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. Annual presentation, Essex C.H.I.P.S.—David Voegele
   b. Annual presentation, Channel 17—Lauren Glenn-Davitian and Meghan O’Rourke
   d. Discussion of whether to pursue local option tax—Greg Duggan
   e. Update from Subcommittee on Governance
   f. Approve revised January meeting schedule—Greg Duggan
   g. *Evaluation of public officer—Evan Teich

6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
   a. Approve minutes: October 29, 2019—Joint Meeting (Trustees only)

7. **READING FILE**
   a. Board Member Comments
   b. Memo from Jerry Firkey and Sharon Kelley re: Inform the Essex Selectboard regarding Revisions to the State Rental Housing Health Codes

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
   a. *An executive session is anticipated to discuss the evaluation of a public officer

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: 11/22/2019
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, to enter into the Special Joint Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard at 7:15 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES
Mr. Teich changed agenda item 6a to include Selectboard approval of the minutes of October 29, 2019. He also provided two additional handouts, TV Municipal Update on Essex & Essex Junction, for item 5a, and an Email from Max Levy regarding the discussion of whether to pursue a local option tax, for item 5d.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL
GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the agenda, as amended. The motion passed 4-0.

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, and ANNIE COOPER seconded, that the Selectboard approve the agenda, as amended. The motion passed 4-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
   There were no comments from the public at this time.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS
a. Annual presentation, Essex C.H.I.P.S.—David Voegele
   Mr. Voegele provided an update on Essex C.H.I.P.S. and the Quality Youth Development (QYD) Project. He discussed participation rates and engagement in Essex C.H.I.P.S. Community Health Initiatives and Programs: Teen and Tween Centers; Mentoring; Substance Use Prevention Campaign; Adventure Orientation program; Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings; and Speech and Debate clubs. He also shared information about the Birdie-Bash 2020 badminton fundraiser to benefit Essex C.H.I.P.S. hosted on January 26th. Mr. Voegele discussed progress on the
(QYD) credentialing process, created by Essex C.H.I.P.S. He explained that this could become a national quality standard for communities that support and empower youth. He discussed the QYD benchmarks communities would need to achieve in order to be credentialled. He explained that these benchmarks are based on the Search Institute’s Assets Development framework. Mr. Voegele said that Essex/Westford, the pilot project for QYD, has already achieved 7 of the 10 benchmarks. Four other communities in Vermont are also interested in obtaining the QYD credential. The Selectboard members and Trustees commended Mr. Voegele on the work of Essex C.H.I.P.S. and encouraged him to continue to share progress updates on Essex/Westford’s QYD credentialing.

b. Annual presentation, Channel 17—Lauren Davitian and Meghan O’Rourke

Ms. Davitian and Ms. O’Rourke discussed highlights of their Town Meeting TV FY20 Update memo to the Trustees and Selectboard members dated November 24, 2019, in preparation for their FY21 funding request. They shared examples of how the three meetings covered by Channel 17 for Essex Junction and the Town of Essex enable the public to be civically engaged, through real time streaming, YouTube archives with transcripts and recordings available on the website. They talked about how the station navigates changing technologies. Ms. Cooper said her friends watch Channel 17. She and Mr. Brown talked about how fortunate the municipalities are to have the service and Ms. Haney talked about how important and popular the service was during this year’s gun ordinance meetings.

Ms. Davitian and Ms. O’Rourke discussed a recent settlement reached with Comcast to continue operating the station. They said that the settlement includes a stipulation that the station will move from channel 17 to a thousand-tier station and they will operate with a new name and look. Ms. Davitian talked with Mr. Tyler about strategies, such as embedding a link and information on websites, to help people learn how to find the new station.

Ms. Davitian and Ms. O’Rourke said that the station will be increasing their request of Essex and Essex Junction by 5% this year, noting that it costs approximately $27K per year for the service, some of which is also paid for by subscribers. Ms. Haney said that the State of Vermont’s Public, Educational & Government (PEG) Access Study Committee will continue to consider PEG regulatory and funding mechanisms for community access channels. She suggested that Essex support this group. Ms. Davitian said that there are promising examples nationally, being explored by the committee, where alternative funding is provided from broadband.


Mr. Brown recused himself from this agenda item for an actual or perceived conflict of interest with his employer.

