

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 8, 2020

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director; Evan Teich, Unified Manager (was present beginning at Business Item 5f).

OTHERS PRESENT: John Alden, Annie Cooper, Renee Dall, Roseanne Prestipino, Brian Shelden, Ken Signorello, Nancy Specht, Joyce Stannard, Irene Wrenner.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Deputy Manager Duggan noted an addition to the Consent Item, which would be Item 6d: Memo from Brad Luck asking for the Trustees to approve acceptance of a School Age Hub Start Up Funding Grant to help with reimbursement for day care costs.

Raj Chawla added a document to Business Item 5d (Consider request to create ordinance restricting parking on Warner Avenue), which is a letter from residents pertaining to that item.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, that the Board of Trustees approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from public on items not on agenda

Brian Shelden asked for the Village to waive the ordinance around campaign lawn signs and rights of way for the two weeks leading up to the November election. He said that this would remove any inadvertent favoritism and would lessen the burden on Public Works. Mr. Brown said that this topic would be brought forth at a future Trustees meeting for consideration.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion and potential action on Policy on Raising of Flags and Painting of Murals on Town of Essex/Village of Essex Junction Property

Mr. Duggan introduced a draft policy on raising flags and painting murals on Town of Essex/Village of Essex Junction property, in response to a comment during a prior public forum requesting the painting of a Black Lives Matter mural in the Village center. He said that the policy includes guidelines for considering and approving requests of this nature and outlines an application process and criteria.

Mr. Brown said that the policy should explicitly require the submission by the applicant of the exact proposed design. He also suggested a provision that the mural or flag could be removed without prior notice by the Town/Village. He further suggested that the Town/Village engage with the School Board if any mural were to be installed on Education Drive.

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50 Mr. Tyler expressed appreciation for the intent and spirit behind the proposed policy but voiced concern
51 that the policy asks the Trustees to deliberate on content outside of its scope of expertise, such as
52 political speech. He added that it could also raise zoning or community development issues. He
53 requested that senior staff be allowed the opportunity to weigh in on the policy prior to approval. He
54 finally stated his preference for no policy but simply ad hoc requests from residents who would like to
55 install murals or raise flags.

56
57 Mr. Chawla suggested that Trustees review the Montpelier policy's guidelines, which could be helpful
58 when refining a policy. He said that any policy should seek to tie specific requests to the community's
59 standards and mission statement.

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61 Amber Thibeault spoke against having a policy for these requests, since a policy had not been necessary
62 in the past. She also suggested several refinements to the draft policy's language.

63
64 Dan Kerin spoke against having a policy for these requests.

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66 The Trustees will revisit the policy with any revisions at a subsequent Board of Trustees meeting.

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68 **b. Discussion and potential action on creation and hire of Town/Village Assistant Manager**

69 Mr. Duggan introduced the proposed Assistant Manager position for the Village of Essex Junction and
70 Town of Essex, and the rationale for its creation. He said that as long as operations continue without
71 consolidation it is difficult for staff to maintain multiple roles, citing Sarah Macy's position as both
72 Finance Director and Assistant Manager. He said that the position could be partially funded by a vacant
73 position and funded through the Town budget. He requested the Trustees' feedback on the position,
74 timing, and funding sources.

75
76 Mr. Brown spoke in support of the creation of the position and funding it through the Town of Essex. He
77 asked if this would be an interim or a permanent position, and Mr. Duggan replied that this would be
78 intended as a permanent position.

79
80 Mr. Tyler spoke in support of the creation of the position, saying that it will be necessary whether a
81 merger occurs or not. He suggested that elected officials would be willing to provide feedback to staff to
82 further refine the position's job description.

83
84 Other Trustees echoed support for the creation of the position.

85
86 **c. Nominate representative to attend Vermont League of Cities & Towns' Town Fair**

87 Mr. Duggan introduced this item to nominate voting delegates to the Vermont League of Cities & Towns'
88 Annual Town Meeting, the VLCT Employment and Resources Benefit Trust (VERB) Annual Meeting, and
89 the PACIF Annual Meeting, which will occur in late September/early October.

90
91 No Trustees are available to attend this set of meetings.

92
93 **d. Consider request to create ordinance restricting parking on Warner Avenue**

94 Mr. Chawla recused himself from the discussion as a resident of the street in question, but introduced
95 the item. He said that Pearl Street Park had recently added pickle ball courts and a disc golf course,
96 which have been extremely popular with residents, but which have also brought frustration about

97 increased parking on Warner Avenue. He said that many residents are beginning to have safety
98 concerns. He said that one solution could be parking restrictions in the Village.
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100 Renee Dall echoed Mr. Chawla's concerns about parking and safety for the children playing on Warner
101 Avenue.
102

103 Mr. Brown asked for clarification about private versus Village property lines around Pearl Street Park.
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105 Mr. Chawla asked whether some of the green space inside the jug-handle could be converted into
106 parking. Community Development Director Pierce replied that it would be possible once traffic
107 modifications are made.
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109 Ms. Thibeault asked how these types of requests have been handled in the past. Other Trustees replied
110 that this scenario has not occurred in the past.
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112 Mr. Tyler asked suggested the creation of a temporary parking area along a portion of Warner Avenue,
113 but would ask that other senior staff and experts weigh in. Mr. Chawla replied that some residents had
114 discussed this, but there had been some concern that a parking area would change the nature and
115 character of the neighborhood.
116

