

LIST OF AGENDA AMENDMENTS AND HANDOUTS
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA
MAY 12, 2020

AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

- 5b. Discuss how to help local businesses during pandemic

ADDITIONAL HANDOUTS

- 5b. Ideas for assisting Village Businesses 5.10.20
- 5b. Location of Bars and Restaurants in Essex and Essex Junction
- 5b. VTDigger Chambers of Commerce urge State to allow outdoor restaurants

**Report to Essex Junction Trustees Regarding Response to Economic Impacts on Village
Businesses with Particular Restaurants**

5.11.20

Summary

Ongoing social distancing guidelines are likely to have an exceptionally negative impact on eating and drinking establishments. Based on prevailing trends in other states, Vermont restaurants are likely to be required to give up half to two thirds of their usual seating capacity. The Village government has limited resources to help any private business, but we may be able to help local restaurants regain some of their lost seating capacity by making public spaces available for outdoor food & drink consumption or as comfortable spaces for people waiting to be seated at a nearby restaurant.

Survey – Our first step has been to reach out to all Village restaurants and bars and ask them to tell us how they're being impacted by the pandemic and how we might help. We offered several ideas for them to consider with the general focus of increasing nearby outdoor seating capacity. Every business was sent a paper letter and return envelope, but we also posted our message and ideas in the form of an online survey on Facebook pages that some business owners might visit. Robin Pierce will also reach out to some of the business owners he knows. The results of the survey are pending.

Formative Planning

While we're awaiting business owners' responses and more specific guidance from the Vermont government, Raj, Robin, Evan, and I started putting together some plans that can be quickly carried forward, amended, or abandoned as circumstances warrant.

Village ordinances inhibiting outdoor eating, drinking, seating – The trustees could suspend all such ordinances. With assistance from Terry, Robin, Susan, and Even we've identified some local ordinances that might need to be considered in this category. Within this context we'd like to include measures that ensure that prohibitions against smoking in indoor public establishments extend to outdoor seating areas as well.

Create outdoor seating at former Road Rescue site. Our long-term plan for the site is to create a pocket park with benches and landscaping. Robin is awaiting some permitting from the state and is also hoping to procure some assistance from a state agency that helps communities finance such projects. In the meantime, we could proceed with procuring the trees or shrubs we will plant in the park and keep them in large planters. These will provide shade and a physical/visual barrier from the traffic on Main and Maple streets. Within the space we can install some picnic tables for public use.

Create ‘streetseats’ – Plagiarizing an idea already underway in Burlington, we could create outdoor seating at several locations around the Village center that might look something like this:



These would need to be put in parking spaces along Village streets. Another possible location would be the ‘cut-thru’ street behind Veteran’s Park that connects Main and Lincoln.

Seating On Village Sidewalks – at strategic locations such as Main St. and Railroad Ave, the Village could work with businesses to augment their outdoor seating. We could provide picnic tables and umbrellas and physical barriers (i.e. chains, ropes, etc.) to help isolate the seating area from the sidewalk to encourage social distancing. Another possibility would be cordoning off the parking areas in front of the businesses on Railroad Ave. for seating / walking, and making it one-way outbound (from Main Street) and leaving parking only on the railroad side of the street.

Street closures or contractions: Due to drastic reductions in traffic, we suggest closing portions of roads in the village core to accommodate this plan and to allow for proper pedestrian and bicycle access with proper social distancing in mind. This will become necessary as we will likely see an increase in tables and chairs on sidewalks as mentioned above. Street sections already identified are Main Street between Five Corners and Railroad Ave., the bypass between Veteran’s Park and TD Bank, ½ of Railroad Ave (parking spaces) along business fronts. Others may be considered. Some of these, for instance the Main Street closure, could be on a schedule, for instance Friday evening to Sunday evening. These plans could easily be adjusted or simply ended as warranted.

Seating in Private Parking Lots – we could work with businesses and property owners to encourage them to increase their seating in private parking lots. Areas in mind are: Lincoln Inn/On Tap, Mark’s BBQ/Heart and Soul, Grand Buffet, Vespas, Subway, Sherpa LLC. We’ll try to make contact with the fast food franchises on Pearl St. but they tend to operate under the own rules.

Pop-Up Seating – Brad and Aly have suggested having a roving pop-up entourage that moves to different locations around the town and village. This would include picnic tables, umbrellas, etc. and might also include live music performances to provide an inviting ambience.

