



VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEE
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

81 Main Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Monday, September 9, 2019
7:45 PM (or immediately following
Town Selectboard Meeting)

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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** [7:45 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. Presentation of Building Needs Study, Phase 1
 - b. Introduction to taxation plan—Sarah Macy
 - c. Update from Governance Subcommittee
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve minutes: August 27, 2019 – Joint Meeting
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board Member Comments
 - b. Email from Dan Richardson re: Drafting Charter Language
 - c. Memo from Sarah Macy re: Joint Board Budget Goals
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: 09/06/2019 *Amitchell*

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**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, September 9, 2019**

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Max Levy; Patrick Murray; Annie Cooper; Andrew Watts.

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sarah Macy, Finance Director/ Assistant Manager; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Nan Abbott-Hourigan; Jim Bernegger; Nicole Clayton; Diane Clemens; Patty Davis; Bonnie Doble; Jose Dorlu; Gillian Franks; Barbara Holingdale; Lisa LaBerge; Kar Lenorovitz; Cindy Rubalcaba; Bill Riley; Ken Signorello; Margaret Smith; Harry Summerfield; Carl VonStritzky; Irene Wrenner.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Elaine Haney called the Essex Selectboard back to order from the recess of their regular meeting, and Andrew Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Trustees to order. They entered into the Special Joint Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard at 8:37 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

No changes or additions to the agenda were suggested.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

With no changes to the agenda, no vote to approve was needed.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

Ken Signorello spoke about two terms used in recent meetings he attended to describe efforts related to the Town and Village merger. In his point of view, the term “merger process” suggests a merger is already in process and he would prefer the term “merger study” be used instead. He also explained his point of view that the term “tax equalization” suggests taxes are currently unfair but, because taxes were voted on and passed by residents, he does not see them as unfair. With this reasoning, he suggested the term “tax shifting” be used instead.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Presentation of Building Needs Study, Phase 1

Mr. Alden, of Scott + Partners Architecture, presented Phase 1 of the Building Needs Study they are conducting for the Town and Village to determine facility needs, planning up to 30 years out. He explained that the study’s focus is on administrative space and facility needs in the Public Works, Fire, and Parks & Recreation departments. He pointed out that the Phase 1 report includes a careful analysis to determine adequacy of space as compared to current codes and ideal physical structures for specific operations. He talked about findings, including that many of the facilities are experiencing wear and tear and some have been ignored because there seems to not have been incentive to change. Scott + Partners received suggestions from departments when they were asked what is needed. These included a

50 suggestion that Essex would benefit from an indoor gym and a year-round pool. He reviewed
51 current vs. required square footage of buildings and sites, pointing out that, with the exception
52 of Village Parks & Recreation, the existing building and site footage is about half of what the
53 functional needs require. He reviewed the cost difference of where the Town is and where it
54 will need to be and described the next phases of the study, which will include drawing solution
55 to address the needs.

56
57 The Selectboard discussed opinions about what is needed for space in the three department
58 areas of the study. Mr. Levy clarified with Mr. Alden that the projected square footage needs
59 outlined in the study is over a 20- to 30-year projection. Mr. Alden, when asked by Mr. Murray
60 if he had any ideas about what may be most important, pointed out that it is easy to focus on
61 some of the most visible and interesting space needs, like a gym, but it is important to focus
62 on safety concerns and more urgent upgrade needs, like installing exhaust systems in the
63 Town Fire Station. Ms. Cooper advocated for the addition of facilities for indoor swimming, to
64 encourage people to engage in healthy lifestyles, growth and development. Mr. Brown and
65 Mr. Chawla discussed with Mr. Alden the role multi-use spaces and combining facilities could
66 play in achieving some of the space needs noted in the study. Mr. Kerin discussed the
67 possibility of growing buildings taller, while considering site sizes, and functionality of spaces.
68 Mr. Teich pointed out that the timeline for space upgrades would be tied closely to the critical
69 nature of some of the building needs and the importance of following codes.

