



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

2 Lincoln Street
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2019
7:15 PM (or immediately
following Village Trustees 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** [7:15 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 *Amitchell*

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**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, September 24, 2019**

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

TRUSTEES: Andrew Brown, President; 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

OTHERS PRESENT: Diane Clemens; John Sheppard; Ken Signorello; Irene Wrenner

1. 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.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

No changes or additions to the Agenda were proposed.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

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

4. 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.

5. 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

50 their understaffing is due to vacant, already approved positions, so this should not affect
51 them. He added that this goal would not limit the option of adding part-time employees.
52

53 The board members discussed how a goal of no more than a 2.5% increase in department
54 budgets would contribute to the overarching theme of “do no harm,” considering the cost of
55 health insurance. Mr. Tyler suggested that the goal should instead be to maintain level
56 services. He also suggested flexibility with the 2.5 % to protect smaller departments, for which
57 this would equate to a smaller amount of money than in larger departments. Ms. Macy
58 explained that the 2.5% increase would not equate to an overall 2.5% budget increase, after
59 calculating health insurance, capital expenses, wage increases and other influences outside
60 of the control of individual departments.
61

62 The board members discussed and debated whether or not to transfer \$165,000 from the
63 Town budget to the Village budget for recreation. Ms. Macy explained this goal was included
64 to continue moving toward equal access and equalized funding now that Essex Junction
65 Recreation and Parks (EJRP) and Essex Parks and Rec (EPR) are co-located. She said that
66 this suggestion continues the discussion of how to address resident and non-resident fee
67 structures. Mr. Watts clarified that this would be a new line item in the Town budget to offset
68 the amount it would cost Town outside the Village residents to have equal access to the EJRP
69 programs. Mr. Kerin pointed out that the \$165,000 would be from taxes collected from all
70 Essex residents (Town outside the Village and Village). Ms. Haney said that this transfer
71 could be beneficial for tax relief if there is a vote to merge but would still be beneficial if there
72 is no vote to merge. Mr. Chawla asserted that he does not believe a transfer such as this
73 should take place before the 2020 vote because the perceptions for why it is happening could
74 get muddled. He stated his opinion that all consolidation work should be on hold until after the
75 vote. Mr. Levy agreed that it would be hasty to proceed with any new cost sharing strategies
76 at this time. Ms. Cooper pointed out that it makes sense to have all recreation co-located, as
77 it makes the programs stronger and agreed and stated her opinion that this is a good step
78 forward no matter the results of the merger vote. Ms. Macy requested a sense of the rest of
79 board members on this item. Mr. Watts and Ms. Haney both expressed interest in the strategy
80 and believed it warranted more information and exploration of what effect it would have. The
81 Trustees showed interest in further exploration. Ms. Haney requested that the Rec. Directors
82 attend the next joint meeting and that staff provide clear recommendations on action steps,
83 expected outcomes and justifications for why this should happen at this time.
84

85 The board members discussed the importance of working on how the Town and Village can
86 address capital expenses together. They agreed that incorporating Space Study needs into
87 the budget should be low priority this year unless the items are essential for safety. Mr.
88 Murray pointed out that that the exhaust system replacement at the fire department should be
89 prioritized. Mr. Tyler agreed, describing this as a dire need. Mr. Levy, Mr. Kerin and Ms.
90 Thibeault also agreed. Mr. Watts suggested that the Town’s 2 cent capital tax and transfer of
91 operating funds into capital should be more standardized and transparent this year. Mr. Brown
92 reiterated that strategizing capital expenses together would be beneficial.
93

94 Mr. Watts clarified, with Ms. Macy and Mr. Teich, how the goal of providing funding to the
95 Community Justice Center (CJC) would change current practices. Mr. Teich explained that

96 currently the Essex CJC has its own grant-funded budget and the employees work for the
97 Town of Essex. The program is funded primarily by a state grant with the Department of
98 Corrections and the Judiciary, which is shared with Milton and Colchester. He said their grant
99 ends next year but the Essex Police Department and administration believe that the Essex
100 CJC program should be sustained whether or not the state renews funding. Mr. Teich
101 explained that the CJC is a separate program from the Street Outreach Team, which is a
102 contracted service of the Police Department through the Howard Center.
103

104 Mr. Chawla clarified with Ms. Macy and Mr. Teich what would be included in the IT and
105 security upgrades goal. Ms. Macy explained this would include updating door access controls
106 and phone systems and aligning IT systems across services, except for the libraries and rec
107 departments, which each have their own unique tech needs. Mr. Chawla and Mr. Murray
108 suggested that the Selectboard and Trustee IT processes also be standardized so they do not
109 need to use multiple programs to manage information.
110

111 Mr. Watts wondered how the Cemetery goal would play out between the two municipalities.
112 Mr. Duggan explained that this goal would align and increase maintenance budgets. He also
113 explained that once a Village cemetery is full, ownership is transferred to the Town, so this will
114 play a role in the budget review.
115