Mr. Schibler talked with the Trustees and Selectboard members about the Housing Needs Assessment and Action Plan, first presented to them in June. Mr. Tyler and Mr. Murray said they were impressed by the document’s breadth of research. Mr. Schibler said, to address the issues of affordable housing, stakeholders from multiple sectors of the community should also be engaged. He talked with the Selectboard and Trustees about establishing a Joint Housing Commission and, eventually, a housing trust fund. Mr. Schibler pointed out that the goals listed on page 5 of the plan could become the mission of a housing commission and a
structure similar to the Economic Development Commission could be a model, with 5
members comprised of experts in the field. Maura Collins, an Essex resident who is also the
Executive Director of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA), spoke to the Selectboard
and Trustees about her interest in establishing a housing commission in Essex. She talked
about how housing commissions function in other municipalities. She encouraged the Board
of Trustees and Selectboard to establish a commission soon, keeping in mind that it could
take years to finally establish a trust fund.

Mr. Watts and Mr. Murray shared anecdotes to illustrate issues related Essex’s limited
housing availability. They talked about young families not being able to move in, former
residents not being able to move back and people moving away because housing is
unaffordable. Mr. Teich added that, even though a number of new apartments are being built
each year, they are filling almost immediately.

Ms. Haney and Mr. Tyler discussed staff capacity with Mr. Duggan and Mr. Teich, noting their
interest in keeping the conversations about housing moving forward. Mr. Teich said that if the
Trustees and Selectboard members advise the creation of a Housing Commission, staff will
devise a strategy with Ms. Collins and Mr. Schibler. Ms. Haney stated that it is the consensus
of the board members to move forward with the idea of establishing a housing commission
and suggested another discussion after the holidays about how to proceed.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, and ANNIE COOPER seconded, that the Selectboard adopt
the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction Housing Needs Assessment and Action
Plan. The motion passed 4-0.

DAN KERIN made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, that the Trustees adopt
the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction Housing Needs Assessment and Action
Plan. The motion passed 3-0, with Mr. Brown recused.

d. Discussion of whether to pursue local option tax—Greg Duggan

Mr. Watts recused himself from this agenda item for an actual or perceived conflict of interest
with his employer. Ms. Haney and Mr. Brown called a 5 minute recess to reestablish a quorum
of the Selectboard, then reconvened at 8:18

Mr. Duggan introduced the issue of whether to pursue a local option tax for capital
infrastructure expenses. He explained that this tax is the only way, other than raising property
taxes, that Essex could secure a significant amount more money to pay for infrastructure. He
said the tax could amount to $1.2 million annually, estimated based on information from the
state. He said in order for a Local Option Tax to be established, there would need to be a
town-wide vote, the language of which would need to be approved by the board members in
January for it to appear on a March ballot. Mr. Teich advocated for the local option tax. He
said Essex is the only municipality in the region that has not adopted this yet and the costs
associated with wear and tear of the roads by people driving through could be offset by
people other than just Essex residents with a Local Option Tax. He noted that this strategy
supports resiliency planning, considering that the 10 year plan for Village capital maintenance
currently does not have a clear funding source for the full costs associated with these
projects. He discussed how the State of Vermont administers the tax. Mr. Brown wondered if
there is enough staff capacity to administer the tax, but Mr. Teich assured the board members
that they would make it work. Mr. Kerin and Mr. Teich discussed how some large industries could be exempt from parts of a Local Option Tax and Mr. Brown said that the board members would also have the choice of approving only part of the Local Options Tax, such as on rooms and meals. Ms. Cooper wondered if an infographic could be generated to illustrate how weekly expenses may change with the tax.

Mr. Tyler, Mr. Brown, Mr. Kerin, Mr. Levy (by e-mail) and Ms. Haney expressed support of the tax but pointed out that the timing of the town-wide vote is an issue, with the merger decision and a presidential election already at the forefront. They expressed concern that residents may not understand what the Local Option Tax vote would mean for them in this context. Ms. Haney strongly suggested not pursuing the tax right now. Mr. Teich reminded the board members of the show of hands in support of a Local Option Tax at the Village of Essex Junction’s Annual meeting. He also said that the residents at the Town of Essex Annual Meeting demonstrated interest in maintaining infrastructure by adding $100,000 to the budget for paving. Mr. Murray stated that his campaign for Selectboard included his support of pursuing a Local Options tax. Ms. Thibeault suggested that staff should develop a strategy for the board members to review in January to determine whether or not to pursue a March ballot vote. The Trustees and Selectboard members agreed that they are not opposed to staff bringing more information to a joint meeting in January.

