



**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

Delta Hotel
1117 Williston Rd.
South Burlington, VT 05403
Saturday, June 22, 2019
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

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The Selectboard and Trustees meet together to discuss and act on joint business. Each board votes separately on action items.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [8:00 AM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION**
 - 8:00 Welcome and Introduction
 - 8:10 Public Comment – 10 minutes
 - 8:20 Strategic Planning Session
 - 10:00 Break
 - 10:15 Strategic Planning Session, continued
 - 11:50 Public Comment – 10 minutes
 - 12:00 Break – Lunch
[Lunch will be provided to board members and staff only]
 - 12:30 Strategic Planning Session, continued
 - 2:20 Public Comment – 10 minutes
 - 2:30 Strategic Planning Session Wrap Up
5. **ADJOURN** [3:00 PM]

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 or President, 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 or President. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings, like all programs and activities of the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Unified Manager's office at 878-1341.

Certification: 06/19/2019

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**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Saturday, June 22, 2019**

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Max Levy; Patrick Murray; Andy Watts

TRUSTEES: Andrew Brown, President; Dan Kerin; Raj Chawla; Amber Thibeault

ADMINISTRATION: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sarah Macy Finance Director/ Assistant Manager; Charlie Cole, Town Fire Chief; Chris Gaboriault, Village Fire Chief; Rick Garey, Chief of Police; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director; Ricky Jones, Village Public Works Superintendent; Jim Jutras, Water Quality Superintendent; Wendy Hysko, Brownell Library Director; Caitlin Corless, Essex Free Library Director; Ally Vile, Parks & Recreation Director; Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk and Treasurer; Karen Lemnah, Assessor; Robin Pierce, Village Community Development Director; Dana Hanley, Town Community Development Director; Ann Janda, Merger Project Manager; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager

OTHERS PRESENT: Liz Gamache; Jennifer Knauer; Margaret Smith; Irene Wrenner; Colin Flanders

1. CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Brown called the Trustees to order, and Elaine Haney called the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 8:05 AM, for the Special Joint Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees with the Town of Essex Selectboard.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

With no changes to the agenda, no motion to approve was required.

4. STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

Welcome and Introduction

Evan Teich, Unified Manager welcomed the attendees and provided of preview of what to expect for the day. He gave an introduction to resources employed including municipal attorney Dan Richardson; KSV, the firm conducting public education and outreach; Ann Janda, recently brought on to work on merger and transition planning, Liz Gamache, former Mayor and Interim City Manager of St. Albans City; and Jennifer Knauer, the facilitator for the day.

Ms. Knauer read through the items on the agenda and explained her role. She pointed out areas where she would provide participants with tools to assist with ideas and planning structures. Ms. Knauer then asked for participants to introduce themselves and their department or role.

Public Comment—10 minutes

Irene Wrenner resident of Town of Essex, has been studying issue of merger since 2005. She offered for anyone to approach her with questions. Her biggest concern is that her neighbors outside the Village pay at least half of the revenue coming in to the Town government and yet they do not have equal representation at meetings where discussion is about the future governance of the Town. She points out that there are eight Village residents on the boards, but there are not eight outside the Village residents, which Ms. Wrenner feels will not provide

55 fair outcomes or negotiations. She is looking for more diversity and fairer representation as
56 the process moves forward.

57
58 Margaret Smith commented that the school board has four [Essex] Junction residents and
59 four Town outside the Village residents making it equal when the schools merged. Ms. Smith
60 then asked what the status of sharing the Heart and Soul report with the Governance
61 Subcommittee is. Greg Duggan responded to Ms. Smith's inquiry stating that he received the
62 report on Friday and will forward to the Governance Subcommittee. Ms. Smith indicated that
63 it would have been nice if it had been forwarded sooner. Ms. Haney commented that she
64 received the report while on the subcommittee, as well as other reports such as the EGG
65 report and the TGIA report, a year ago as part of the reading for the beginning of the process.
66 Ms. Smith thanked Ms. Haney for the response and asked that the report be brought up
67 again.