Small Grants to Help Create or Enhance Outdoor Seating: We could make grants available (i.e. up to \$2000 or \$2500) to restaurants in the downtown core to apply for funding to help them establish or expand their outdoor seating capacity (tables, chairs, umbrellas, planters, etc.) We could have a very brief, simple application and review process with minimal questions:

Example:

- How will this funding help you establish or expand your outdoor seating capacity?
- What will you purchase?
- How much will your current outdoor capacity increase due to this funding?
- How will you promote physical distancing with this added outdoor seating?
- What support(s) do you need from the municipality to make this happen (i.e. taking up parking spaces, etc.)?

Resources

Funds – The Village has economic development funds that are supposed to be restricted to purchase property, landscaping, etc. for the Village center district, but under the circumstances we could perhaps bend the rules a bit. The Town does not have specific economic development funds but under present circumstances with other departmental expenditures curtailed there might be surplus funds available.

Picnic tables – EJRP might spare a few tables but probably not enough to meet all needs. CVE can provide many tables but they're meant for indoors and would need to be moved inside at night.

Purchasing Outdoor tables – We can purchase durable, metal table/seat assemblies for about \$500 - \$700 apiece, such as these:



I recommend metal obviously because they're more durable than wood or plastic, but also the metal-mesh stays relatively clean because food junk and liquid just drops right through it.

Purchasing umbrellas – We can purchase sturdy, metal pole, thick vinyl umbrellas for the tables for about \$140-\$160 apiece. They would need to be mono-color. Multicolor are more expensive. But having the same mono-color umbrellas at different locations around the village would provide a bit of identity branding for us.