70
71 **b. Introduction to taxation plan—Sarah Macy**

72 Ms. Macy presented key taxation planning concepts that would need to be considered and
73 included with a merger. In order to illustrate how the community could end up, over time, with
74 one tax rate she utilized a zero-growth model. In her model and demonstration she illustrated
75 how the tax amount raised by the Village General Fund could be spread out over the entire
76 grand list. She provided illustrations of what the average tax increase/decreases would look
77 like if done in 3, 5, 7, 10 or 12 years. She illustrated the tax increases on a PowerPoint
78 presentation, in her report for the board members and with a demonstration using water.

79
80 Mr. Kerin asked what the taxes would look like if the Town outside the Village becomes its
81 own municipality, instead of merging. Ms. Macy explained that this would look like a similar
82 tax change because the Village would need to begin accounting for or contracting for its own
83 finance, IT, human resources and manager expenses. Ms. Cooper added that a separation
84 model would need to account for the costs associated with what is currently a shared police
85 department and Mr. Murray pointed out that the tax rate of the schools would change with a
86 separation plan as well.

87
88 Mr. Teich, Ms. Macy and Ms. Haney discussed the fact that the Zero Growth Model was used
89 in the presentation in order to simplify the conversation, but future projects, , inflation, grand
90 list growth, and more would play a role in the true numbers within a merger and would require
91 open conversations of all of the related assumptions .
92

93 Mr. Watts wondered if there could be another way to show the merger tax projections. He
94 expressed concern that people may misunderstand the tax increase as presented in one of
95 the charts because if it is done over 12 years it looks like a smaller increase.

96
97 Ms. Macy expressed hope that the next community survey would reveal what tax change
98 timeline would be acceptable and tolerable by residents. She pointed out that various items
99 should be discussed that could make a meaningful impact on the tax rates, such as the
100 possibility of introducing a non-property tax revenue (local option tax) or holding down staff
101 growth.

102
103 • **Irene Wrenner** commented that if the Town outside the Village separated, there would be
104 equal representation and local control. She pointed out that the Essex Police Department
105 could be paid by all districts, and school separation does not need to take place if the Village
106 and the Town outside the Village separate. She encouraged the board members to educate
107 and inform the community about separation as much as they are doing with merger options.

108

109 c. **Update from Governance Subcommittee**

110 Mr. Tyler explained that the Governance Subcommittee provided final revisions to the next
111 community survey, which will be ready for final review on Thursday, September 12 and will be
112 ready to go live next week through the beginning of October. He said that the results of this
113 survey should be tabulated and available to the board members by the October 29th joint
114 meeting. He said the hope, for this survey, is to find out from the community what tax rate
115 increase/decrease timeline would be reasonable or tolerable.

116

117 Mr. Tyler said that the Subcommittee has been re-looking at the possibility of having “special
118 tax districts” within a municipality and determined a flaw in their original understanding of this.
119 He explained that a special tax district can only be for a downtown designation, not for a parks
120 and recreation designation. Ms. Haney clarified that this “special tax district” model is now off
121 the table as an option in the merger discussions. Mr. Duggan explained that special tax
122 districts in Vermont need to account for special services being provided to a certain area of a
123 town, such as a downtown district that has special lighting or sidewalk plowing.

124

125 6. **CONSENT AGENDA**

126 a. **Approve minutes: August 27, 2019 – Joint Meeting**

127

128 **MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, that the Selectboard**
129 **approve the Consent Agenda items with Selectboard comments.**

130 **The motion passed 5-0.**

131

132 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees approve**
133 **the Consent Agenda. The motion passed 5-0.**

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135 7. **READING FILE**

136 a. **Board Member Comments**

137 • Mr. Brown pointed out the memo from Ms. Macy about budget goals.

- 138 b. **Email from Dan Richardson re: Drafting Charter Language**
- 139 c. **Memo from Sarah Macy re: Joint Board Budget Goals**
- 140

141 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 142 a. An executive session is not anticipated
- 143

144 **9. ADJOURN**

145
146 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN for the Trustees to adjourn**
147 **the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:16 p.m.**
148

149 **ELAINE HANEY called for the Selectboard to recess the Special Meeting of the Village of**
150 **Essex Junction Trustees and Town of Essex Selectboard, to re-enter the Selectboard**
151 **meeting at 10:16 p.m.**
152

153
154 Respectfully Submitted,
155 Cathy Ainsworth
156 Recording Secretary
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