68 69 **Strategic Planning Session**

70 Ms. Knauer began the Strategic Planning Session by asking department heads to provide the
71 highlights from the summary report sent out before the meeting. The first group asked to
72 present was public safety and public works.

73
74 Village Fire Chief Chris Gaboriault does not see any major issues with merging and the two
75 fire departments. Both departments address public safety and aligning policies. One of the
76 biggest issues affecting both departments are that they work on paid call and are dependent
77 on volunteers. The volunteers display a deep-rooted sense of commitment to the different
78 communities and things such as what color gear they are wearing, what color the trucks are
79 and what the truck says on it are important. If the volunteers do not agree with the way things
80 are changing, the departments risk losing them. Chief Gaboriault reported that volunteerism
81 is down and training is a lengthy process.

82
83 Town Fire Chief Charlie Cole reports that recruitment and retention are the greatest
84 challenges. Call volumes have increased and Essex Fire Department averages three calls per
85 day, which is difficult with a volunteer force. Chief Cole emphasized that colors and
86 representation make a difference to the volunteers. The two departments have been working
87 together for decades and that will not change. What the departments need help with is tax
88 fairness. The fire service is nearly equal, but how residents pay for the service is not. There
89 are two departments, but one service.

90
91 Police Chief Rick Garey reported that the police department has been serving both
92 communities for forty years and does not experience any merged department issues. The two
93 biggest challenges for the police department is recruitment and the difference in Village and
94 Town ordinances. Chief Garey stated that the department has been working on draft changes
95 to ordinances that they are hoping to present in the next year. Chief Garey said that he is
96 pleased to say there is more diversity and many proactive activities going on at the police
97 department.

98
99 Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director said that he would like to skip over accomplishments,
100 since these have been reported in past annual reports. Mr. Lutz said that he wants to focus
101 on five key points. The first is that size matters. A combined department increases road
102 mileage, infrastructure size and population—all of which has an impact. There must be some
103 hierarchy of order in the public works department to handle the management decisions. The
104 second point is to understand what the Town has, what the Village has and what the

differences are. Mr. Lutz encourages the board members to drive the roads, visit the buildings, the garages and the wastewater treatment plant to understand the infrastructure and the costs to operate. The third point is to provide a clear and timely direction and not to waiver from it. This is important for future hires and decisions down the road. The fourth point is to use staff effectively. The fifth point is to always reflect back on the prime mission is in providing responsive service, addressing community infrastructure needs and protecting the health and safety of the community.

Ricky Jones, Village Public Works Superintendent points out that although we are two different communities with different needs, the two departments can make it work. They just need direction. The departments do very well sharing equipment and resources, including staff.

Jim Jutras, Water Quality Superintendent began his presentation by stating that he pulled his report from the summary at the last minute since a lot of it was repeated from other reports and that there were many common themes. He went on to say the challenge is to remain nimble, not with just the communities, but also with local environmental rules, political rules, and legislative mandates that push things down to the local level. Mr. Jutras stated the process the communities are going through is to provide stability in the future should there be major economic changes in the community. Changes come quickly and the response must be just as quick, which can only come from stability. The water treatment plant has been merged for over 35 years for regulatory reasons. There is also a shared sanitation agreement between the Town and the Village since 1985. Stormwater is working well and is emerging from its start as a joint committee. Mr. Jutras reinforced the point made by Mr. Lutz stated in that to meet the goals of alignment, the departments must have consistent direction with priorities. Quoting from a book, Mr. Jutras explained the term "fight and unite", which means that after the debates when you walk away with consensus, support the decision.

Questions:

Ms. Haney asked Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones if there is a similar thought process as with the fire departments regarding the importance of colors of the trucks, the equipment etc.. Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones agreed that color is not a problem, since both departments have red trucks. There is still the issue of "I work for the Town or I work for the Village". Additionally, it takes time to recruit and train new people.

Mr. Teich asked the fire chiefs what they think could help to keep volunteers through the process of keeping their sense of identity. Fire Chief Cole responded that retaining the identity, history, emblems and pride of each department could be still take place while aligning policies and practices. Chief Cole provided an example of how New York City's fire department has "FDNY" on all of their trucks, but each station has their own logos and colors. He said that he believe that this could work for their departments.