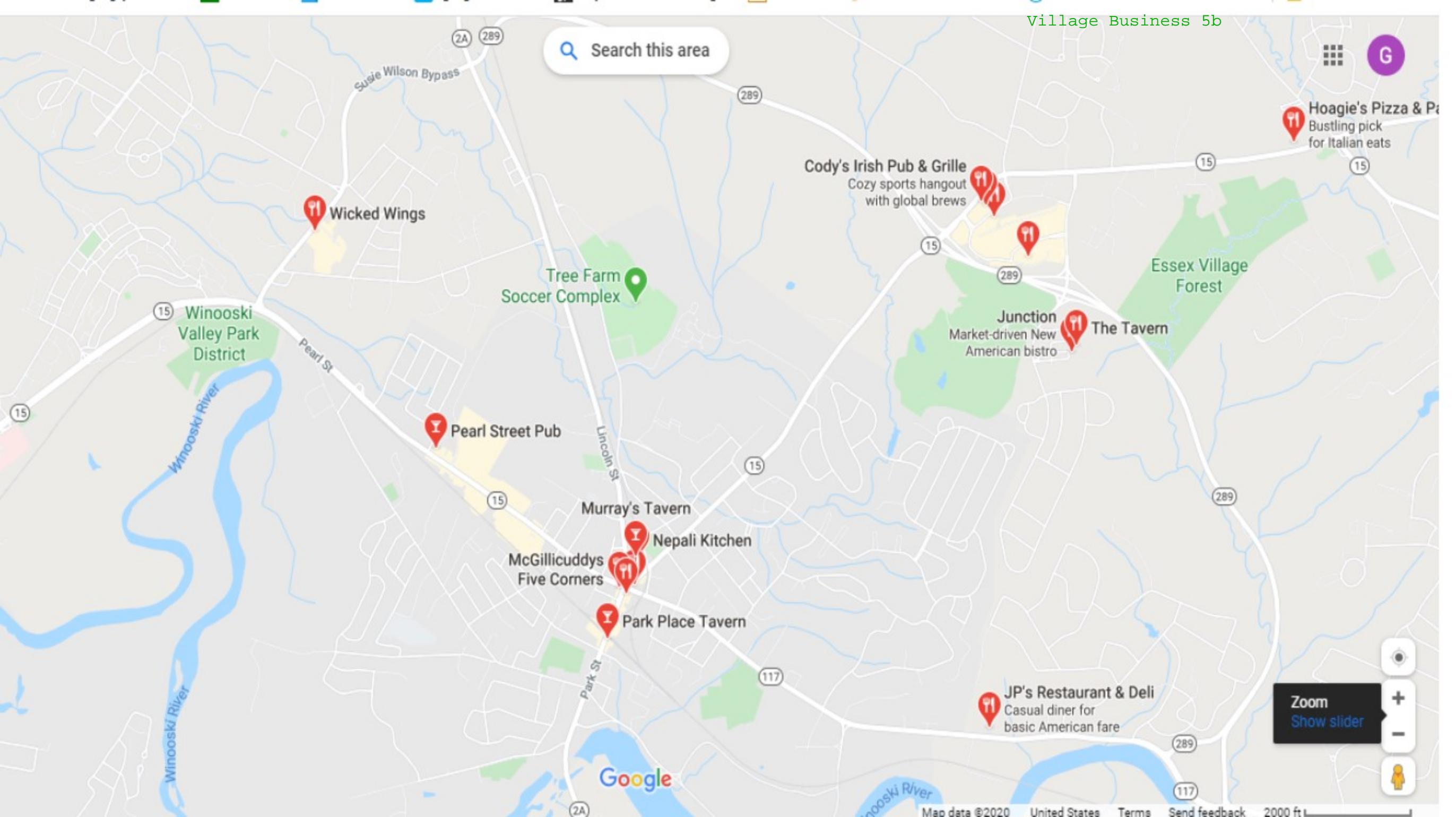


Also – if we did a bulk purchase of umbrellas and picnic tables (20 of each for example) and used 10 for our RR site and StreetSeats, we could loan out the other ten to local businesses to augment their sidewalk/parking lot seating.

Example of costs:

- \$12K for 20 picnic tables
- \$3K for 20 umbrellas
- \$10K for trees/plantings around former RR property

Search this area



Wicked Wings

Tree Farm Soccer Complex

Winooski Valley Park District

Pearl Street Pub

Murray's Tavern

Nepali Kitchen

McGillicuddys Five Corners

Park Place Tavern

Cody's Irish Pub & Grille
Cozy sports hangout with global brews

Junction
Market-driven New American bistro

The Tavern

Hoagie's Pizza & Pa
Bustling pick for Italian eats

JP's Restaurant & Deli
Casual diner for basic American fare

Zoom
Show slider

<https://vtdigger.org/2020/05/08/chambers-of-commerce-urge-state-to-allow-outdoor-restaurant-dining/>

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Chambers of commerce urge state to allow outdoor restaurant dining

By **Xander Landen**

May 8 2020 |



The Three Penny Taproom in Montpelier is among restaurants and bars closed during the coronavirus pandemic. Photo by Cate Chant/VTDigger

VTDigger posts regular coronavirus updates on [this page](#). You can also [subscribe here](#) for daily coronavirus news. Please send your Covid-19 questions to coronavirus@vtdigger.org.

The Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce is asking state officials to allow restaurants to open for outdoor seating of customers later this month.

In a memo sent Thursday, the chamber urged officials at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to allow restaurants to reopen with outdoor dining options beginning May 22.

If approved, the restaurants would provide outdoor service “with proper accommodations for social distancing and other best practices,” according to the memo.

The chamber wants the state to provide \$50,000 grants for restaurants to facilitate outdoor dining. It also wants officials to provide guidance to municipalities to ease local zoning regulations to make it easier for restaurants that don’t already offer outdoor service.

Austin Davis, a lobbyist with the chamber, said outdoor dining could provide some restaurants relief after they’ve been forced to remain closed, or offering only takeout or delivery options, for nearly two months.

“I think it comes down to you’ve got to do something,” he said. “And this first round of something, outdoor dining, can help some people.”

He acknowledged not all restaurants would benefit.

“For some folks, their business model is they need to have their entire floor plan occupied, or they don’t make their margin,” he said.

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce also believes that outdoor dining would be a “positive first step” for restaurants as the state looks to lift restrictions for businesses in the service industry.

“Outdoor dining is a wonderful fit to meet the need of space and safety and it’s a great way for restaurants to start that first quarter-turn of the spigot,” said Amy Spear, the vice president of tourism at the Vermont Chamber.

During his press conference Friday, Gov. Phil Scott said he wasn’t sure when restaurants would be allowed to resume partial business, but said the administration is considering allowing restaurants with outdoor tables to reopen.

“We want to open up the restaurants eventually,” Scott said.

“I would say those with outdoor seating would be probably, from a commonsense standpoint, would be the first to be able to do that because we know that being outside is better than being in a confined space,” the governor said.

The proposal has drawn a mixed response from restaurants.

Matt Willey, the owner of Ramunto’s and The Avocado Pit in Bennington, said outdoor dining would help some restaurants like his pizzeria, which have outdoor seating space.

But Willey, who is also the vice president of the Bennington Chamber of Commerce, said it would disadvantage others — like the restaurant across the street from him — that lack it.

“For me it’s great, I mean I do have a little bit of outside space,” Willey said. “But for some people they’re going to get buried because of that.”

Willey also worries that it might be difficult to get employees to return to work when many of them are now making more on unemployment benefits than they were at his restaurant.

He’s already had some trouble getting employees back to work at Ramunto’s, which is offering takeout and delivery.

