

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 10, 2020**

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Andrew Brown; George Tyler; Raj Chawla; Amber Thibeault; Dan Kerin

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Sarah Macy, Finance Director/
Assistant Manager; Travis Sabatano, HR Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Patrick LaClair; Ken Signorello; Irene Wrenner

1. **CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES**

Mr. Teich added item 6f to the agenda, authorization to submit a grant application for the fire department which requires a 5% match.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Trustees approve the agenda to include the grant application for the fire department. VOTING: 5-0; motion carried.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. **Comments from public on items not on the agenda.**

There were no comments from the public at this time.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. ***Interview for Bike/Walk Advisory Committee: Patrick LaClair**

Mr. Brown asked Mr. LaClair about his background and interest in serving on the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee. Mr. LaClair told the Trustees that he grew up in Essex and, since moving back, he has been active with biking, walking and running. He said he has had conversations about these activities in the community. Mr. Tyler asked him about how Essex compares to other places he has lived and what he would like to see improved. Mr. LaClair said that he likes taking advantage of biking, walking and running in all seasons but some seasons are harder in Essex than others. He shared that he avoids the 5 corners because of his impression that the roads are too hard to cross, there is limited visibility and driver awareness is a challenge. Mr. LaClair told Mr. Chawla that he would like to have a general awareness of ongoing projects related to biking and walking but would advocate for more crosswalk strobes near Maple Street park. Mr. Brown explained that, upon conclusion of their executive session discussion of the two candidates for the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee seat, staff would contact the candidates about their decision.

b. **Discuss Village Hall Staffing**

Mr. Brown said he liked the options laid out in the memo from Mr. Teich, for providing full municipal service coverage at the Village Offices, but reminded the Trustees that these options are not included in the final amount warned for the FYE21 budget. Mr. Teich discussed how staffing changes and unification strategies resulted in the smaller staffing numbers at the Village office. He talked about the current functions handled in the office, including community outreach, communications and development; payment of taxes, water and sewer bills by check; Public

Works invoicing; and mail processing for the Fire Department, EJRP and the Brownell library. The Trustees discussed worries about security and staff coverage, with such low staff presence. They talked about the additional presence of Essex Chips and the Senior Center. Mr. Teich discussed the benefits a recent phone system upgrade that allows service between multiple offices and municipal buildings. He also pointed out that a new card key system is planned to be installed at Village Hall. Mr. Teich discussed his point of view that it is important to not split the clerk and finance functions into separate buildings. Mr. Kerin suggested that they consider installing a direct phone to the Essex Town offices from Village Hall for people who arrive when a staff member is unavailable to help.

c. **Discussion on what to cover under Article 4 (Other Business) at Village Annual Meeting**

Mr. Brown reminded the Trustees that The Village Annual Meeting's Article 4 can be a good time to share information with the community and to gain a sense of the Village residents' preferences on some of the issues being discussed. Mr. Tyler, if available for Annual Meeting, or Mr. Chawla agreed to present about the merger proposal, during Article 4. The Trustees agreed that it would be helpful to poll the Village residents in attendance about which "Special Districts" they would prefer in the tax reconciliation model. Mr. Chawla proposed asking the residents if they want to have cannabis retail in the Village, and the Trustees said that this would be dependent on which of the two pieces cannabis legislation moves forward. They considered talking with the residents about the Local Option Tax and Mr. Tyler suggested they share information about how funds in the Economic Development fund were used this year.

