



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

2 Lincoln Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Tuesday, June 25, 2019

7:00 PM (or immediately
following Village Trustees Meeting)

E-mail: manager@essex.org

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www.essex.org

Phone: (802) 878-1341

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

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [7:00 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
 - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Update on website revisions—Rob Paluba & Greg Duggan
 - b. Follow-up discussion from Strategic Advance
 - c. Creation of “why merge” elevator speech
 - d. Update from Governance Subcommittee
 - e. Approve web address for merger website
 - f. Determine role and authority of Governance Subcommittee as steering committee for public outreach
 - g. Appoint alternates to Governance Subcommittee
 - h. Approval of column about consolidation
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approval of minutes: June 3, 2019
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board Member Comments
 - b. Memo from Annie Costandi and Chelsea Mandigo re: Awarded Projects under the CCRPC FY20 Unified Planning Work Program
 - c. Email from Liz Gamache re: thoughts on questions posed by George Tyler
 - d. Letter from Adam Basford re: Update Concerning Announcement of Planned Action
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. An executive session is not anticipated
9. **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 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: 06/21/2019

Amitchell

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
FINAL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, June 25, 2019**

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney; Max Levy; Andrew Watts; Annie Cooper; Patrick Murray (arrived at 7:32)

TRUSTEES: Andrew Brown; George Tyler; Dan Kerin; Amber Thibeault; Raj Chawla

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sarah Macy Finance Director/ Assistant Manager; Rob Paluba;

OTHERS PRESENT: Robert Bates; Kim Chase; Colin Flanders; Nathan Fiske; Mary Lou Hurley; Dustin Nolifer; John Sheppard, MD; Annie Dunn Watson; Irene Wrenner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Trustees back to order from their recess, and Elaine Haney called the Town of Essex Selectboard to order. They entered into the Special Joint Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard at 7:00 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

- Andrew Brown proposed that item 5g be switched in order with Item 5f.
- Elaine Haney revised the action of Item 5h, to be "discussion" instead of "approval".

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

MAX LEVY made a motion, and **ANNIE COOPER** seconded, that the Selectboard approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 4-0 (Patrick Murray not yet in attendance).

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and **AMBER THIBEAULT** seconded, that the Trustees approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

- **Irene Wrenner** commented that she does not think a fair Essex merger plan can come out of a meeting that includes 8 Village residents but not 8 Town Outside the Village residents. She expressed concern that a lopsided, inequitable merger plan could result from imbalanced representation during negotiations.
- **Kim Chase** expressed concern that she may have missed a merger vote and said she was unaware of a plan is in place for a vote. She shared that when she was trying to find more information about this, she found a picture of the T-Shirts Trustees and Selectboard members wore to their recent Strategic Advance Meeting. In her opinion, the image of wedding rings on the shirts depicts a narrow stance on the part of elected officials, and she feels it promotes conventional gender roles, and gender inequality. She also noted that diamonds, included in the image, are conflict minerals with human rights issues. Ms. Chase suggested that more effort be put into informing the community versus persuading people about the right way to vote. Mr. Brown responded that the Trustees and Selectboard have a goal for a vote but that there is not yet a formal plan. Ms. Haney clarified that the Strategic Advance meeting was a work session for staff and elected officials to kick off discussions about a potential change in governance. She stressed that there were no intentions behind the color or graphics on the T-shirts, and their intentions

are to be equitable and unbiased. Ms. Haney said the job of the boards is to, eventually, advocate for what they determine is best for the municipalities, but not before a robust community input and vetting processes as well as thorough discussions and research. She said that there is not complete agreement on the boards yet about what to move forward with and there is a lot of work and research to still do in order to get to an agreement. She explained that no community vote took place and that, before the greater community votes on anything, each of the two boards will individually vote on a plan.