Ms. Clemens introduced herself as a presiding officer at the polls and pointed out that there are more options than just March for a vote on the Local Options Tax in 2020, noting the April school budget vote and the August primary vote. She shared her opinion that this year is the right time for a Local Options Tax because many other local communities have implemented it, the roads need funding and residents are supportive.

Mr. Watts returned to the meeting.

e. Update from Subcommittee on Governance

Mr. Tyler reviewed the Subcommittee on Governance’s recommendation for a representation model within an Essex merger plan: establishing a 7-member board with four seats designated (two from district 8-2; one from district 8-1; one from 8-3) and three seats at-large. Mr. Tyler said that the subcommittee suggested the model be established for a transitional phase, followed by a new government structure thereafter. He said the subcommittee debated over if the recommendation should have been an all at-large representation structure or divided amongst districts. He said they considered public feedback that prefers a ward governance structure. He described the recommendation as the result of compromise on all sides. Mr. Tyler said that, next, the subcommittee will determine a strategy for phasing in taxes. He said there may be interest in creating a designated tax district during the phase-in process to help pay for specific, planned, Village-level infrastructure work.

Mr. Watts told the board members that the subcommittee discussed the complexities of getting representation correct. He expressed concern that the recommendation for representation does not reflect public survey results. Mr. Brown agreed, pointing out that 50% or higher of surveys from every district recommended a district ward model but a hybrid model was suggested at the lowest rate. Mr. Murray said that the subcommittee’s representative model may face challenges because it is relatively unique. He agreed with Mr. Watts and Mr.
Brown that representation should be based a district ward model. Mr. Brown added that if the
subcommittee’s recommendation is accepted, an independent body should work with the
board to determine a permanent model. Ms. Haney suggested that the duration of an interim
representative body should be short and should have a requirement to begin developing a
districting board immediately. Mr. Watts explained that when the census is completed new
population count boundaries will need to be considered in this process.

Mr. Kerin expressed concern with the subcommittee’s recommendation of a special tax district
and Mr. Tyler explained that the tax would be specific, like the penny tax, only to a portion of
the community and would not include a representative entity dealing with debt or bonds. Ms. Haney expressed concern that the special district idea is complicated and that any phase-in of
taxes should have a longer timeline than an interim representative body.

Mr. Signorello showed a chart of survey data from the Greater Essex 2020 website to
highlight that Essex residents prefer a district ward representation model. He suggested that
merger’s governance should include 3 representatives from the Town outside the Village, and
3 from inside the Village.

Mr. Franco said that he moved to Essex in July and would like more information on the issues
being discussed. He asked for direction on how to obtain this. Mr. Brown pointed him to the
Greater Essex 2020 website; Ms. Cooper said that any of the Selectboard members or
Trustees would be willing to talk with him individually; and Mr. Murray suggested that he read
current and back issues of the Essex Reporter.

f. Approve revised January meeting schedule – Greg Duggan

Mr. Duggan explained that the suggested changes to the January meeting schedule aim to
mitigate long meetings previously scheduled.

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, that the Trustees
accept the January meeting schedule as presented. The motion passed 4-0.

ANNIE COOPER made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard
approve the schedule. The motion passed 4-0.

g. *Evaluation of public officer – Evan Teich

Discussion of this item took place in executive session as 8a.

6. CONSENT AGENDA
a. Approve minutes: October 29, 2019 – Joint Meeting (Selectboard and Trustees)

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, that the Selectboard
approve the Consent Agenda with Selectboard comments.

- There were no changes or comments on the minutes.
The motion passed 4-0.

AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, to that the Trustees
approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed 4-0.

7. READING FILE
a. Board Member Comments
   - There were no board member comments on the reading file.

b. Memo from Jerry Firkey and Sharon Kelley re: Inform the Essex Selectboard regarding Revisions to the State Rental Housing Health Codes

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION
   a. *An executive session is anticipated to discuss the evaluation of a public officer

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313 (a)(3) and to include the Selectboard. The motion passed 4-0 at 9:55 PM.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313 (a)(3) and to include the Trustees.

The motion passed 4-0 at 9:55 PM.

AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees exit executive session. The motion passed 4-0 at 10:07 PM.

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, and ANDY WATTS seconded, that the Selectboard exit executive session. The motion passed 4-0 at 10:07 PM.

9. ADJOURN

AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, for the Trustees to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0 at 10:08 PM.

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, for the Selectboard to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0 at 10:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Ainsworth
Recording Secretary