Mr. Teich talked with the Trustees about how COVID-19 may affect the meeting. He reminded them that the charter states a meeting must be held and there is no provision for not doing so. He said, in a worst case scenario, a motion to delay the meeting to another date could be made at the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Teich noted that staff are following guidance from the Vermont Department of Health (VTDOH) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), regarding the virus.

d. **Discuss results of Town Meeting proposed charter change for six-member Selectboard**

Mr. Brown explained that as per 17 V.S.A. §2645 (charters; adoption, repeal, or amendment; procedure) the Town Clerk will send the proposed charter change to the Secretary of State who will certify the document and deliver it to the Attorney General and others at the state level to go to General Assembly for a vote. He pointed out that, at this time, it is out of the municipalities' hands and if residents have thoughts on it, they should contact their legislators and senators directly.

e. **Update from Governance Subcommittee**

Mr. Tyler let the Trustees know that the Governance Subcommittee approved a memo to be discussed at the next joint meeting of the Selectboard and Trustees. This memo requests that the boards provide guidance, in light of the Charter Amendment vote, to determine a representation model and tax reconciliation strategies for the merger charter. He said the Governance Subcommittee recommendations remain the same, but the boards could decide to accept or change them. Mr. Tyler said that, once the boards approve the direction, he will begin working with Ms. Macy to determine funding plans associated with the decision. He said that the Transitional Charter language is almost finished and he will request that the boards review it and approve it. Mr. Brown and Mr. Tyler discussed wanting to gain a sense of the boards at the joint meeting so they can ask questions about what residents prefer from the special district taxes options during the Village Annual Meeting.

Ms. Wrenner asked for clarification on the Transition Charter's section regarding the Brownell Library. Mr. Tyler said that the way the Brownell Library Trust was written, establishes an ordinance regarding the library's governance structure. Ms. Wrenner also wondered why the

Trustees would poll the Village residents at the Annual Meeting and Mr. Tyler explained that this would just be regarding the tax districts related to Village taxes.

- f. ****Update on status of public union contract negotiations—Evan Teich**
This took place during executive session under item 8b.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the Consent agenda, with corrections to the minutes of February 25:

- a. Adopt Local Emergency Management Plan.
- b. Approve Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways (TA-60)
- c. Approve Certification of Compliance for Town Road and Bridge Standards and Network Inventory
- d. Approve minutes: February 25, 2020
 - Ms. Wrenner suggested that in the first line of item 5b, “MVP” be replaced with “and VP”.
- e. Check Warrant #17188—02/28/2020; #17189—03/06/2020
- f. Authorize the Fire Department to apply for a FEMA Grant

VOTING: 5-0 motion carried.

7. READING FILE

- a. Board Member Comments
 - Mr. Teich explained how the community departments are responding to the COVID-19 virus including putting together cleaning plans, addressing public service concerns, and decisions about staffing. He said they are working on contingency and continuity plans, utilizing guidance from the CDC and VTDOH. Mr. Teich talked about concerns for seniors, the senior van drivers, and the police and fire department staff.
 - Ms. Macy noted that Taxes are due on Monday March 16 and some precautions will be in place due to the increase in foot traffic.
- b. Memo from James Jutras re: Details on Farm soil and Groundwater sampling for PFAS
- c. Email from Andrew Brown re: S.54
- d. Email from Elaine Haney re: Please support H.744 and support the PEG Study Bill
- e. Chittenden County Community Outreach – 2019 report
- f. Memo from Robin Pierce re: Village Center Development
- g. Spring Selectboard Institute and Transparency Essentials trainings
- h. Upcoming meeting schedule

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. ***An executive may be necessary for the appointment of a public official**
- b. ****An executive session is anticipated for contracts and labor relations agreements with employees**

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees enter into executive session to discuss the proposed public official appointment(s) in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3) and to include the Unified Manager, and the HR Director; and that the Trustees make the specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the Village’s position concerning ongoing contract negotiations and labor relations agreements with employees would place the Village at a substantial disadvantage; and that the Trustees enter into executive session to discuss contracts and labor relations agreements with employees pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A) and 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(B), to include the Unified Manager and HR Director. VOTING: 5-0; motion carried at 7:39 PM.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and **DAN KERIN** seconded, that the Trustees adjourn the meeting. **VOTING: 5-0; motion carried at 8:17 PM**

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Ainsworth