“The first two people I tried to call back said no,” he said. “I mean they’re making \$1,100 staying home. Why would they come back for \$800 a week if they can sit home and make \$1,100 a week?”

Mark Frier, the owner of three restaurants — The Reservoir in Waterbury and Tres Amigos and The Bench, both in Stowe — said he doesn’t think opening his restaurants up to outdoor dining alone would generate enough business.

“To try to say that we could survive just on that and takeout in just our normal fixed-cost scenario is probably unlikely,” Frier said.

He added that many restaurants without outdoor space wouldn’t be able to benefit from the change.

“I feel like that’s not necessarily leveling the playing field for the dine-in restaurant owner community,” Frier said.



Many restaurants on the Church Street Marketplace in downtown Burlington offer outdoor seating. File photo

When the state does decide it's safe for restaurants to resume business, Frier said he would prefer that establishments have the ability to offer limited in-door dining, which would give "more businesses a shot at reopening."

And when the restrictions are lifted, Frier also hopes the state will provide financial assistance to help with their accumulating expenses.

"If the state wants to make that decision, we hope that the state would come behind with some kind of understanding that we're going to need some help to carry our fixed costs through that time period when we're basically going to be suppressed in our ability to do business," he said.

Rep. Matthew Birong, D-Vergennes, who owns 3 Squares Cafe, said that allowing restaurants to first offer outdoor dining is a "logical step."

But he said that it's important that the state provide grants to restaurants that aren't already set up to offer outdoor seating, so that they can also generate revenue.

He suggested that restaurants should be able to set up tents in their parking lots, and work with municipalities to offer seating in parking spots, or public spaces.

“Everybody’s got to get creative with the next year or two,” Birong said. “Because traditional formats aren’t going to work.”

Restaurants are [hoping the state will be able to provide relief dollars](#), and that federal requirements for aid they have received through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) will change.

Right now, loans through the program can be forgiven, but only if businesses rehire their employees within two months.

That poses a problem for restaurants that have received PPP loans, but have been unable to open up.

The Lake Champlain and Vermont Chambers of Commerce are pushing the state to provide financial assistance for restaurants from the \$1.25 billion the state received from the federal CARES Act to respond to Covid-19.

The Vermont Chamber is lobbying for a grants program for restaurants. It also wants restaurants to not have pay the state the rooms and meals taxes they collected in February and March before they shut down. Due dates for those payments had already been pushed back to July 15.

In its Thursday memo, the Lake Champlain chamber pitched a program to state officials that would give restaurants grants equal to what they paid in rooms and meals taxes for six months of 2019.

“Investment to keep these businesses alive today will be repaid in future rooms and meals tax revenue for years to come,” the memo says.



VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Online
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Tuesday, May 12, 2020
6:30 PM

E-mail: manager@essexjunction.org

www.essexjunction.org

Phone: (802) 878-6951

COVID-19 UPDATE: Due to the Covid-19/coronavirus pandemic, **this meeting will be held remotely**. Available options to watch or join the meeting:

- The meeting will be live-streamed on [Channel 17's YouTube channel](#).
- [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#). Depending on your browser, you may need to call in for audio (below).
- Join via conference call (*audio only*): (802) 377-3784 | Conference ID: 684 051 95#
- For the purpose of recording minutes, you will be asked to provide your first and last name.
- When listening to the meeting, please keep your phone or computer on "mute" as to prevent interruptions during the meeting. For agenda items when it is appropriate for the public to speak, please unmute your phone or computer and introduce yourself before requesting the floor from the President.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [6:30 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. Consider request to recognize graduating Essex High School seniors near 5 Corners
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve FY21 Lincoln Hall lease for Essex CHIPS
 - b. Approve Manager's Annual Appointments
 - c. Approve minutes: April 28, 2020
 - d. Check Warrant #17197—05/01/2020; #17198—05/08/2020
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board Member Comments
 - b. Memo from Robin Pierce re: Village Center Development
 - c. Letter from James L. Jutras re: Grant Match Vermont Phosphorus Innovation Challenge Stage 3
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. An executive session is not anticipated
9. **ADJOURN**

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Certification: 05/08/2020
Date Posted


Initials

VILLAGE TRUSTEES

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday May 12, 2020**

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sarah Macy, Assistant Manager/Finance Director; Rick Garey, Chief of Police; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager; Rick Jones, Public Works Superintendent; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Annie Cooper; Kara Janaro; Stephanie Meunier; Ken Signorello; Margaret Smith; Irene Wrenner.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Brown called the meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Mr. Duggan added a new agenda item 5b, to discuss how to help local businesses during the pandemic. Mr. Duggan also added three handouts to accompany this item:

