



VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION INFORMATIONAL MEETING FOR ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

June 1: Online
Essex Junction, VT 05452
June 2: Essex High School
2 Educational Drive

E-mail: manager@essexjunction.org

www.essexjunction.org

Phone: (802) 878-6951

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

- The meeting will be live-streamed on [Town Meeting TV](#).
- [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: 518 760 121#
- 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 Moderator.

Informational Meeting Monday, June 1

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [7:00 PM]
2. **ANNOUNCEMENT** regarding different format for 2020 Village Annual Meeting
3. **DISCUSS ARTICLE 1:** Shall the voters act upon the report of the auditor?
4. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 2:** Shall the voters approve an annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$5,367,655 for fiscal year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020, \$3,670,039 of which is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?
5. **DISCUSS ARTICLE 3:** Shall the voters approve holding the 2021 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 to vote for the Village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot?
6. **DISCUSS ARTICLE 4:** To transact any other business that may lawfully come before the meeting?
7. **DISCUSS ARTICLE 5:** To elect Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one year term); three Village Trustees (2 three year terms, 1 one year term); one Library Trustee (five year term)?
8. **ADJOURN to the following day, June 2, 2020, for the consideration of all articles to be voted on by Australian ballot.**

Annual Meeting Tuesday, June 2

[10:00 AM]

The legal voters of the Village of Essex Junction may vote by Australian ballot at the Essex Community Educational Center on Educational Drive in the Village of Essex Junction on Tuesday, June 2, 2020 to begin at 10:00 AM and close at 7:00 PM. Mailed ballots must be received (not post-marked) no later than Monday, June 1. Ballots may be returned in person on Tuesday, June 2 at the High School.

This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the Trustees, like all programs and activities of the Village of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Unified Manager's office at 878-6951.

Certification: 05/29/2020
Date Posted

Initials

VILLAGE TRUSTEES

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
INFORMATIONAL MEETING FOR ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday June 1, 2020

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

STAFF PRESENT: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sarah Macy, Assistant Manager/Finance Director; Wendy Hysko, Brownell Library Director; Rick Jones, Public Works Director; Jim Jutras, Wastewater Superintendent; Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk/ Treasurer; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Annie Cooper; Helen Diplock; Brian Shelden; Erna Deutsch; Ken Signorello; Margaret Smith; Irene Wrenner.

MODERATOR: Steve Eustis.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Eustis called the Informational Meeting for the Village of Essex Junction Annual Meeting to order at 7:00 PM and welcomed all in attendance. A rendition of the National Anthem was played virtually. Mr. Brown introduced Village of Essex Junction Trustees and staff who were present. He also acknowledged local representatives and took a moment to honor and thank essential workers who have been working through the pandemic. He extended congratulations to the Essex High School 2020 graduates and invited the public to view the graduate signs posted near Five Corners.

2. ANNOUNCEMENT regarding different format for 2020 Village Annual Meeting

Mr. Eustis explained how to participate in the meeting remotely through Microsoft Teams using conference call-in information.

3. DISCUSS ARTICLE 1: Shall the voters act upon the report of the auditor?

Mr. Eustis introduced Article 1 and invited public comment. There were no comments from the public at this time.

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters approve an annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$5,367,655 for fiscal year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, \$3,670,039 of which is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?

Mr. Eustis introduced Article 2 and invited Mr. Brown to present information on the General Fund Budget for FY2021. Mr. Brown talked about the FY2021 General Fund highlights: level staffing; rising health insurance cost mitigation; the continuation of combined highway budgets and the specific building budget; Village and Town Recreation department co-location; the retirement of pool debt and costs associated with filling Fire Department oxygen tanks. He illustrated changes to the budget, according to each fund, clarifying that the General Fund is the only one paid for by tax dollars: General fund 3.93%; EJRP Program Fund 1.84%; Water Fund 2.66%; WWTF fund 5.45% and Sanitation Fund 4.68%. He summarized proposed spending from Capital Funds and infrastructure projects planned for the upcoming year. He discussed contributing factors for the \$202,742 increase in the budget from FY20 to FY21

48 including salaries and benefits; paving; professional and purchased services; maintenance;
49 capital transfers; debt reduction; legal; and equipment. Mr. Brown summarized the estimated
50 tax impact on a \$280,000 assessed Village home would be \$20.28, after considering grants,
51 enterprise funding and fund balance, and the growth in the grand list. He explained that the
52 total taxes paid by Village taxpayers would be used in the following amounts: 22% for the
53 Town of Essex; 14% for the Village of Essex Junction and 64% to the Essex Westford School
54 District.
55

