

**VILLAGE TRUSTEES  
(DRAFT)**

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES  
MEETING MINUTES  
October 13, 2020**

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

**ADMINISTRATION and STAFF:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Ron Hoague, Police Chief; Jim Jutras, Water Quality Superintendent; Sarah Macy, Finance Director/Assistant Manager.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jay Blanchard; Bruce Brown; Alexander Caron; Marcus Certa; Diane Clemens; Annie Cooper; Jennifer Coulter; Patty Davis; Brian Donohue; Joe Dowd; Lucy Drummond; Jeff Frolik; Lloyd Gates; Roy Gates; Chris Hollis; Sam Hooker; Christopher Kenny; Sean Maloney; Russ Mills; Lynda Ossola; Noreen Pellcheck; Roseanne Prestipino; Ken Signorello; Gibson Smith; Mike Sullivan; Irene Wrenner; Dave \_\_\_\_; EJ Resident08; John\_\_\_\_; Michelle \_\_\_\_; Phyllis\_\_\_\_; PHW; Robin \_\_\_\_.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

Mr. Teich requested the addition of the Merger Public Hearing PowerPoint presentation as a handout for item 4a (Public hearing to consider the Plan for Merger of the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction, Vermont); and a document from Chief Hoague for item 6a (Discussion with Essex Police Chief about traffic enforcement, police staffing, and other police department priorities).

**3. APPROVE AGENDA**

**RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, to approve the agenda. The motion passed 5-0.**

**4. PUBLIC HEARING**

**a. Public Hearing to consider the Plan for Merger of the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction, Vermont dated September 28, 2020 and the proposed Charter for the merged communities.**

Mr. Brown provided an overview of the Essex merger plan while presenting a slideshow. He discussed the history of collaboration between the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction from 2013-2020. He explained the most recent years' concerted efforts to identify and answer all financial and legal questions about merger, in order to make a recommendation for how to proceed with a new municipal charter for a merged community. He talked about key challenges for creating a unified charter, including integrating budgets and devising a model for representation. He said the merger proposal would equalize Town and Village taxes, but not all at once. He explained the two transitional periods outlined in the Charter. The first 5 years, in the Village's proposed merger charter, would establish a 7-member elected board; reorganize departments, building codes, municipal plans, policies, etc.; and establish a special Voting Wards Commission. Over the first 12 years, the Village would pay off its residual debt and taxes would gradually equalize between the Town and Village. Mr. Brown provided an overview of the merger plan's recommended phased-in tax reconciliation process, and the mechanisms that would allow this, as established in the proposed charter. Mr. Brown provided information about the merger charter's voting wards and the Village merger charter's proposal of a 7-member elected board. He also talked about other important features of the merger plan

53 including Australian Ballot voting; annual meeting schedule; the name of the new community  
54 (Essex); and that water/sewer rates would not be affected by merger. He talked about how the  
55 votes for the question can be cast, what would happen if the Village votes against the merger  
56 and how to find out more information.  
57

58 Mr. Teich clarified that the ballots were sent separately; one is for the merger and the other is  
59 for the election. Ms. Clemens said that the polling place for Village residents is at Essex High  
60 School. She explained that masks are required on school premises and people who arrive with  
61 no masks on must stay outside of the school to vote.  
62

63 There were no comments from the public, so Mr. Brown closed the public hearing at 6:50 PM.  
64

65 **5. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

66 a. **Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda**

67 There were no comments from the public at this time.  
68

69 **6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

70 a. **Discussion with Essex Police Chief about traffic enforcement, police staffing, and other  
71 police department priorities**

72 Chief Hoague presented information about traffic enforcement, which he described as a crash  
73 reduction and life-saving effort. He talked about numbers of crashes, tickets, and warnings over  
74 the past years. He presented a 5-year comparison of Village and Town traffic-related incidents  
75 and addressed the public misperception of low traffic enforcement in Essex. He said the  
76 department has been sharing traffic enforcement for over a year, but on October 5, a new  
77 officer was hired to be assigned solely to traffic enforcement. Chief Hoague said the highest  
78 number of public complaints called in are about traffic.  
79

80 The Trustees discussed traffic enforcement with Chief Hoague. Mr. Brown requested  
81 clarification of whether a person is issued a traffic ticket or a warning, at a stop. Chief Hoague  
82 said this decision is up to the discretion of the officer. Mr. Brown asked for racial information on  
83 traffic stops. Mr. Kerin said people should keep in mind that documented race data is based on  
84 an officer's perception of the race. Chief Hoague said in recent years, officers received more  
85 training on how to collect and enter this data. Mr. Tyler talked about speeding traffic on Maple  
86 Street and wondered if visuals could be used to slow drivers. Chief Hoague explained how  
87 engineering, enforcement, and education all play a role. Mr. Chawla brought up traffic issues on  
88 Susie Wilson Road, which he said are improving. He said the Bike/Walk Committee often  
89 discusses the need for different engineering in that location to promote safety for bikers and  
90 pedestrians. He asked for numbers on how many of the reported road accidents involved  
91 pedestrians or bikes. Chief Hoague agreed to provide this number.  
92