117 Mr. Duggan noted that there had been a recent ordinance change related to parking on Lincoln Street
118 and outlined the process for this type of change. He further noted that the Police Department is
119 currently working through parking ordinance updates and to develop potential solutions for this specific
120 situation.
121

122 Mr. Brown asked Mr. Chawla and Ms. Dall whether traffic might decrease in the colder months, and
123 whether taking up an ordinance change in the winter would still be helpful. Ms. Dall replied that yes, it
124 would be helpful.
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126 **e. Approve design of park at 1 Main St.**

127 Mr. Pierce provided an overview of this item, noting that a design charrette occurred and subsequently
128 a schematic design was developed incorporating these ideas for an urban pocket park at 1 Main Street.
129 He said that the design would still need to be presented to the Chittenden County Regional Planning
130 Commission (CCRPC) and that a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) needs to be produced by an environmental
131 engineer by mid-September in order to take advantage of time-limited available funding.
132

133 John Alden asked if the Village supports this and whether the Village Planning Commission has been
134 engaged. Mr. Brown replied that yes, the Village is providing guidance and support for this project, and
135 also noted that the Village's Planning Commission has not met for a number of months.
136

137 Mr. Pierce will present a schematic design to the Board of Trustees at their September 24 meeting.
138

139 **f. Discussion on how to publicize merger facts and figures**

140 Mr. Duggan introduced this item as an opportunity for the Trustees to brainstorm additional ways to
141 publicize information regarding the merger work to the community.
142

143 Mr. Brown suggested using a website other than the GreaterEssex2020.org website, since that website
144 is intended for collaborative actions between the Town and Village and that the interest in publicity is

145 coming solely from the Village Trustees. He also asked the Trustees if they would be willing to
146 appropriate \$8,000-\$10,000 to help push information out to the community as effectively as possible.

147
148 Mr. Kerin suggested that visual media is more impactful to some than reading material.

149
150 George Tyler noted that ballots will be mailed in the beginning of October and that the Village needs to
151 explain a number of fundamental elements of background information prior to voting.

152
153 Mr. Chawla agreed with Mr. Tyler, saying that the Village needs to explain its existence vis a vis the
154 Town, what the Village currently pays for, and what it would look like to merge in terms of tax
155 implications. He said it would be important to explain why the Village is voting on this in November and
156 the Town is voting on it in March.

157
158 Mr. Brown said that focus should be on informing voters about the merger option, not options other
159 than merger.

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161 Mr. Tyler said that he will work with Mr. Brown to draft a newsletter around merger information for the
162 Board of Trustees' consideration and edits. He said he will also work with videographers to produce a
163 video of the information as well.

164
165 Mr. Duggan said that he would work with Ms. Macy to determine whether an allocation of \$8,000 would
166 be possible.

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168 **DAN KERIN made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, that the Trustees approve the**
169 **appropriation of a maximum of \$8,000 for information pertaining to upcoming merger vote. The**
170 **motion passed 5-0.**

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172 **g. Discussion and potential action on merger charter**

173 Mr. Duggan summarized the status of the latest version of the merger charter, noting that attorney Dan
174 Richardson responded to questions from the Selectboard, and that the Selectboard has made responses
175 to those comments and edits based on those responses.

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177 Mr. Tyler said that he responded to the Selectboard edits or summarized the current status of items
178 where possible. He provided an overview to the Board of Trustees explaining each of the Selectboard's
179 questions or edits, and his subsequent responses to them. He noted that the composition of the new
180 merger Selectboard remains a significant point of contention.

181
182 Mr. Brown outlined next steps, saying that this version will be considered at the Selectboard at their
183 next meeting, which will then return to the Trustees at their next meeting and be considered for
184 approval to go to voters.

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186 **6. CONSENT ITEMS**

187 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the Consent**
188 **Agenda, as amended:**

189 **a. Approve change in Trustee meeting schedule from September 22, 2020 to September 24, 2020**

190 **b. Approve minutes: August 25, 2020**

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- Mr. Brown requested to change "Shiang" to "Hsiang" in line 103.

192 **c. Check Warrant #17214—8/28/20; #17215—9/4/20**

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The motion passed 5-0.

7. **READING FILE:**

- a. Board Member Comments
- b. Vermont Community Leadership Network
- c. Green Up Day #2 in October
- d. Memo from Travis Sabataso re: Recap of Abundant Sun Training on Promoting Dignity and Respect
- e. Update on racial justice work in Essex
- f. Memo from Greg Duggan re: Dates for racial justice training for elected officials
- g. Upcoming meeting schedule

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

- a. *An executive session is not anticipated

9. **ADJOURN:**

DAN KERIN made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Trustees adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:38 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt
Recording Secretary

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2020

(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