Mr. Watts asked if the elected officials are in the way of decision-making. Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jutras responded that there are decisions that need to be made before a merger decision and some that will come after, whether merged or not. Once a structure is in place, management can begin to fill that structure. It is important to have priorities, clear decisions and timeframes.

Mr. Kerin commented that the differences between the Town and the Village may create hard feelings at first, but these feelings will fade as time passes. We must find commonality and

practice forward thinking to prevent making changes to the charter that avoid satisfying the passions of certain groups and making future decisions difficult with complicated terms like "Town outside the Village". Chief Cole responded to this by pointing out Mr. Lutz's challenge of making a decision and to stay moving forward. In order to keep qualified staff, it is important to have a plan to support the decisions made. Ms. Knauer clarifies that the point Chief Cole might be making is that recruitment is tough when it is ambiguous.

Ms. Knauer introduced the second round of presentations from the library and recreation departments.

Brownell Library Director, Wendy Hysko and Essex Free Library Director, Caitlin Corless presented together. They began by informing the audience that the library reports in the summary cover their merger challenges and they want the presentation to include what the libraries can offer as well. One of the greatest challenges that the two libraries face is the difference in board structure. Essex Free oversees operations, while Brownell's structure is included in the Trust. Ms. Hysko and Ms. Corless said that the libraries are in the business of sharing, including a library management system. Each library has 5,000 registered borrowers, but are always hoping they can reach more of the community. Having two locations helps the libraries to reach more people and allows for different styles of users. Brownell serves a walking community, while Essex Free serves a more rural community. Both libraries offer a safe place for people, free community programs for all ages, and provide a popular community meeting space. Due to the various needs of the patrons, the libraries would like to align better in a technological way and provide clean, usable websites. The libraries strive to guard patron privacy and protect intellectual freedom.

Ally Vile, Essex Parks and Recreation (EPR) Director presented on behalf of both recreation departments. Both departments have been meeting regularly. She reports that aligning this time, as compared to last round of rec governance feels better because it is inclusive of all staff and everyone has a part in it. In the last eight months, they have had staff get-togethers, learning more about each other and increasing communication. It does not feel as forced as it was in the past. Ms. Vile stated that the binds and challenges include the move to Maple Street in two months and the idea that if the Town and Village do not merge, but the departments are co-located, the departments would not want to move again and it would just feel strange. Staffing is a challenge. Ms. Vile reports that EPR can no longer serve and produce as they have been at their small size. There are many programs with very little help. Conservative staffing is no longer fine or no longer doable. Ms. Vile wraps up by saying that the recreation departments can keep their identities, but are ready to be acting as one and to stop having to figure out who is paying for what, what we're doing and where we're going.

Questions:

Mr. Levy asked if the libraries see the identity piece of a merged environment being an issue with staffing or even the public. Ms. Corless answered that the public struggles with the change and staff-wise; the two libraries already work great together and communicate well. She went on to say the libraries have their own distinct personalities and that people choose a particular library because that is where they feel most comfortable. Having two separate locations is appealing to the public. Ms. Hysko said that some people do not want to drive into the Village, while others do not have transportation to go outside of the Village. Ms. Corless explained further that they believe they can make two separate locations work, but would need to understand what merging looks like to see how to keep identities intact.

Mr. Teich asked Ms. Vile to clarify what she meant by the recreation departments keeping their identities. Ms. Vile answered that it is more about keeping the history. After blending the Town/Village line, but recognize that there is a difference in the hustle and bustle of the parks and pools. There are different reasons as to why people go to one pool versus another. The recreation department can become one, but the services are spread out with identities for each of the parks and facilities. Mr. Teich asked a second question about how the public uses the pools and how it is necessary for people from other communities to use the pools to support the revenues. How does merging effect the pools and the facilities that we have? Ms. Vile responded that for Sand Hill, swim team is important, while Maple Street is the hub for camps. The facilities have important individual uses and provide a resource to other smaller communities. It is important to continually improve the facilities.

