



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

Essex High School Cafeteria  
2 Educational Drive

Essex Junction, VT 05452

Monday, February 3, 2020  
7:45 PM (or immediately following  
Town Selectboard Meeting)

E-mail: [manager@essex.org](mailto:manager@essex.org)

[www.essexjunction.org](http://www.essexjunction.org)  
[www.essex.org](http://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** [7:45 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. Discussion of potential merger of Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction with the delegation of Essex area State Senators and State Representatives
  - b. Review and consider approval of draft Essex Merger Vote 2020 FAQ for use at upcoming public meetings and events
  - c. \*Evaluation of a public employee
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
  - a. Approve minutes: January 21, 2020 – (Selectboard and Trustees approval)
7. **READING FILE**
  - a. Board Member Comments
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
  - a. An executive session is anticipated to discuss the evaluation of a public employee
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: 01/31/2020 *J Mitchell*

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES  
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Monday, February 3, 2020

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

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

**ADMINISTRATION and STAFF:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager.

**CHITTENDEN COUNTY LEGISLATORS:** Senator Tim Ashe; Senator Debbie Ingram; Senator Virginia Lyons; Senator Christopher Pearson; Senator Michael Sirotkin; Representative Robert Bancroft (8-3); Representative Dylan Giambatista (8-2); Representative Lori Houghton (8-2); Representative Linda Myers (8-1); Representative Marybeth Redmond (8-1)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Harris Abbott; Jan Abbott; Gil Allen; Lisa Allen; Paul Austin; Gary J. Balaun; Iris Banks; Gina Halpin Barrett; Dennis Bergeron; Robert Bates; Alyssa Black; Al Bombardier; Diane Clemens; Patty Davis; Paula Duke; Libby Dunbar; Betsy Dunn; Vincent Franco; Jerry Fox; Matt Gilbert; Ann Gray; Mary Lou Hurley; Sharon Illenye; Stephanie Isaboreh; Tim Jerman; Art Johnson; Lynn Johnson; Brad Kennison; Dave Kilbon; John Larkin; Bob Leuang; Alice Martin; Catherine Mitchell; Candace Morgan; Guy Morin; Abbie Nelson; Hubert Norton; Mike Nosch; Michael Plageman; Mary Post; Linda Proctor; Michael Ross; Sara Serabian; Brian Shelden; Gabrielle Smith; Harlan Smith; Margaret Smith; Ken Signorello; Mitch Stern; Alvin Strong; Daryl Stultz; Saramichelle Stultz; Mike Sullivan; Andy Suntup; Linda Suntup; Dennis Thibault; Mike Thorne; Ralph Undercoffler; Chuck Vile; Carl Wermer; Jean White; Irene Wrenner; Lorraine Zaloom

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Elaine Haney called the Essex Selectboard back to order from recess, and Andrew Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Trustees to order, to enter into the Special Joint Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard at 8:22 PM.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES**

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

**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**

There were no comments from the public.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Discussion of a potential merger of the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction with the delegation of Essex area State Senators and State Representatives**

Mr. Tyler provided an overview and showed a PowerPoint about the Governance Subcommittee's efforts to address the question of whether or not the Village of Essex Junction would merge with the Town and, if so, how. He pointed out that the subcommittee is

50 made up of two board members who live in the Town outside the Village and two who live in  
51 the Village. Mr. Tyler began his overview focusing on major efforts during the past 7 years  
52 related to consolidation, unified leadership, joint meetings, and shared municipal services in  
53 police, public works, and recreation. He talked about the subcommittee’s formation in 2018 to  
54 research, review and determine possible governance models. He explained the expertise  
55 gleaned from Special Counsel Dan Richardson, esq., as well as through the market research  
56 done by KSV. Mr. Tyler said the subcommittee considered many options for Governance and  
57 Tax consolidation over two years and are now proposing a hybrid governance transition  
58 model. Mr. Tyler described the proposed 5-year transitional phase for the new governance  
59 model and a 12-year phase-in of tax reconciliation. He explained the rationale for a 7-member  
60 transitional governance structure of two elected from the Village, two elected from the Town  
61 outside the Village and 3 elected at-large (2-2-3). He talked about why the committee moved  
62 away from a 3-3-1 model, which would have one elected person at-large. He discussed the  
63 interests of residents to construct a districting model and how this could take place during the  
64 transitional phase, once the U.S. Census provides clarity on population counts. Mr. Tyler  
65 discussed the phased-in tax reconciliation rationale and the mechanisms for facilitating this  
66 merger. He discussed other subcommittee recommendations including voting for budgets by  
67 Australian ballot, the Annual Meeting dynamics, the name of the new community (Essex) and  
68 how sewer and water would be handled.

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70 Andrew Brown invited the representatives present to discuss the proposal with the boards.

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72 Sen. Ashe wondered why the board members had expressed concern that the legislature may  
73 not approve the Charter change if it was approved by the voters. Mr. Tyler spoke about the  
74 unusual choice within the model to establish special Tax Districts to help ease the tax burden.  
75 Mr. Ashe suggested that because these will not pose a negative tax change to the State there  
76 will most likely be support of the new Charter within the legislature.

77  
78 Sen. Lyons commented on the thorough, good work conducted by the Governance  
79 Subcommittee. She cautioned that the board members should be able to effectively explain  
80 the Tax District strategy to Essex residents. She said legislators familiar with Essex tend to be  
81 supportive of the merger.

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83 Sen. Sirotkin talked about his history with the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction  
84 and said that if the residents vote for the merger, he is pretty sure the legislature will too.

