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

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [7:15 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. Discussion of joint budget initiatives and goals – Sarah Macy
   b. Discussion of FY2020 budget schedule – Sarah Macy
   c. Update from Governance Subcommittee and next steps in possible merger

6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
   a. Approve minutes: September 9, 2019 – Joint Meeting

7. **READING FILE**
   a. Board Member Comments
   b. Letter from Joyce Stannard, Passionate About Pickleball

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: 09/20/2019
CALL TO ORDER
Andrew Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Trustees back to order from recess, and Elaine Haney called the Essex Selectboard to order, and entered the Special Joint Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard at 7:39 PM.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES
No changes or additions to the Agenda were proposed.

AGENDA APPROVAL
With no changes to the agenda, approval was not required.

PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
Ken Signorello shared his opinion that if a merger takes place, the Village will be expected to sacrifice services. He spoke about the fiscal constraints of service levels and conjectured that it is unlikely that the levels of service will remain the same after a merger.

Irene Wrenner stated that a merger is inadequate for achieving five goals of government: appropriate representation, access, identity, transparency and fair taxation. She shared her opinion that pushing the two municipalities together would result in collateral damage of four of these five goals. She asserted that separating the Village and the Town outside the Village would be a more appropriate solution for achieving the goals, but this idea was not given enough consideration in the beginning of the research process by the Trustees and Selectboard. She suggested that the strategy be reconsidered now that one of the two options, “special districting” is no longer on the table. She said that the time is right for this because once the surveys and public input is collected it may reveal the need for a re-vetted approach to the process.

BUSINESS ITEMS
a. Discussion of Joint Budget Initiatives and Goals – Sarah Macy
Ms. Macy presented administration’s goals for crafting the FY21 budget. She and Mr. Teich requested that the board members discuss the items and identify priorities.

Mr. Murray requested clarification on how the goal of not approving new full-time positions would affect the understaffing situation at the Police Department. Mr. Teich explained that
The board members discussed how a goal of no more than a 2.5% increase in department budgets would contribute to the overarching theme of “do no harm,” considering the cost of health insurance. Mr. Tyler suggested that the goal should instead be to maintain level services. He also suggested flexibility with the 2.5% to protect smaller departments, for which this would equate to a smaller amount of money than in larger departments. Ms. Macy explained that the 2.5% increase would not equate to an overall 2.5% budget increase, after calculating health insurance, capital expenses, wage increases and other influences outside of the control of individual departments.

The board members discussed and debated whether or not to transfer $165,000 from the Town budget to the Village budget for recreation. Ms. Macy explained this goal was included to continue moving toward equal access and equalized funding now that Essex Junction Recreation and Parks (EJRP) and Essex Parks and Rec (EPR) are co-located. She said that this suggestion continues the discussion of how to address resident and non-resident fee structures. Mr. Watts clarified that this would be a new line item in the Town budget to offset the amount it would cost Town outside the Village residents to have equal access to the EJRP programs. Mr. Kerin pointed out that the $165,000 would be from taxes collected from all Essex residents (Town outside the Village and Village). Ms. Haney said that this transfer could be beneficial for tax relief if there is a vote to merge but would still be beneficial if there is no vote to merge. Mr. Chawla asserted that he does not believe a transfer such as this should take place before the 2020 vote because the perceptions for why it is happening could get muddied. He stated his opinion that all consolidation work should be on hold until after the vote. Mr. Levy agreed that it would be hasty to proceed with any new cost sharing strategies at this time. Ms. Cooper pointed out that it makes sense to have all recreation co-located, as it makes the programs stronger and agreed and stated her opinion that this is a good step forward no matter the results of the merger vote. Ms. Macy requested a sense of the rest of board members on this item. Mr. Watts and Ms. Haney both expressed interest in the strategy and believed it warranted more information and exploration of what effect it would have. The Trustees showed interest in further exploration. Ms. Haney requested that the Rec. Directors attend the next joint meeting and that staff provide clear recommendations on action steps, expected outcomes and justifications for why this should happen at this time.

The board members discussed the importance of working on how the Town and Village can address capital expenses together. They agreed that incorporating Space Study needs into the budget should be low priority this year unless the items are essential for safety. Mr. Murray pointed out that that the exhaust system replacement at the fire department should be prioritized. Mr. Tyler agreed, describing this as a dire need. Mr. Levy, Mr. Kerin and Ms. Thibeault also agreed. Mr. Watts suggested that the Town’s 2 cent capital tax and transfer of operating funds into capital should be more standardized and transparent this year. Mr. Brown reiterated that strategizing capital expenses together would be beneficial.

Mr. Watts clarified, with Ms. Macy and Mr. Teich, how the goal of providing funding to the Community Justice Center (CJC) would change current practices. Mr. Teich explained that...
currently the Essex CJC has its own grant-funded budget and the employees work for the 
Town of Essex. The program is funded primarily by a state grant with the Department of 
Corrections and the Judiciary, which is shared with Milton and Colchester. He said their grant ends next year but the Essex Police Department and administration believe that the Essex CJC program should be sustained whether or not the state renews funding. Mr. Teich explained that the CJC is a separate program from the Street Outreach Team, which is a contracted service of the Police Department through the Howard Center.

