Paluba pointed out that, when the new website goes live, thirteen of the fourteen websites currently managed by the municipalities will be discontinued, but their domains will still be owned by the municipalities. The only exclusion to this is the Brownell Library page, who will continue using their own new website.

Mr. Tyler, Mr. Levy, Ms. Haney and Ms. Houghton explained specific website functionality important to them, including: a front-end that encourages two-way communication and connects directly with Essex events, news and opportunities for public input; a mobile app option; water bill and tax payment options; Channel 17 compatibility; the same or better analytics; public records requests monitoring; clarity of communications and buttons; and document storage/ document history capability. The Village Trustees described collaboration between staff and the Trustees, when their current website was designed. They encouraged IT to work with them in a similar fashion while designing the new website. Mr. Paluba said the workgroup will provide regular updates in the Selectboard and Trustees’ reading files, and Mr. Teich said he would include Village Trustees in website development conversations.

b. **Approval of draft timeline for merger vote—Max Levy & George Tyler**

Mr. Tyler suggested that the Trustees and Selectboard members establish a November 2020 deadline for a governance change question to be on the ballot for voters. Ms. McNamara-Hill clarified that the question would need to be finalized by the middle of August 2020, in order to ensure it is on the ballot, through the state of Vermont. She discussed legal statutes and procedures involved with merging the municipalities. Ms. McNamara-Hill and Mr. Watts pointed out variations in statutes, based on what governance structure is chosen and protocol differences for Villages and Towns. Ms. Haney wondered if there could be sub-questions on the ballot. Ms. McNamara-Hill said that all decisions need to be arranged with legal counsel, to ensure adherence with requirements for public hearings, warnings, which sections of the

93 population needs to vote, how the votes should take place, how the question is worded on
94 ballot, etc. Mr. Tyler and Mr. Levy pointed out that, if merger details are not worked out in
95 time for the November deadline, the Selectboard members and Trustees can aim for a later
96 date for a vote on governance.
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98 The Selectboard and Trustees discussed the pros and cons of a November 2020 deadline. Ms.
99 Haney proposed that the Selectboard and Trustees review progress in May 2020, to see if the
100 goal is still achievable. Ms. Wrenner pointed out that, even though there will be a large
101 turnout for the November 2020 election, getting information out to voters about the
102 governance question may be challenging. Ms. Haney pointed out that including the question
103 on the November ballot will ensure people do not miss their opportunity to vote.
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105 Mr. Tyler opened the discussion to public comment. Ms. Smith agreed that getting
106 governance change information out to voters during the 2020 election will be a challenge.
107 Mr. Suntup requested verification that an early voter option will be available. Ms.
108 McNamara-Hill confirmed that early voting would be an option because the question would
109 be on the ballot.
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111 **Mr. Tyler moved, and Ms. Haney seconded, that the Trustees work with the Selectboard to**
112 **develop a governance change proposal for voter approval in November 2020. The motion**
113 **passed 4-0 (Andrew Brown absent).**
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115 **Michael Plageman moved, and Andy Watts seconded, that the Selectboard work with the**
116 **Trustees to develop a governance change proposal for voter approval in November 2020.**
117 **The motion passed 5-0.**
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119 c. **Review of Governance Subcommittee final report and discussion of next steps—George**
120 **Tyler**

121 Mr. Tyler opened a discussion with Selectboard members and Trustees to determine whether
122 there is continued support for the Governance Committee to focus on and guide work
123 involved with governance change. He shared his opinion that the joint meetings of the
124 Trustees and Selectboard are not ideal venues for moving the governance issue forward, due
125 to their consistently full agendas. Mr. Plageman and Ms. Wrenner agreed with his opinion.
126 Mr. Levy and Ms. Haney suggested that the subcommittee develop a timeline, now that there
127 is a vote date in place, and condense the report they developed so it can be to be discussed at
128 the next Joint Meeting. They also discussed the pros and cons of possibly reconstituting the
129 subcommittee after April elections. Mr. Kerin voiced his support of the subcommittee model
130 as a way to mobilize public outreach on the topic of governance change. Mr. Kerin, Mr.
131 Plageman and Ms. Haney commended the subcommittee's work to date, which resulted in a
132 menu of options for the Selectboard and the Trustees to consider, all vetted by legal counsel.
133

134 Mr. Watts said that the subcommittee did not conduct their work as he had expected it would
135 be done, and proposed the governance change efforts take place at the joint meetings, not in a
136 subcommittee. He also suggested that governance planning meetings be warned as
137 Selectboard meetings, to promote greater inclusion. Mr. Tyler noted that consult with legal
138 counsels indicated the subcommittee meetings do not need to be warned, but any of the

139 Trustees and Selectboard members can attend them and participate in the discussions. Ms.
140 Wrenner, Ms. Macy and Ms. Houghton discussed how the Selectboard, Trustee and joint
141 meetings may need to be take place differently in the future, based on the changing dynamics
142 of the municipalities.

