

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 24, 2020

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Brad Luck, Director of Essex Junction Recreation & Parks; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: John Alden, Annie Cooper, Tim Kemerer, Brian Sheldon, Harlan Smith, Irene Wrenner.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brown called the meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees to order at 6:31 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Trustees noted additional material for Business Item 5h.

Mr. Chawla requested moving Consent Agenda Item 6b (approval to accept \$20,000 records digitization grant) to Business Item 5k.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA 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

No comments at this time.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion of Tree Farm operations with Tree Farm Board President

Mr. Brown provided an overview of the Tree Farm property that is jointly owned by the Village of Essex Junction and Town of Essex and noted that day-to-day operations and maintenance of the parcel are overseen by the Tree Farm Management Group. He introduced Jake Hennekey, the Tree Farm Board's president, who said that the parcel is primarily used for soccer, rugby, ultimate frisbee, or parties, and is funded by patron dollars rather than tax dollars. Mr. Hennekey noted that in the last year or so there have been issues with off-leash dogs and dog bite complaints, as well as with sticks and dog feces in the fields, which maintenance workers are spending extra time removing. He added that any new signage around the facility's "no dogs policy" has been met with resistance from the public, and he is requesting help from the Trustees and Selectboard with communicating this message to the public.

Mr. Teich said the Village has had an agreement with the Tree Farm Management Group since 2002 and that the parcel had previously been owned by the State. He noted that the management agreement with the Tree Farm Group was renewed in 2011 for 10 years. He further noted that since the Autumn Pond complex was built next to the property and allows dogs in its units, the Town, Village and the Tree Farm Group have recently seen more issues and complaints around dogs.

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49 Mr. Chawla noted that the Village is growing and suggested examining the agreement with the Tree Farm
50 Group when it is up for another extension. He also suggested considering portioning off sections of the
51 park to accommodate the growth in use and to refocus some areas of the park for activities other than
52 soccer and rugby.

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54 Ms. Thibeault suggested that the Trustees and Selectboard jointly review the policies around dogs for the
55 Town and Village as well as the Tree Farm policy around dogs and then discuss the topic further at a joint
56 meeting of the boards. Mr. Brown requested background material on the Tree Farm Board, its financial
57 status, and how this information is accessible to the public.

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59 Ms. Wrenner provided more detail on the history of the sale of the parcel from the State to the Town and
60 Village.

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62 Mr. Luck noted that the Village park ordinances are currently being revised and updated, adding that the
63 revisions up for consideration by the Joint Boards will allow dogs in parks except where noted with
64 signage. He further added that the Tree Farm property is included as a park in those ordinance revisions.

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66 **b. Discussion and possible approval of design of park at 1 Main St for grant application**
67 Mr. Pierce presented a design for the park at 1 Main Street, which will be used to inform a Corrective
68 Action Plan from the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) but is flexible in terms of
69 some of the design elements and vegetation. Mr. Brown expressed concern about the amount of public
70 input into the design of the park. Mr. Tyler spoke of his participation in the charrette and how each
71 participants' designs were different but had common elements, which this design captures. Other
72 Trustees gave positive feedback on the park design.

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74 Mr. Kemerer asked that the Essex Tree Advisory Committee be given the opportunity to weigh in on tree
75 selection for the park. He suggested adding several additional trees to the plan prior to submission to the
76 State for CAP development.

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78 Mr. Alden concurred with other speakers about including additional trees in the design. Ms. Cooper and
79 Mr. Shelden also spoke enthusiastically about the plan.

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81 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the design and**
82 **direct staff to move the project forward through the CCRPC and DEC so that the CAP can be completed.**
83 **The motion passed 5-0.**

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85 **c. Consider request to waive political sign ordinance prior to November election**
86 Mr. Duggan noted that this agenda item pertains to a request from a resident to waive the political sign
87 ordinance until after the November election. Mr. Duggan added that staff does not recommend waiving
88 the ordinance on safety grounds, as signs in the Village rights-of-way could block views of pedestrians and
89 vehicles.

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91 Mr. Shelden noted that there were signs that had been removed by the Village's Department of Public
92 Works that were on municipal property but not impeding rights-of-way and expressed concern about
93 that removal occurring inconsistently. He suggested mirroring Vermont transportation laws for two weeks
94 up to the election, which would allow for signs during these two weeks.

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96 Mr. Chawla expressed concern about the volume of signage on Village property should the ordinance be
97 waived. Mr. Kerin and Ms. Thibeault agreed. Mr. Tyler expressed sympathy about the request to waive
98 the ordinance, but also recognized the challenges with rights-of-way and safety concerns. The Trustees
99 agreed not to waive the political sign ordinance.