Mr. Chawla clarified with Ms. Macy and Mr. Teich what would be included in the IT and security upgrades goal. Ms. Macy explained this would include updating door access controls and phone systems and aligning IT systems across services, except for the libraries and rec departments, which each have their own unique tech needs. Mr. Chawla and Mr. Murray suggested that the Selectboard and Trustee IT processes also be standardized so they do not need to use multiple programs to manage information.

Mr. Watts wondered how the Cemetery goal would play out between the two municipalities. Mr. Duggan explained that this goal would align and increase maintenance budgets. He also explained that once a Village cemetery is full, ownership is transferred to the Town, so this will play a role in the budget review.

Mr. Levy wondered if the goal related to reviewing fees structures would include fines. Mr. Teich said, more importantly, it would analyze impact and other fee structures to determine appropriate amounts. Mr. Duggan clarified that an impact fees study is not scheduled at this time but it is on staff’s radar to be addressed.

b. Discussion of FY2020 budget schedule – Sarah Macy

Mr. Teich presented the FY2021 budget calendar, which he said adheres to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns rules. He pointed out that the Village is scheduled to engage in a full-day budget meeting from 8:30-3:30, and the Selectboard is scheduled to hold a series of special budget sessions in the evenings. He asked for feedback or suggestions on this schedule.

Ms. Haney requested that the Selectboard budget meeting on January 6 be changed, or one of the other two meetings scheduled that day change, so meeting times can be reasonable. She discussed either putting shorter, admin items on the budget agenda, cancelling the Joint meeting or cutting the Selectboard meeting short.

Mr. Murray suggested an agenda item on the next Selectboard meeting be a discussion of interest of the board members in trying to fit the whole budget meeting process onto one day. Mr. Brown suggested an agenda item at the next Trustees meeting be a discussion of whether they want to still do a full day budget meeting or if it should be broken out into multiple meetings.

c. Update from Governance Subcommittee and Next Steps in Possible Merger

Mr. Duggan recapped for the board members that the Governance Subcommittee met on September 12th and finalized the mostly quantitative survey, currently being administered. He said there are 370 responses so far. KSV is scheduled to present the analyzed data to the
board members at the October 29 joint meeting. After this, he said, the boards need to have a
strategy for how to move forward. Mr. Duggan suggested either charging the Subcommittee
with the task of creating a draft plan, proceeding as a joint board effort or creating some other
type of process that includes multiple stakeholders.

Mr. Tyler clarified that, once the data is presented to the boards, it is their responsibility to
consider the information and discern an effective process forward. He said he plans to
compile all of the Governance Subcommittee’s completed legal, finance and researched
legwork to help interpret the results. Mr. Tyler gave credit to Mr. Duggan and Mr. Teich for all
of their work on securing information along the way. He said that because subcommittee
members are well informed at this point, consulting with Mr. Richardson, legal counsel, would
be premature.

Ms. Haney suggested that the boards have reached a new plateau in the process which
requires a decision to construct a plan, merger or otherwise. She said that they need to come
up with a list of topics to be covered and suggested disbanding the Governance
Subcommittee in order to form a Charter Committee, if they discover that they need to
strategize a merger. The board members appeared to agree with this strategy. Mr. Teich
encouraged them to think about how many people would be included, what their charge and
scope of work would be and how to keep the committee small enough to ensure effectiveness
on the quick timeline. Mr. Duggan suggested that they discuss this at their next meetings and
Mr. Tyler cautioned that they should not plan the new committee too soon because they may
discover that they do not have a go-ahead on a merger, based on survey responses. Mr.
Chawla wondered if there could be a hybrid committee that could address whatever direction
they find themselves going in.

The board members discussed the pros and cons of possibly having community members on
the new committee. Mr. Watts pointed out that the Governance Subcommittee has been
repeatedly stating that there will be continued opportunities for community input on the
process. Ms. Haney suggested including local State Representatives on the committee but
Mr. Murray expressed that this may not be acceptable to the public. Ms. Cooper stated that
public input does not necessarily mean public participation. She and Mr. Kerin discussed the
option of conducting hearing sessions to have conversations with the public and also use
these opportunities to clear up misinformation. Mr. Murray added that community feedback
could also be collected on written document discussions. They suggested that bringing all of
these conversations to the committee may a good solution.

Ms. Haney suggested that the board members determine who would be on the new
Committee at their next joint meeting.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approve minutes: September 9, 2019 – Joint Meeting

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the Trustees
approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

7. READING FILE
a. **Board Member Comments**
   - There were no board member comments at this time.

b. **Letter from Joyce Stannard, Passionate About Pickleball**

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
   a. An executive session is not anticipated
      No Executive Session took place.

9. **ADJOURN**
   MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, for the Selectboard to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:30 p.m.
   DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, for the Trustees to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cathy Ainsworth
Recording Secretary