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144 The Trustees and Selectboard, agreed that the subcommittee should meet in March to
145 produce a governance change timeline for the upcoming year and to condense the report so it
146 is ready to be discussed at the next Joint Meeting on April 10th.

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148 d. **Support for collaborative planning between Town and Village Planning Commissions**
149 Mr. Tyler presented the question of Board support for formal, collaborative planning efforts
150 between the Town and Village Planning commissions. He invited Mr. Brusso and Mr. Alden
151 to discuss their collaborative process. Mr. Brusso said that their goal is to work toward the
152 creation of a single Planning Commission, but first explore ways to collaborate and align.
153 Mr. Duggan explained the legal limitations/ nuances of how the Planning Commissions
154 collaborate, according to municipality statutes. Mr. Brusso said that the two commissions
155 began dedicating every other month of their meeting schedules as “joint planning
156 workshops”. He expressed that this format has been beneficial and commissions have
157 identified a series of workshop topics to address. He also pointed out that, in this
158 arrangement, ex-officious are not required and those who attend are “visiting members”. Mr.
159 Tyler and Mr. Kerin said the commissions should consider going on a retreat to begin putting
160 together their ideas. Ms. Haney suggested that the Planning Commissions, the Selectboard
161 and the Trustees all meet together on some of the topic areas they are discussing. All
162 members of the Selectboard and the Trustees agreed that they support the efforts of the
163 Planning Commissions to define and normalize alignment and collaboration practices.

164
165 e. ***Evaluation of Unified Manager on 2018 goals—Max Levy & George Tyler**
166 Mr. Levy proposed that the Selectboard and Trustees evaluate the Unified Manager on the
167 Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Constrained (SMART) goals included
168 in his contract for 2018. Input from Mr. Teich about his efforts toward these goals, along
169 with feedback from others on his performance, were collected and summarized for review.
170 Mr. Levy proposed that the Trustees and Selectboard members go into executive session, as
171 item 7a, to review the summery, determine Mr. Teich’s accomplishment of the 2018 SMART
172 goals and decide whether he is eligible for a bonus of up to \$3,000, as per his contract.

173
174 f. **Determine 2019 goals for Unified Manager—Evan Teich**
175 Mr. Levy introduced the issue of setting SMART goals for the Unified Manager for 2019.
176 He explained that the Village President and Selectboard Chair compiled and synthesized a
177 list of suggested goals, provided by Selectboard members and Trustees. Their proposed
178 SMART goals included:
179 • Ensure periodic, one-on-one, communication and interaction with department
180 heads, particularly before any policy changes that might affect their jobs. Don’t allow the
181 management organizational structure to impede good working relations with staff.
182 • When speaking in public make sure you and staff use consistent, inclusive, mutually
183 agreed upon Language. For example, don’t use the term ‘town’ without specifying
184 whether this refers to ‘town-wide’ or ‘town within the village.’

- 185 • Consult with interested board members and staff to develop a communication strategy
186 across multiple platforms, including Facebook and other relevant social media, and
187 incorporating the potential to effectively disseminate accurate information about merger
188 and other town-wide issues.
- 189 • Initiate a process for all Town and Village Departments to develop a five-year strategic
190 plan. This effort should be driven by department heads working in collaboration with
191 administrative staff.
- 192 • Develop an aligned and consistent process for hiring staff and onboarding new staff and
193 new appointees of standing committees.

194
195 The Selectboard members and the Trustees determined that a new, better method of
196 establishing the Unified Manager’s SMART goals should be planned for future evaluations.
197 Mr. Kerin suggested that they consider, in the future, measuring the Unified Manager’s
198 progress semiannually. Ms. Houghton suggested that the 2019 SMART goals be determined
199 as one goal specific to the Village of Essex Junction, one specific to Essex Town and one
200 joint goal. Mr. Kerin, Ms. Haney and Ms. Wrenner discussed the challenges and nuances of
201 measuring the goals proposed by the Village President and Selectboard Chair. In
202 consideration of this, it was decided to eliminate the goal written as bullet number two.