85  
86 Sen. Ingram praised the work of the board members and agreed that if the voters learn about  
87 the framework presented and approve it, the legislators will too.

88  
89 Sen. Pearson thanked the board members for explaining the plan and said he looks forward  
90 to hearing whether the voters will approve it. He said he believes the legislators will approve  
91 the plan if the voters do.

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93 Rep. Houghton talked about her experience as a Village Trustee from 2013-2018 when much  
94 of this work to determine a plan forward was taking place. She acknowledged the many  
95 extensive hours of hard work that board members and staff have put into this. She said she  
96 plans to discuss the merger strategy with Vermont’s Government Operations committee.

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Rep. Meyers mentioned her 13 years of service on the Selectboard and agreed with the other senators and representatives that, in the event the voters approve it and as long as the plan does not affect state taxes, it should pass in the legislature.

Rep. Bancroft said, coming from Westford, the urban/suburban/rural split of representation is a concern of his and is a concern shared at the state level. He pointed out that the school merger process in Westford was contentious and divided because of this and financial incentives helped deescalate the tensions.

Rep. Giambatista commended the work of the board members and the comments of the community. He said that they continue to consider how regionalism factors into the structure being developed. He underscored the importance of achieving clarity about how the new Charter will achieve the long-term vision of the entire municipality.

Rep. Redmond said this process of creating a new charter should reflect the voice of the voters. She mentioned a concern at the State House that there is confusion about what is being proposed. Rep. Redmond said she appreciates the thought that has gone into devising solutions for the merger and hopes the board members can carefully communicate and distill these ideas to the community.

Mr. Watts thanked the legislators for sharing their positive responses and Ms. Cooper added that their appreciation is rejuvenating in the midst of the tireless work of this effort.

Ms. Haney called a 2 minute recess and then reconvened the boards at 9:14 PM.

**b. Review and consider approval of draft Essex Merger Vote 2020 FAQ for use at upcoming public meetings and events**

Mr. Duggan introduced the Merger Vote 2020 FAQs draft for use at upcoming meetings and events. Mr. Levy noted that the revisions he had provided in advance were incorporated. Mr. Watts suggested that the words “focus groups” be changed to “listening sessions”. He also suggested that the line above the last list of bullets, on the second page, should be revised to clarify that the tax impact would be split over 12 years, with the average Town outside the Village property owner seeing an increase of between \$20 and \$30 each year, above normal budgetary increases, over this time period. He was glad to see the comparison between current Village and Town outside the Village tax rate on the FAQs. The board members suggested that the document include a “Revised on” date at the top of the first page along with a note to visit [www.greateressex2020.org](http://www.greateressex2020.org) for the most up-to-date information.

Ms. Wrenner asked if a Town Meeting FAQ on the community-led Charter change proposal warned for March would be available. Mr. Duggan said one is currently not available.

A community member wondered how the November ballot would read and asked if the Village would need to answer two questions in order to dissolve one charter and accept another. The boards acknowledged this would be considered over the upcoming months.

143 **MAX LEVY** made a motion, seconded by **PATRICK MURRAY**, that the Selectboard approve  
144 the draft FAQ, with board edits, for use at the upcoming annual meetings, other public  
145 outreach meetings, and to update [www.greateressex2020.org](http://www.greateressex2020.org). The motion passed 5-0.  
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147 **GEORGE TYLER** made a motion, seconded by **DAN KERIN**, that the Trustees approve the  
148 draft FAQ, with board edits, for use at the upcoming annual meetings, other public  
149 outreach meetings, and to update [www.greateressex2020.org](http://www.greateressex2020.org).. The motion passed 5-0.  
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151 c. **\*Evaluation of a public employee**  
152 This took place as item 8a of the agenda.  
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154 **6. CONSENT AGENDA**

155 a. **Approve minutes: January 21, 2020 – (Selectboard and Trustees approval)**  
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157 **MAX LEVY** made a motion, seconded by **ANNIE COOPER**, that the Selectboard approve  
158 the Joint meeting minutes of January 21, 2020 with Selectboard comments:

159 . Mr. Levy suggested the addition of the word “approved” after “Selectboard” on line 178.

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

161 Mr. Tyler requested his name be removed from line 14.  
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163 **AMBER THIBEAULT** made a motion, seconded by **DAN KERIN**, to that the Trustees  
164 approve the minutes from the last meeting, as amended. The motion passed 5-0.  
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167 **7. READING FILE**

168 a. **Board Member Comments**

169 . There were no board member comments at this time.  
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171 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

172 a. **\*An executive session is anticipated to discuss the evaluation of a public employee**  
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174 **MAX LEVY** made a motion, seconded by **ANNIE COOPER**, that the Selectboard enter into  
175 executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public employee in accordance with 1  
176 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3) and to include the Selectboard/Trustees. The motion passed 5-0 at  
177 9:31 PM.  
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179 **ANDREW BROWN** made a motion, seconded by **DAN KERIN**, that the Trustees enter into  
180 executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public employee in accordance with 1  
181 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3) and to include the Selectboard/Trustees. The motion passed 5-0 at  
182 9:31 PM.  
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184 **DAN KERIN** made a motion, seconded by **GEORGE TYLER**, that the Trustees close the  
185 executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:20 PM.  
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187 **MAX LEVY** made a motion, seconded by **ANNIE COOPER**, that the Selectboard close the  
188 executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:20 PM.  
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190 **9. ADJOURN**

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**DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, for the Trustees to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:23 PM.**

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**Ms. Haney returned the Selectboard back into the Selectboard meeting at 10:23 PM.**

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Respectfully Submitted,

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Cathy Ainsworth

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Recording Secretary