Mr. Murray asked if there would be a change in staffing with a merge and an increased population. Ms. Vile answered that there would not be a decreased need for staff, and if anything, some part time positions may have to be full time. Ms. Vile gave the example that EJRP is licensed for childcare, but EPR is not. The department is limited on its growth in providing childcare, however, since they do not have the facilities for the increased demand. She did not have exact numbers, but states that the department would need to adjust for growth. Ms. Macy pointed out that many of the programs are funded through an enterprise recreation program fund, so as demand for the programs grow, so do the funds to support them, outside of what is required by the taxpayers.

Mr. Kerin asked if the libraries or recreation have difficulty finding staffing like the public safety departments do. Ms. Corless said that the libraries are always able to fill their positions. Ms. Vile said that recreation does very well seasonally with camp and lifeguards. However, offering part-time jobs does not always attract the best and most qualified people for year-round positions.

Ms. Knauer introduced the third round of presentations from community development, assessing and clerk departments.

Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk and Treasurer began her presentation with some history of how her department merged. The merge changed her responsibilities, for instance, she turned over Village personnel responsibilities to the unified human resources department. One of her major issues is that she supervises employees who work for the Town with Town rules, but she is from the Village with Village rules. She was not sure if it was envisioned that she should work part time from the Village office and part time from the Town office, but she works primarily from the Town, since working from two locations is difficult. This also means that while payments are taken in from both locations, the cash receipting process is located at 81 Main.

Karen Lemnah, Assessor began her presentation. Since her department is only one, her concerns are more indirect and on the administrative side. She finds difficulty in the differences in permitting and applications. She is involved with inspections for both Village and Town, which is a great advantage.

Robin Pierce, Village Community Development Director said the Town has more planned growth, while the Village is more filling in what is available. They do have things in common like the energy plan. Both have to respond to regional commission's needs. Mr. Pierce said that the two departments do things well together when there is opportunity, but there is a

255 difference in approaches. Mr. Pierce said that Ms. Hanley has more of a regulatory
256 background, while he comes from more of a design and development background, but it is
257 good to have two different visions in their work. They do have differences in how they look at
258 fees. The Village has several ways to look at making fees appealing to bringing in growth and
259 protecting historical areas, pointing out the concept of "importance of the past, promise of the
260 future" in their planning.

261
262 Dana Hanley, Town Community Development Director pointed out to the attendees that as
263 small little departments, they have a big impact on the community. Community Development
264 departments regulate what people can do with their land and surrounding that is a lot of
265 emotion, complexity and hostility. Changes in a truly merged community development
266 structure would be large structural changes in the boards. In our communities, we have our
267 planning commissions also doing development review, which is rare. Some future steps
268 would be to dissolve the existing Planning Commissions and form one, which is a huge
269 political challenge. The communities would also have to dissolve the zoning boards and
270 become the development review boards. This could be difficult since the current boards do
271 not have experience in site plan review or subdivision plan review. Ms. Hanley went on to say
272 they need one unified development code and plan. All of these tasks are very hard. Merging
273 also involves aligning fees, forms, policies and procedures and these smaller areas that they
274 have attempted to work at have hit troubles.

275
276 Questions:

277 Mr. Levy asked that whether they merge, does the community development departments think
278 that one planning commission and two development review boards is the right way to go.
279 Both Ms. Hanley and Mr. Pierce agreed that two could work.

280
281 Ms. Knauer introduced the fourth round of presentations from the support departments.

282
283 Travis Sabataso, Human Resources Director began by saying that many of his concerns have
284 already been said, as they are issues for all departments. Specific to HR, having Town
285 employees working hand in hand with Village employees is difficult. While everyone works
286 well together, there are different pay scales, vacation accruals and benefits, which can cause
287 tension. Travel reimbursement policies are completely different, where some can be paid
288 prior to traveling and others have to wait for reimbursement. There are two different unions
289 making the correction difficult. It all must be negotiated. Mr. Sabataso said that staffing is a
290 concern not knowing exactly what the unified organization will look like. It is difficult to
291 determine if we should hire for what the needs are now or what the needs might be in the
292 future. Getting there means that the employees and associations must be okay with a "happy
293 medium" when making these decisions.