- **Robert Bates** shared that, at a recent Governance Committee meeting with KSV, “loaded” words were included in some of the plans and materials being discussed. He pointed out that semantics go a long way to forming public perception. He wondered why there is a recent re-emergence of the word “merger” when, for the last few years, the word being used was “consolidation”. Mr. Bates pointed out that the word “merger” comes with a history of tensions for previous efforts in Essex. He suggested that there be clarification and clear definitions about language in this process.
- **Mary Lou Hurley** commented that she does not believe the consolidation process can be fair without equal representation from individuals who live in the Town Outside the Village.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. **Update on website revisions—Rob Paluba & Greg Duggan**

Mr. Duggan discussed the status of work being done by staff on the new website. Mr. Paluba showed the current draft of the Town Website landing page, revised for simplicity and consistency. He said the goal was for this page to be clean, easy to navigate and to have effective search functionality. He pointed out the buttons, bars and sections of the page that will provide ease in navigation, municipality news and a calendar of events. Mr. Paluba noted that all decisions being made are within a high standard of ADA compliance and that the website is designed to work on multiple types of equipment.

The Trustees and Selectboard asked questions about the site’s functionality. Ms. Cooper wondered if it could have a direct button for senior citizens, and Ms. Haney agreed that accessibility should be a priority. Ms. Haney liked the idea of the site having a “how do I...?” search function for residents and a way for residents to easily report problems or concerns. Mr. Chawla said that he loves the site and encouraged that the pictures on the site not be stock photos but, instead, photographs of Essex. Mr. Tyler confirmed with Mr. Paluba that the Landing page will be the Town of Essex’s page and the Village site will remain the same until further notice. Mr. Paluba said that there will be a link to the Village site from the Town site and explained that the design is still being worked out so adaptations could be included. Mr. Levy, Ms. Cooper and Mr. Paluba discussed the challenges of having functions that automatically save credit card information and sign up forms. At this time they are not planning to make these functions available on the website.

b. **Follow-up discussion from Strategic Advance**

The Selectboard and Trustees who attended the Strategic Advance said that it was a great day. Ms. Haney noted that it was effectively facilitated and she thought learning about different perspectives, on the part of staff and elected officials, was valuable as an opportunity to discuss solutions to potential roadblocks. Ms. Cooper and Mr. Tyler shared their regrets for not making it to the Strategic Advance. Mr. Duggan and Mr. Teich said that Ms. Knauer would be sending them compiled brainstormers from the meeting soon. They expressed the sentiment of staff that the day was beneficial and they would like to propose doing one annually.

c. **Creation of “why merge” elevator speech**

Mr. Brown reminded the Trustees and Selectboard that in April of 2018, at a Joint Meeting of the Trustees and Selectboard, each person described the end goal of consolidation as “one community and one board”. He reminded them that it is important for each person in the Joint body of elected officials to share the same messages about what it could look like to unify, what the status quo is and what it would look like if they moved away from it. The boards discussed the importance of semantics and legal terminology. Mr. Brown suggested that they re-look at the Heart and Soul Values, explained by Ms. Cooper as a compilation of the region’s values developed through a community outreach initiative funded by a grant. Mr. Haney suggested that they use the words “appropriate taxation” instead of “tax equity. She also said that, in the next reading file, she would include a list of common language devised by her and Irene Wrenner in years past. Mr. Tyler explained that the word “merger”, although it may have an uncomfortable connotation to some Essex residents, is a term used in legal statute to describe municipal unification models. Mr. Murray suggested that he and other residents will need to know about the economic reasons for unification vs. what it means to have separate resources. Mr. Kerin pointed out, and the Trustees and Selectboard members agreed, that the elevator speech not push an agenda but, instead, inform the public to make a decision.

Ms. Haney opened the discussion to community members:

- **Mr. Bates** expressed gratitude to Mr. Tyler for clarifying that the word “merger” is a legal term. He suggested that if the word must be used, it should be connected with the term “consolidation”. He also suggested that the boards clarify to the public the fact that it is a legal term. He said that he thinks unification is a good idea and should be pursued.
- **Ms. Wrenner** noted that there are many options and models to consider for unified governance and she encouraged the governance committee to spend enough time, with the attorney contracted to work on this, to carefully consider these options.
- **Annie Watson** described herself as a resident of the Town Outside the Village who wants to see the unification take place. She said that she needs to know, from the elevator speech, the specifics of how unification will affect her economically, recreationally, in terms of use of spaces, education and governance. She wants to hear about what the impact will be.

The Selectboard and Trustees agreed to engage the Governance Subcommittee to work on the elevator speech, and board members will email their comments to be considered during this process.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, that the Trustees authorize the Governance Subcommittee to draft a “why unify” elevator speech, for final approval by both boards. The motion passed 5-0.