56 Mr. Eustis invited discussion on Article 2 and the public made no comments at this time.
57

58 **5. DISCUSS ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters approve holding the 2021 Annual Meeting on**
59 **Wednesday, April 7, 2021 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian**
60 **Ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 to vote for the Village officers and**
61 **transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot.**

62 Mr. Eustis read Article 3, invited discussion and the public made no comments at this time.
63

64 **6. DISCUSS ARTICLE 4: To transact any other business that may lawfully come before the**
65 **meeting?**

66 Mr. Eustis introduced Article 4 and explained this year’s mail-in voting process, as well as the
67 ballot drop off and regular voting available at the high school on Tuesday, June 2, 2020. He
68 talked about the ballot election of Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one
69 year term); three Village Trustees (2 three-year terms, 1 one-year term); and one Library
70 Trustee (five-year term). Mr. Eustis then invited Mr. Chawla to present about the Village of
71 Essex Junction and Town of Essex merger plans.
72

73 Mr. Chawla discussed major efforts during the past 7 years related to consolidation of the
74 Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex. He described early and ongoing work to
75 share and merge programs between the two municipalities: hire a Unified Manager; align
76 policies and procedures; and hold regular meetings of the Selectboard and Trustees together.
77

78 Mr. Chawla talked about the formation of the Governance Subcommittee in 2018, its
79 configuration and work to research, rank and recommend governance models and tax
80 unification strategies for a unified charter. He talked about key challenges, a public survey
81 process and the Governance Subcommittee’s original recommendations. The board’s selected
82 governance structure would have consisted of two people elected from the Village, two elected
83 from the Town outside the Village and 3 elected at-large (2-2-3). He pointed out that, shortly
84 after this structure was discussed by the boards, a petition to put a charter change on the Town
85 of Essex ballot resulted in a vote, which passed. This change would have established a six-
86 member board, with three to be elected from the Village and three elected from the Town
87 outside the Village. The voter-approved charter was sent to Montpelier for final approval or
88 rejection. The Legislature’s Gov Ops Committee did not approve the charter change, raising
89 concerns about a lack of a transition plan and its even-numbered governance structure. He
90 explained that the Governance Subcommittee will, considering this, work to determine a
91 governance structure to be voted on in November.
92

93 Mr. Chawla explained two transitional periods being proposed by the Trustees and Selectboard
94 if a unified charter is passed. The First 5 Years transitional phase would focus on reorganizing
95 Town and Village departments, building codes, municipal plans, ordinances, policies, etc. In

96 addition, he said, the First 12 Years transitional phase would focus on a gradual merger of the
97 Village and Town tax rates and provide time for the Village to solely pay down its debt. He said
98 further strategies to ease the tax rate increase on the Town outside the Village could include
99 reorganization efficiencies; growth in the grand list and options to designate the Village as a
100 Sidewalk District, a Capital Improvement district and/or a Downtown Revitalization District.

101
102 Mr. Chawla talked about other elements of the merger proposal, including plans to vote by
103 Australian ballot in April and to name the merged municipality "Essex". No water and sewer
104 rates would change but the Wastewater treatment plant would be owned by Essex. Mr. Chawla
105 said the Trustees and Selectboard will meet again on June 8 to discuss a path forward, for the
106 first time since the COVID pandemic began. Mr. Brown explained how people can access this
107 meeting online to participate.

108
109 Mr. Eustis invited discussion of the merger or any other item that could lawfully come before the
110 meeting. The public made no comments at this time.

111
112 Mr. Brown thanked the community for their support during the COVID pandemic, as everyone
113 has transitioned to a new normal, and Mr. Eustis thanked those in the public who voted by mail
114 as an additional safety precaution. Mr. Tyler thanked Mr. Brown for his leadership this year.

115
116 To close, Mr. Duggan shared a rendition of the Star Spangled Banner sung by Emma Blatt, a
117 Senior of Essex High School. The Trustees commended the singer for her rendition and talent.

118
119 **7. DISCUSS ARTICLE 5: To elect Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one**
120 **year term); three Village Trustees (2 three year terms, 1 one year term); one Library**
121 **Trustee (five year term)?**

122 This item was addressed at the beginning of Item 6.
123

124 **8. ADJOURN to the following day, June 2, 2020, for the consideration of all articles to be**
125 **voted on by Australian ballot**

126 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN, to adjourn the meeting at**
127 **7:48 PM. The motion passed 5-0.**