294
295 Finance Director and Assistant Manager, Sarah Macy started her presentation with
296 information about what accounting for the Village and the Town includes. She explains that
297 governmental accounting is different from regular accounting, including enterprise funds,
298 fiduciary funds and the layers of two organizations with an overlapping tax base. To add to
299 this, the two organizations are becoming more and more combined, causing us to become
300 joint applicants at times, with mixed awardee/match responsibilities, additional transfers to
301 record assets, and shared expenses that Ms. Macy questions if any of that appears
302 comparable, relevant and understandable to the people who look at it. Ms. Macy continued to
303 say that the finance department must be able to track, summarize, and show that they are

good stewards of taxpayer dollars. The more combined that the Village and Town become without actually combining, the harder that is to do.

Rob Paluba, IT Director repeated what Mr. Lutz said during his presentation, that size matters. IT is responsible for making sure that everything is protected. As departments have been combined and areas of support for the Village are now under IT, the workload has increased and IT has a greater responsibility in keeping everything guarded. The struggle for IT is the cultural difference and understanding of some of the departments that they now have an IT department with experts to do this job.

Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager began by complimenting staff on the great job they do to keep departments running while aligning, merging and co-locating. Employees enjoy where they work and the community they work for. He said that departments are sharing resources and working well together, but that it is all really hard work and time consuming. In addition to the already mentioned challenges of running two organizations, some other highlights of the challenges administration face are: the pushback when trying to align or create policies—"our policies have worked fine for years;" one consolidated finance department having to do two of everything; preparation for meetings takes up a lot of staff time and takes away from other duties; customer service is a challenge when customers are not sure of which office they are supposed to go to; the phone system is not connected and we are unable to transfer calls directly; long term planning when deciding what positions to hire for an unknown organizational structure; capital planning with two of everything; directions from the board—we need consistency.

Evan Teich, Unified Manager was the final presenter of the day and began his comments by telling the audience that, "We can't go back, we can't stand still, we have to move forward". He continued to say the Village and the Town have done too many things and gone too far to go back and standing still is not a great place to be. He said that customers are confused with two locations. The ability to transfer phone calls is the beginning, but he questions how the phone should be answered and from what location.

Questions:

Ms. Haney asked if the greatest amount of duplication occurs in Finance, HR and the Clerk's office.

Mr. Teich said that he would add the Village board and the Selectboard to that. The panel agreed that one of the benefits of merging would be that taxpayers would understand where their money goes with one set of books, one capital plan, and one direction; and would lead to more transparency.

Break

The Village Board of Trustees and the Town Selectboard recessed for a break from 10:12 AM to 10:24 AM.

Strategic Planning Session, continued

Ms. Knauer introduced the attendees to an exercise to assist in articulating the rationale for why you would merge and what can you achieve together. Using the easel sheets posted around the room, the group was encouraged to use ten minutes of quiet time to write their thoughts under the different departments. The title of the sheets, "What can we achieve together?" was followed by separate subcategories that included governance, public safety,

culture and recreation, general government (clerk, administration, treasurer), and public works and utilities. Ms. Knauer asked that as participants think about what it takes to drive these efforts, to also write down on their worksheets any reservations since there is wisdom in both of those perspectives.

After the sheets were completed, Ms. Knauer asked the attendees to go back and read them to see what trends are emerging and what rationale they are seeing for merging. The attendees then came up with the following reasons to investigate merging:

- Better customer service
- Complement vs. compete
- Efficient procedures
- Consistency in terms of practices
- Stability
 - Staff
 - Community
 - Tax rates
 - Financial decisions
- Predictability
- Accessibility
 - Information
 - Resources
 - Reduced confusion
 - Representation
- Simplicity of governance
- Positioning for long term change
 - Technologies
 - Big players in community
 - Planning vs. reacting (how do we deal with change?)
 - Sustainable future
 - Re-establishing focus on issues of our community
- United community
 - How it feels here
 - Clarity in messages
 - Everyone is equal
- Being the best
 - Best place to live, best place to locate your business, best employer, THINK ESSEX
- Refocus issues into strengths
- Nimble and responsive in face of change—departments need to be positioned well to respond—resilience

Ms. Knauer points out that the rationale and vision does not have to be for or against because it is perennial. No matter what organizational structure is in place, the focus always goes back to what the community wants to achieve and to finding out what endures over time.