203
204 **George Tyler moved, and Elaine Haney seconded, that the Trustees assign goals 1, 3, 4, and**
205 **5, recommended by the two board chairs, with the correction on goal number 3 to replace**
206 **“Facebook and other relevant social media” with just “social media”. The motion passed 3-**
207 **1. Roll call: George Tyler, yes; Elaine Haney, yes; Dan Kerin, yes; Ms. Houghton, No;**
208 **Andrew Brown absent.**

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210 Ms. Houghton reiterated that she wanted to see the group choose one Village goal, one Town
211 goal and a joint goal.

212
213 **Michael Plageman moved, and Andy Watts seconded, that the Selectboard assign goals 1,**
214 **3, 4, and 5, recommended by the two board chairs, with the correction on goal number 3 to**
215 **replace “Facebook and other relevant social media” with just “social media”.**

216
217 Ms. Wrenner said that the goal written as bullet number two was important to include in the
218 SMART goals, and she sees it as measurable.

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220 **The motion passed 4-1, with dissenting vote from Irene Wrenner.**

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222 g. **Approval of Minutes: December 5, 2019 (Trustees only)**

223
224 **George Tyler moved, and Dan Kerin seconded, that the Trustees approve the Trustee and**
225 **Selectboard special meeting of December 18, 2018 minutes, without correction.**
226 **The motion passed 4-0 (Andrew Brown absent).**

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228 **George Tyler moved, and Dan Kerin seconded, that the Trustees approve the Joint meeting**
229 **of the Essex Selectboard and Essex Junction Trustees' minutes from the meeting of**
230 **December 5, 2018, without correction. The motion passed 4-0 (Andrew Brown absent).**
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232 **6. READING FILE**

233 **a. Board Member Comments**

- 234 • Ms. Wrenner said she is unable to go to the Saturday 2/9/19 hockey game to conduct
- 235 outreach, and Mr. Plageman said he would attend in her stead.
- 236 • Ms. Wrenner attended a Voices for Education meeting and has a packet of information
- 237 for the boards that she will add to the next meeting's reading file.

238 **b. Q&A info sheet re: Update on Governance of Essex and Essex Junction upcoming**
239 **Meeting Schedule and Events**

240 Mr. Levy introduced the Governance info sheet, to be used for public outreach, and requested
241 that the Selectboard and Trustees approve its content, before it is distributed. Ms. Wrenner
242 provided a spelling correction and all other revisions will be provided to Mr. Duggan.
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244 **7. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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246 **a. *An executive session is expected for evaluation of a public employee**
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248 **Andy Watts moved, and Irene Wrenner seconded, that the Selectboard enter into executive**
249 **session to discuss the evaluation of an employee in accordance with 1. V.S.A. Section 313**
250 **(a)(3), to include the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Unified Manager. The**
251 **motion passed 5-0.**
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253 **George Tyler moved, and Elaine Haney seconded, that the Trustees enter into executive**
254 **session to discuss the evaluation of an employee in accordance with 1. V.S.A. Section 313**
255 **(a)(3), to include the Unified Manager and the Essex Town Selectboard. The motion passed**
256 **4-0 (Andrew Brown absent).**
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258 **Michael Plageman moved, and Irene Wrenner seconded, that the Selectboard exit**
259 **executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:45 p.m.**
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261 **George Tyler moved, and Elaine Haney seconded, that the Village Trustees exit executive**
262 **session. The motion passed 4-0 (Andrew Brown absent) at 8:45 p.m.**
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264 **Irene Wrenner moved, and Michael Plageman seconded, that the Selectboard approve**
265 **awarding Evan the full \$3,000 bonus for successfully achieving 2018 goals. The motion**
266 **passed 5-0.**
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268 **George Tyler moved, and Dan Kerin seconded, that the Trustees award Evan Teich the**
269 **maximum \$3,000 performance bonus for satisfactorily achieving the mutually agreed upon**
270 **goals as warranted under the manager's contract. The motion passed 4-0 (Andrew Brown**
271 **absent).**
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273 **8. ADJOURN**

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275 **Irene Wrenner moved, and Michael Plageman seconded, that the Selectboard adjourn the**
276 **meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:45 p.m.**

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278 **Dan Kerin moved, and George Tyler seconded, that the Trustees adjourn the meeting. The**
279 **motion passed 4-0 (Andrew Brown absent) at 8:45 p.m.**

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283 **Respectfully Submitted,**

284 **Cathy Ainsworth**

285 **Recording Secretary**