116 Mr. Levy wondered if the goal related to reviewing fees structures would include fines. Mr.
117 Teich said, more importantly, it would analyze impact and other fee structures to determine
118 appropriate amounts. Mr. Duggan clarified that an impact fees study is not scheduled at this
119 time but it is on staff's radar to be addressed.
120

121 **b. Discussion of FY2020 budget schedule – Sarah Macy**

122 Mr. Teich presented the FY2021 budget calendar, which he said adheres to the Vermont
123 League of Cities and Towns rules. He pointed out that the Village is scheduled to engage in a
124 full-day budget meeting from 8:30-3:30, and the Selectboard is scheduled to hold a series of
125 special budget sessions in the evenings. He asked for feedback or suggestions on this
126 schedule.
127

128 Ms. Haney requested that the Selectboard budget meeting on January 6 be changed, or one
129 of the other two meetings scheduled that day change, so meeting times can be reasonable.
130 She discussed either putting shorter, admin items on the budget agenda, cancelling the Joint
131 meeting or cutting the Selectboard meeting short.
132

133 Mr. Murray suggested an agenda item on the next Selectboard meeting be a discussion of
134 interest of the board members in trying to fit the whole budget meeting process onto one day.
135 Mr. Brown suggested an agenda item at the next Trustees meeting be a discussion of
136 whether they want to still do a full day budget meeting or if it should be broken out into
137 multiple meetings.
138

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

140 Mr. Duggan recapped for the board members that the Governance Subcommittee met on
141 September 12th and finalized the mostly quantitative survey, currently being administered. He
142 said there are 370 responses so far. KSV is scheduled to present the analyzed data to the

143 board members at the October 29 joint meeting. After this, he said, the boards need to have a
144 strategy for how to move forward. Mr. Duggan suggested either charging the Subcommittee
145 with the task of creating a draft plan, proceeding as a joint board effort or creating some other
146 type of process that includes multiple stakeholders.
147

148 Mr. Tyler clarified that, once the data is presented to the boards, it is their responsibility to
149 consider the information and discern an effective process forward. He said he plans to
150 compile all of the Governance Subcommittee's completed legal, finance and researched
151 legwork to help interpret the results. Mr. Tyler gave credit to Mr. Duggan and Mr. Teich for all
152 of their work on securing information along the way. He said that because subcommittee
153 members are well informed at this point, consulting with Mr. Richardson, legal counsel, would
154 be premature.
155

156 Ms. Haney suggested that the boards have reached a new plateau in the process which
157 requires a decision to construct a plan, merger or otherwise. She said that they need to come
158 up with a list of topics to be covered and suggested disbanding the Governance
159 Subcommittee in order to form a Charter Committee, if they discover that they need to
160 strategize a merger. The board members appeared to agree with this strategy. Mr. Teich
161 encouraged them to think about how many people would be included, what their charge and
162 scope of work would be and how to keep the committee small enough to ensure effectiveness
163 on the quick timeline. Mr. Duggan suggested that they discuss this at their next meetings and
164 Mr. Tyler cautioned that they should not plan the new committee too soon because they may
165 discover that they do not have a go-ahead on a merger, based on survey responses. Mr.
166 Chawla wondered if there could be a hybrid committee that could address whatever direction
167 they find themselves going in.
168

169 The board members discussed the pros and cons of possibly having community members on
170 the new committee. Mr. Watts pointed out that the Governance Subcommittee has been
171 repeatedly stating that there will be continued opportunities for community input on the
172 process. Ms. Haney suggested including local State Representatives on the committee but
173 Mr. Murray expressed that this may not be acceptable to the public. Ms. Cooper stated that
174 public input does not necessarily mean public participation. She and Mr. Kerin discussed the
175 option of conducting hearing sessions to have conversations with the public and also use
176 these opportunities to clear up misinformation. Mr. Murray added that community feedback
177 could also be collected on written document discussions. They suggested that bringing all of
178 these conversations to the committee may a good solution.
179

180 Ms. Haney suggested that the board members determine who would be on the new
181 Committee at their next joint meeting.
182

183 **6. CONSENT AGENDA**

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

185
186 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the Trustees**
187 **approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed 5-0.**
188

189 **7. READING FILE**

- 190 a. **Board Member Comments**
191 • There were no board member comments at this time.
192 b. **Letter from Joyce Stannard, Passionate About Pickleball**
193

- 194 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**
195 a. An executive session is not anticipated
196 No Executive Session took place.
197

198 **9. ADJOURN**
199

200 **MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, for the Selectboard to**
201 **adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:30 p.m.**
202

203 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, for the Trustees to adjourn the**
204 **meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:30 p.m.**
205

206
207 Respectfully Submitted,
208 Cathy Ainsworth
209 Recording Secretary
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