Mr. Levy commented that he would hate to have staff doing work all for naught, but there are many things that need to be done regardless of what the vote is. It is important to work with

staff to allow them to provide their input on the pros and cons as the elected officials work to piece it together and make plans.

Ms. Knauer mentions that as everyone thinks of these reservations, it important to remember that how information is received will then impact what people will hear in an anchoring effect; so consider "are these actually roadblocks or things that have to be figured out?"

Mr. Lutz says that two important questions are, "What is it going to look like if we merge and what are the impediments?" The second question becomes, "What does it look like if we don't merge?" He goes further to say that we should know this upfront before the vote. Mr. Jutras comments that these are things we should be doing now anyway as departments. Ms. Knauer points out that departments are at different degrees of consolidating, making the thought process to analyze "what we do if merged" or "what we do if not" is quite different. Ms. Janda adds that in viewing this a project, there must be a contingency plan as we go along. Mr. Teich says that on November 4, we need to be organized to keep public trust, regardless of whether we are merged or not because we still need to provide good customer service.

Ms. Knauer provides the attendees with further instruction on how to use the worksheets in their packets by writing down reservations and challenges and listing them under the categories on the map to become a strategic map of questions.

Public Comment—10 minutes

Irene Wrenner stated that the word merger is a misnomer and wishes that a different word were being used. She said that Essex is already one town and has been inviting the Village to become a part of it more and more over time. She would like to hear more about how the two communities are interdependent and how they are becoming one. She would like to see voters more welcomed to meetings and citizen representatives on the governance subcommittee. Ms. Wrenner expressed concern about the workshop t-shirts. She referred to the comment made about not going back by saying that if we do not look back at the history, we are bound to repeat it. Ms. Wrenner said that she agrees that it is great to start fresh, but that we should not lose the institutional knowledge from the people who sat on the first merger task force by doing more than inviting them to focus groups. She added that she would like to see a change in the language being used, such as taxation versus tax equity. She pointed out that racing to come to an agreement does not make it the best process.

Ms. Knauer wrapped the first part of the session up by reminding attendees that the day is about establishing planning structures.

Break—Lunch

The Village Board of Trustees and the Town Selectboard recessed for a break from 12:00 PM to 12:39 PM.

Strategic Planning Session, continued

Ms. Knauer reconvened the planning session by asking the participants for reflections on the day so far.

Ms. Gamache shared her observations that visioning work takes a lot of time and processing. It is a process of taking the information and figuring out what is the question for us, and what is the question we want the community to explore. She adds that the group may not be

452 creating the vision during this session, but the activity is putting out some great ideas. The
453 planning framework allows for thinking about how to be the best and most efficient
454 government to make Essex such a great place to be and to connect with the day-to-day
455 needs and priorities of citizens.

456
457 Mr. Teich thanked everyone for taking the day to take part in the process. Mr. Lutz
458 commented that he would like the elected officials to form questions for staff and give staff a
459 chance to prepare informed answers for their consideration. Ms. Janda added that she has
460 started putting together a "big picture" timeline, which will assist with when to prompt
461 departments to prepare answers to questions.

462
463 Ms. Knauer asked the group to move back to a logistical conversation that is focused around
464 decision-making procedures and how, as two boards, decisions will be made about
465 consolidation and merger. Ms. Haney started by stating that the boards have discussed the
466 governance subcommittee being the ad hoc work group that brings recommendations to the
467 boards and the implication is that the joint board will make decisions on this process. Mr.
468 Brown added that the Governance Subcommittee meets more frequently. Mr. Levy and Mr.
469 Chawla mention that the boards must figure out what authority the Governance Subcommittee
470 has to make decisions, considering the timeframe. Ms. Haney mentions that as a follow up to
471 a mentioned challenge, there should be a discussion on what roles the boards are willing to
472 let the chairs have and how much group decision-making there will be versus delegating
473 chairs to make decisions. Mr. Duggan confirmed that the roles of the Governance
474 Subcommittee topic is on the joint meeting agenda for Tuesday, June 25.