ANNIE COOPER made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard ditto the Trustees authorization motion. The motion passed 5-0.

d. **Update from Governance Subcommittee**

Mr. Levy provided a brief account of the Governance Committee meeting that took place on June 20 at 7PM. As Vice Chair, Mr. Levy ran the meeting because the Subcommittee Chair, Mr. Tyler, was not in attendance. He reported that they reviewed a draft survey from KSV, provided revisions and added some questions. They discussed the possibility a unification

website and considered the domains available to choose from. Mr. Levy said they approved the Governance Subcommittee minutes and took comments from the community.

e. Approve web address for merger website

The Selectboard and Trustees discussed the domain options for a unification website address, to determine which one to use. Mr. Tyler explained that the Governance Subcommittee envisions the site including information on the current governance structure, the governance models under consideration, progress being made and links to resources related to the process. Staff suggested three domains that each had the word "merger" in them. Mr. Chawla suggested that, based on community feedback, they reconsider using the word "merger". Mr. Brown and Ms. Haney agreed with this point and suggested that they go with the term "Greater Essex" instead. This phrase was coined during a recent presentation to the joint boards. The board members discussed Mr. Watts' concern that the term "great" has a connotation because of its use by a national candidate for the presidency. It was the sense of the boards that this may not be a significant problem.

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, and ANNIE COOPER seconded, that the Selectboard approve the use of www.greateressex2020.org as the address for a merger website.

Mr. Watts expressed reservation with using the word "Great" in conjunction with the date "2020" because there is a national candidate who is also using these terms together.

The motion passed 4-1, with Andy Watts dissenting.

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded the same motion on behalf of the Trustees. The motion passed 5-0.

f. Appoint alternates to Governance Subcommittee

Mr. Duggan explained that having enough people to make a quorum at the Governance Subcommittee meetings will be essential in the immediate future because the KCV contract schedule requires approvals on a weekly basis. Therefore, he suggested that two alternates from each board be appointed to step in, if one or more Subcommittee members cannot attend a meeting. The board members discussed how many people should be in attendance at these meetings and what the configuration should be. Ms. Cooper and Mr. Chawla discussed fair representation. Mr. Watts brought up his concern that having alternates from the boards may increase the risk of an open meeting law violation. He suggested considering staff to serve as alternates to the meetings. Mr. Levy said that it is important for staff to remain a-political so, instead, the board members agreed to be careful to not to share what happened in the meetings with the people they are subbing for outside of the warned, open meetings.

Mr. Kerin and Ms. Thibeault nominated themselves on behalf of the Trustees. Annie Cooper nominated herself as first alternate and Patrick Murray nominated himself as second alternate on behalf of the Selectboard.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, on behalf of the Trustees, that Dan Kerin is the first alternate on the Governance Subcommittee and Ms. Thibeault is the second. The motion passed 5-0.

ELAINE HANEY made a motion, and MAX LEVY seconded, the Selectboard accept the slate of nominees. The motion passed 4-1, with Andy Watts dissenting.

g. Determine role and authority of Governance Subcommittee as steering committee for public outreach

Mr. Duggan discussed the recommendation that the Selectboard and Trustees authorize more decision making authority to the Governance Subcommittee and final approval authority to staff, after vetting by the subcommittee, in order to effectively respond to the fast turnaround needs of KSV. These authorizations would be focused on surveys as well as focus group screening tools and questions. Mr. Tyler clarified that this arrangement would only be through the duration of the KSV contract, but any major changes would still come to the boards to act on. Mr. Kerin further clarified that decisions about using funds would still not be made by the subcommittee

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees authorize the Governance Subcommittee to make decisions as the steering committee to KSV for public outreach. The motion passed 5-0.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees authorize staff to give final approval to documents vetted by the Governance Subcommittee. The motion passed 5-0.

ELAINE HANEY made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard authorize the Governance Subcommittee to make decisions as the steering committee to KSV for public outreach. The motion passed 5-0.