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101 **d. Discussion and possible approval of charter for merger of Village of Essex Junction and Town of**
102 **Essex**

103 Mr. Duggan provided an overview of the latest edits to the merger charter that were made by the Town
104 Selectboard at their meeting on September 21, 2020. Mr. Teich noted that the Town is still waiting to hear
105 from the State on the 3+3 charter change that is currently up for consideration by the legislature. He also
106 noted several areas still under discussion and pending legal opinion, including governance, time period
107 for phase-in, ordinances and how they are approved, and the process of resolving current differences
108 between Village and Town ordinances. The Trustees reviewed the approved edits from the Selectboard.

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110 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, DAN KERIN seconded, to approve the above-discussed merger charter.**
111 **The motion passed 5-0.**

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113 **e. Discussion and possible approval to warn Special Village meeting on November 3**

114 The Trustees reviewed the proposed questions that would be placed on the November 3 ballot, including
115 asking the Village if it approved the plan to merge with the Town of Essex and asking the Village if it should
116 adopt its budget by Australian ballot.

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118 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, that the Trustees warn a special**
119 **Village Meeting for November 3, 2020, for approval of merger plan and adoption of Australian ballot**
120 **and warn public hearings on October 13 and October 27. The motion passed 5-0.**

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122 **f. Discussion and possible approval to warn public hearings regarding the merger charter**

123 This item was discussed as part of Business Item 5e.

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125 **g. Discussion and possible approval of sending ballots to all active voters for November 3 election**

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127 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve sending ballots to**
128 **all active voters for the November 3, 2020 election. The motion passed 5-0.**

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130 **h. Discussion and possible approval of merger information materials**

131 Mr. Tyler reviewed a PowerPoint, which walks through the details and timeline of the merger. He said the
132 presentation was put together as a response to requests for more information on the merger. He also
133 reviewed a detailed "question and answer" document pertaining to the merger. He anticipates posting
134 the material on the merger website. He further provided an update on a merger video, which would be 4
135 minutes long and feature scenes of Essex Junction with a voiceover reading a script, and which would be
136 posted to YouTube with links posted to Facebook, Front Porch Forum, and the website.

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138 Mr. Tyler also suggested using the Village Facebook page to ask the public what information they would
139 like to know about the merger. Mr. Brown agreed that Facebook is a good resource and also suggested
140 utilizing Front Porch Forum for similar information-gathering.

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142 Trustees will submit feedback to Mr. Tyler by the end of the day on September 25, and staff will review
143 any new content to ensure that it is accurate.

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Ms. Wrenner suggested incorporating additional perspectives from residents of the Town Outside the Village to the materials in order to make them more objective.

i. Consider updating mission statement of Village of Essex Junction

Mr. Duggan introduced this item, which came up at a prior Trustee discussion about creating a Policy on Raising of Flags and Painting of Murals on Town of Essex/Village of Essex Junction Property. Mr. Chawla suggested taking time at a later date to thoughtfully update the mission statement, with ample community input, to reference some of Essex’s Heart & Soul values. Mr. Brown suggested revisiting the mission statement in the spring of 2021.

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, to table the discussion on updating the mission statement of the Village of Essex Junction until an unspecified future meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

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

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, to table the discussion on a policy on raising flags and painting of murals until an unspecified future meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

k. Approval to accept \$20,000 records digitization grant (was Consent Agenda Item 6a**)**

Mr. Chawla asked if Essex would be engaging an additional commercial entity to conduct this work. Ms. Macy replied that these grant funds are intended to fund ongoing work with an already-engaged vendor.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees authorize staff to accept the Act 137 Digitization of Land Records Grant for the Village. The motion passed 5-0.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the Consent Agenda:

- a. ~~Approval to accept \$20,000 records digitization grant (**now Business Item 5k**)~~**
- b. Approve grant application and match funding for LED Beacon light at Lincoln/Central crosswalk**
- c. Approve minutes: September 8, 2020**
- d. Check Warrant #17216—9/11/20; #17217—9/18/20**

The motion passed 5-0.

7. READING FILE:

- a. Email from Jean Mongeon re: Lavoie Drive speed bump/table**
- b. Email from Dawn Hill-Fleury re: Village vote:** Mr. Brown requested that Trustee members assist with ballot mailing if they are available on October 7.
- c. Memo from Greg Duggan and Ron Hoague re: Ordinances in regards to merger of Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction**
- d. Upcoming meeting schedule**

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. *An executive session is not anticipated**

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9. ADJOURN:

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:03 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt
Recording Secretary

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2020

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

DRAFT