475
476 Mr. Chawla mentioned that there is a proposal to add alternates to the Governance
477 Subcommittee. Ms. Knauer asked the group if they have considered if alternates join a
478 meeting after not taking part in previous meetings, they might lose the ability to make
479 informed decisions. She adds that this is the time to explore how decisions are made and if
480 anything appears ambiguous, this discussion is to draw that out. Some of these questions
481 are, "What decisions can the Governance Subcommittee make?", "What decisions can board
482 chairs make?" and "What is the decision-making procedure?" She went on to ask other
483 questions, "What do you do after a decision is made?" "What if you walk away from a meeting
484 and have second thoughts or change your mind?"

485
486 Village Trustees and Town Selectboard members offered their viewpoints on how to answer
487 the questions, including requiring a unanimous decision on larger issues such as charter
488 changes and simple majority on others, which would have to be defined. The board members
489 talked about how to work with dissidence and being strong enough to unify around decisions
490 made. When defining when the board could go back to revisit a vote, the discussion pointed
491 toward the definition of an egregious violation and how that could cause the boards to revisit a
492 decision made.

493
494 The board members then moved onto a discussion about having enough lead-time to make
495 informed decisions, balancing enough time to conduct research and be prepared for
496 meetings, and allowing the public enough notice about decisions.

497
498 Ms. Gamache comments that the boards should be careful about being overly restrictive in
499 terms of how they lay out their decision-making procedures and to focus on the culture of the
500 two boards when setting expectations and guidelines. She went on to caution that the boards
501 should be careful not to box themselves in to timelines when it may take one person three

days to go over materials, but two weeks for someone else—do the boards then hold out for two weeks? Ms. Gamache said that it appears that a common interest of the group seems to be that they when it comes to the big decisions, they are striving for unanimous consent, which may or may not happen. Due to unknown circumstances, the group may want to consider this and keep some openness in the process.

Ms. Haney made an observational request that the boards work hard to understand staff are the subject matter experts and what they bring to the boards are not for the boards to tweak and meddle and to respect staff for their expertise. She went on to say that staff needs to understand that the boards are bringing a much broader perspective with considerations for what they hear from residents, so there has to be equal respect for following staff recommendations, while meeting the broader purpose for what is trying to be accomplished.

The discussion of the group moved on to how preparation for meetings could be streamlined and more efficient. Ms. Macy offered the idea of an agenda format that could help hone in on when a decision is being asked. Other ideas discussed were to be more precise on what is in the packets, keep length of memos short, and where possible, add implementation logistics to memos. Mr. Duggan said that staff would decide what should go on business and what needs multiple reviews as well as determining what can be placed under the consent agenda instead of under business. Mr. Murray asks what makes something an issue for the boards and what can a department handle without board review. He likened it to the school board and how an agenda item that discusses website content would be considered to be too much into the weeds. Mr. Lutz comments that as a staff member, the boards have questions and staff can provide answers, but that the questions must come from both ways. Mr. Kerin commented on being mindful of the public meeting law and using the chairs of the boards to check on the readiness to vote and to make sure board members have enough information to make their own educated decision.

Break

The Village Board of Trustees and the Town Selectboard recessed for a break from 1:40 PM to 1:50 PM.

Strategic Planning Session, continued

Ms. Knauer called the group back together and introduced the next topic, roles and responsibilities. Through participation in discussion, the group produced a chart.

Board/Trustees

- Have to have the best interest of the community as a whole in mind when making decisions; represents the public good; get the biggest bang for the buck;
- Elected officials cannot go directly to department heads or staff; no micromanagement; follow the chain of command
- Approval of attorney review and advice
- Political arm; manage political aspects
- Approve policy/ promulgate policy
- Public face of the initiative, represents the initiative
- Ask questions in advance so staff can be prepared
- Hold the vision
- Make decision on policy and on vision

Governance Subcommittee—will discuss at the joint meeting

Staff

- Responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of departments
- Primary fact finders
- Reception of and incorporation of attorney review and advice
- Staff stays out of politics; apolitical
- Recommend policy / write, draft
- Subject matter experts
- Support the initiative
- Make decisions on implementation and logistics of policy

While going through the exercise, Ms. Knauer asked the group if this answers the earlier question of, “How do we know when we are getting into the weeds?”