- Ideas for assisting Village Businesses 5.10.20
- Location of Bars and Restaurants in Essex and Essex Junction
- VT Digger Chambers of Commerce urge State to allow outdoor restaurants

3. APPROVE AGENDA

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, to approve the agenda, as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

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. **Consider request to recognize graduating Essex High School seniors near 5 Corners**

Mr. Brown introduced Essex High School's request to use municipal green space for congratulations posters that recognize graduating seniors. Ms. Janaro clarified that there would be 269 signs with a student's yearbook photo and others without, for students who do not have yearbook photos. She said the signs would be up for two weeks in early June and would be taken down overnight to avoid vandalism. Mr. Teich offered that they could use Lincoln Hall and the Town Offices at 81 Main Street to store the signs overnight. The Trustees supported this effort and provided guidance: to coordinate the effort with the library directors to use their lawns, and to use the lawn space at 81 Main and the Auxiliary lot around Lincoln Hall to the fire station. Mr. Brown requested that Mr. Teich and Mr. Duggan coordinate the logistics of this effort.

Ms. Meunier introduced herself as a parent of a 2020 graduating senior and thanked the Trustees for their support.

51 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, to waive ordinances related**
52 **to signs for a period of two weeks to honor Essex graduating seniors by using signs as**
53 **recommended. The motion passed 5-0.**
54

55 **b. Discuss how to help local businesses during the pandemic**

56 Mr. Tyler introduced the discussion of how to support local businesses during the pandemic,
57 clarifying that any decisions would need to prioritize state guidelines. He said restaurants and
58 bars would be hit hard, with estimated 60% loss in seating capacity. Mr. Chawla and Mr. Tyler
59 discussed strategies other parts of the state are using to encourage outdoor seating. The
60 Trustees talked about the possibility of establishing small grants for Essex businesses to use
61 for street seating, seating on village sidewalks, and in private lots. They pointed out that most
62 businesses in the Village do not have outdoor space available. To resolve this, the Trustees
63 considered putting together a plan for public-owned spaces to be used by businesses for
64 outdoor service. This might include temporarily removing some parking from Railroad Avenue,
65 Veterans Park and Lower Park Street, possibly closing some streets, and fixing up the newly
66 purchased lot next to Firebird Café sooner. They discussed the need to partner with businesses
67 and property owners to share responsibility for cleaning and anti-vandalism. Mr. Kerin added
68 that they should consider how security would be established if the venues include alcohol. Mr.
69 Chawla said the survey to businesses should help guide more formative planning and Ms.
70 Thibeault said she would look forward to more guidance from the state. Mr. Teich encouraged
71 the Trustees to be flexible with ordinances and the speed of turnaround on requests.
72

73 **6. CONSENT ITEMS**

74
75 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees approve the**
76 **Consent Agenda:**
77

- 78 a. Approve FY21 Lincoln Hall lease for Essex CHIPS
79 **Approval of the FY21 lease of the 2nd floor of Lincoln Hall to Essex C.H.I.P.S. to**
80 **commence July 1, 2020 and end June 30, 2020**
- 81 b. Approve Manager’s Annual Appointments
82 **Approval of the Unified Manager’s appointments for the period July 1, 2020- June 30,**
83 **2020: Susan McNamara-Hill as Village Treasurer/ Tax Collector and Village Clerk;**
84 **Claudine Safar as Village Attorney; Chris Gaboriault as Village Fire Chief; and Hamlin**
85 **Consulting Engineers as Village Engineering Consultant**
- 86 c. Approve minutes: April 28, 2020
- 87 d. Check Warrant #17197—05/01/2020; #17198—05/08/2020
88

89 **The motion passed 5-0.**
90

91 **7. READING FILE**

92 **a. Board Member Comments**

- 93 ○ Mr. Brown commended Essex Junction Recreation and Parks for early re-opening of
94 childcare services. He expressed concern that EJRP has a 5% cancellation fee and
95 encouraged them to issue full refunds. Mr. Teich agreed to discuss this with Mr. Luck but
96 noted EJRP’s significant loss of revenue from the past two months.

97 **b. Memo from Robin Pierce re: Village Center Development**

98 **c. Letter from James Jutras re: Grant Match Vermont Phosphorus Innovation Challenge Stage 3**
99

100 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 101 a. **An executive session is not anticipated**
102 An executive session did not take place.

103
104

105 **9. ADJOURN**

106

107 **Mr. Brown called a brief recess to enter into the Joint Meeting of the Essex Junction**
108 **Trustees and the Essex Selectboard.**

109

110 **AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN to adjourn the**
111 **meeting at 9:35 PM.**