ELAINE HANEY made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard authorize staff to give final approval to documents vetted by the Governance Subcommittee. The motion passed 5-0.

h. Discussion of column about consolidation

Ms. Haney requested that the board share if they agree to allow the Chair of the Selectboard and President of the Board of Trustees to speak on behalf of the boards by writing a regular column about consolidation efforts in the Essex Reporter. Ms. Haney pointed out an example of the first column in the meeting packet. She acknowledged that this is a generous offer from the Essex Reporter and could be a primary way to communicate with the community about the efforts of consolidation. They reminded the board members that St. Albans officials encouraged this idea when they shared insights with Essex into what worked well for their Downtown Revitalization efforts.

The board members discussed the strategy and all were in agreement with the column strategy. Mr. Levy, Ms. Cooper and Mr. Murray discussed their trust in the Selectboard Chair and President of the Board of Trustees to speak about the unification process in this way. Mr. Murray expressed his concern that the Essex Reporter is not delivered to his house, along with many others in the upper quarter, and he would appreciate if the paper could be received by a wider audience. Mr. Brown pointed out that some local condominium complexes also do not receive the paper, but all of the articles could also be shared on Front Porch Forum, Facebook and elsewhere to reach a greater audience. Ms. Thibeault noted that it could go on the new unification website as well. Mr. Tyler gave some writing suggestions, from his experience writing a column for the Essex Reporter from 2001-2007, such as using an active vs. passive voice. Mr. Chawla suggested defining some words like "Charter" for people.

Ms. Haney opened the discussion to community members:

- **Ms. Wrenner** pointed out the importance of not confusing people by making writings sound like Essex Town does not include the Village of Essex Junction. She pointed out

multiple references to the "Town and Village," in the proposed column included in the packet, that should instead just say "Essex Town" because otherwise it is redundant.

- **John Sheppard** requested clarification of how the topics presented in the columns, on the subject of unification, will receive feedback from the community so that there is fair and equal reporting. He expressed concern that this strategy could become one-sided. Ms. Haney pointed out that sending letters to the editor via news@essexreporter.com to be published would be a way for the public to respond to the column. Mr. Sheppard questioned the ethical responsibilities of impartial journalism on the part of the Essex Reporter by running the column. Ms. Haney, Mr. Kerin, Mr. Teich and Ms. Cooper discussed that the column would focus on factual information of the issues. They discussed the precedence set by the relationship that St. Albans had with the St. Albans Messenger during their Downtown Revitalization efforts.
- **Mr. Bates** suggested that the column focus on the process of Unification, such as the work beginning with KSV, including a schematic about the process, in order to avoid perceptions that the boards are pushing an agenda or a certain direction. Ms. Haney noted that a graphic is being developed by the project manager about the timeline.

The boards agreed that the President and Chair should proceed with the column. Ms. Haney welcomed board members to submit ideas or articles to her or Mr. Brown as well. They gave direction that all articles should be written and/ or vetted by the Chair and President, then submitted to staff for review and fact-checking prior to forwarding the column writings to the Essex Reporter. Mr. Watts reminded everyone to review the communications policy in this process.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and **DAN KERIN** seconded, that the Trustees approve the Consent agenda:

- a. **Approval of minutes: May 28, 2019**

The motion passed 5-0.

7. READING FILE

- a. **Board Member Comments**

- Mr. Tyler suggested, based on further research, that the Governance Subcommittee discuss and reconsider a Mayoral model of Governance. The Trustees and Selectboard discussed and agreed with this suggestion.
- Ms. Haney shared that Channel 17 expressed interest in helping encourage discussions and document the consolidation process by hosting a regular television segment. They suggested doing a "man on the street" segment. The Trustees and Selectboard members delegated further discussion of this to the Governance Subcommittee.
- Mr. Teich said that staff appreciates how the Trustee meetings, Selectboard meetings and Joint meetings have been coming together under the new meeting model. He suggested placing an agenda item on a future meeting to discuss the model and consider suggestions for improving it.

- b. **Memo from Annie Costandi and Chelsea Mandigo re: Awarded Projects under the CCRPC FY20 Unified Planning Work Program**

- c. **Email from Liz Gamache re: thoughts on questions posed by George Tyler**

- d. **Letter from Adam Basford re: Update Concerning Announcement of Planned Action**

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was required or held

9. ADJOURN

AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, for the Trustees to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:19 p.m.

MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by ANNIE COOPER, for the Selectboard to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Ainsworth
Recording Secretary

Approved this 15 day of July, 2019

(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)



Patrick Murray, Clerk, Selectboard