- The charter has a clear hierarchy—the board communicates to the manager and the manager communicates to staff
- Ms. Haney requested that staff present to the boards their proposal, recommendations and questions that need answers, pointing out that the questions from staff will help the boards to stay out of the weeds because it will be clear what you need from the boards.
- Chief Garey asked the board members to ask their questions for staff in advance, so that staff has time to prepare answers.
- The role of the manager is to make sure the will and the intent of the boards gets down to staff

Ms. Knauer asked if members of the Governance Subcommittee have any questions for the group. Mr. Levy mentions that his question will be addressed at the joint meeting regarding the authority of the subcommittee.

Ms. Knauer asked if staff had any questions or observations to share. Mr. Jones stated that he is just looking for direction. Mr. Teich said that he is looking for direction as to what departments staff should we be working on first, and what the big picture looks like for priorities, finances, and actions. He said that he would like be able to provide guidance when decisions are needed regarding organizational structure and what needs to be worked on next.

Public Comment—10 minutes

Irene Wrenner thanked everyone for an informative day. She said that she would like to see extreme neutrality from everyone who is supposed to be apolitical.

Strategic Planning Session Wrap Up

Ms. Knauer asked the board members to provide staff with their thoughts and observations.

Mr. Kerin said that the process was enlightening to hear what staff had to say and to gain a better understanding. The key is to translate that out to the community.

Mr. Watts thought that it was a very good gathering and suggested that maybe it could happen again with smaller department groups to provide ongoing communication. He was

not cognizant of the frustrations of staff with the uncertainty of the next 18+ months. He appreciated the input from staff.

Mr. Levy thanked staff for their honest input in what they said and what they wrote in their summaries. He said he also did not have a full appreciation of the frustration level of staff.

Mr. Murray said that he would not be apolitical because he holds a political office and would like to provide clarity to staff that his preference is that the communities completely combine in totality and that is what his goal on the board is for. He says that the question of "What happens if this vote doesn't work and what does it look like afterwards" is something that the board members or anyone else just does not know. Mr. Murray added that he believes that we can do amazing things as one community.

Ms. Haney thanked staff, including those who are not in attendance, for their honesty and assessments. The input is very useful, with valuable critiques embedded in the reports. Ms. Haney thanked Ms. Knauer and Ms. Gamache for the work on organization and structure. She went on to address the other elected officials by saying that she hopes that the work of the day engenders a sense of urgency and encouraged them to make sure they are comfortable with the level of effort they can and have committed to put in.

Mr. Chawla thanked staff and agreed that the process is going to be difficult. As a board member, he supports staff and appreciates the work happening behind the scenes.

Ms. Thibeault thanked staff and will take some time to digest everything as the newest member on both of the boards. She appreciated meeting staff.

Mr. Brown said that he appreciates everyone in attendance for being there, including Ms. Knauer and Ms. Gamache. He is excited to see things on the track to one community, one charter, and one Essex. He added that he appreciated the honesty from staff and encouraged Village staff to reach out to when there are areas of ambiguity. Ms. Haney also extended the invitation for Town staff to reach out.

Mr. Teich thanked the team who helped to put the event together, saying that everything that we do is serious and that this was supposed to be fun. He was very pleased at how the day turned out.

Mr. Jutras thanked the board members for taking their time to be there as well.

5. ADJOURN

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, that the Trustees adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0, at 2:42 PM.

MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, that the Selectboard adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0, at 2:42 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tammy Getchell
Assistant to the Manager

TRUSTEE & SELECTBOARD

June 22, 2019

649 Approved this 15 day of July, 2019
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651 (See minutes of this day for corrections, if any)
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Patrick Murray
Patrick Murray, Clerk, Selectboard