93 Chief Hoague provided an overview of officer hiring at the police station. He said they are  
94 budgeted for 32 officers and currently 27 officers are on staff. He said two of the vacancies are  
95 frozen due to COVID restrictions, and two people are currently in the Police Academy,  
96 expected to begin training in March. Chief Hoague explained the 11-12 month hiring process  
97 for officer candidates. The process includes multiple interviews, a polygraph test, health test,  
98 three months with the Police Academy, an academy test and four months of shadowing officers  
99 on the job. Upon successful completion of all of these steps an officer may begin working  
100 independently.  
101

102 Ms. Cooper expressed concerns about traffic on Maple Street. She described people crossing  
103 the double line to pass, instead of waiting. Chief Hoague said signs were placed to help  
104 address this. He described the large fine and license violation points for this type of driving

105 infraction. Ms. Cooper expressed concern for people who use the crosswalk from 81 Main  
106 Street toward Five Corners. Chief Hoague talked about the realities of drivers not recognizing  
107 cross walks but that blinking lights are expensive and need to be justified by rate of use.  
108

109 **b. Consideration of and possible action to modify wastewater facility capital fund to add**  
110 **replacement blower core**

111 Mr. Jutras spoke with the Trustees about his request to modify the Wastewater Treatment  
112 Facility Capital Plan for the purchase of a new aeration blower core replacement under a one-  
113 time special offer. He said the wastewater facility aeration blower core, purchased in 2014, has  
114 since become obsolete and can no longer be maintained. The manufacturer's one-time, highly-  
115 discounted price offer for the replacement is available to Essex until December 31. Mr. Jutras  
116 said this piece of equipment is responsible for about 40% of the facility's operation.  
117

118 The Trustees discussed the costs and savings associated with the price. Mr. Jutras explained  
119 his request for the full amount of the purchase, \$55,000, which includes the cost of the part,  
120 installation, and shipping and handling. \$25,000 would be credited back to the Village. Ms.  
121 Macy confirmed that there are sufficient funds in the Wastewater Treatment Facility Capital  
122 Reserves for this purchase. Although Tri-Town utilization communities contribute to the  
123 Wastewater capital reserves, decisions to utilize the funds are made by the Trustees. Mr.  
124 Jutras expressed no concern with the manufacturer of this purchase and talked about the  
125 importance of investing in the facility's lifecycle expenses with the most financially viable  
126 options.  
127

128 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees approve the**  
129 **Wastewater Facility Capital Fund be modified to add a replacement blower core not to**  
130 **exceed a net cost to the Village of \$30,000.**

131 Mr. Jutras confirmed he will not move forward with the purchase without the expected discount.  
132 **The motion passed 5-0.**  
133

134 **c. Consideration of and possible action to enter professional services agreement and**  
135 **apply for grants for Densmore Drive and Brickyard culverts**

136 Mr. Jutras discussed the issue of whether to move forward with two culvert replacements in the  
137 capital plan: 1) Densmore Drive upstream from the culvert that failed in the Halloween storm; 2)  
138 Brickyard Road east of the Densmore Drive intersection. He said the engineering evaluation for  
139 FEMA, from the Halloween storm washout, included major upstream culverts as part of the  
140 overall hydraulic analysis. The analysis found that the marginally-sized culverts are in early  
141 stage failure. He said it makes sense for all of these projects to be considered as the same  
142 project. He requested permission from the Trustees to apply for a Municipal Highway  
143 Stormwater Mitigation Grant, with the Engineering company Hoyle, Tanner & Associates. He  
144 also requested approval from the Trustees to allow this company to follow the culvert projects  
145 to completion, because they already provided engineering with financing toward the project,  
146 with the Densmore Drive culvert replacement. Ms. Macy pointed out that this project ranked 40  
147 points higher than any other capital project. Ms. Thibeault said the Capital Review Committee  
148 decided not to split the project because it was originally planned as one full project and would  
149 remain as a top priority. She said this request will make minimal impact on the Capital Plan and  
150 timeline. Mr. Tyler expressed concerns about the entire area and described the work as a  
151 massive engineering accomplishment. He wondered if this would become a problem again in  
152 ten years. Mr. Jutras said pipeline assessment protocols are followed so culverts will last and  
153 he gave an example of the Mansfield culvert, replaced ten years ago and still functioning.  
154

155 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the Trustees**  
156 **authorize the Unified Manager to sign the agreements for professional services with Hoyle,**  
157 **Tanner & Associates and approve staff to apply for grants to offset capital costs. The**  
158 **motion passed 5-0.**  
159

160 **d. Discussion about Out and About event**

161 Mr. Teich presented an update on the Out and About event planned for October 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. He  
162 said state grants of \$10,000 to the Town of Essex and \$10,000 to the Village were awarded to  
163 infuse money into local businesses. He said \$15 shopping vouchers are available for the event, on  
164 a first-come, first-serve basis, limited to one per Essex household, with verification of residence,  
165 and redeemable at specific Essex businesses. Mr. Teich said the event would be family-friendly,  
166 socially-distanced, and would include entertainment. He said staff hopes to hold this event annually.  
167 The Trustees talked about hopes that there will be high numbers of residents at the event and  
168 discussed the methods being used for voucher distribution.  
169

170 Ms. Wrenner suggested a table in a central location be set up to hand out vouchers.  
171

172 **e. Discussion of public outreach for merger plan and vote**

173 Mr. Teich introduced the issue of whether the Trustees would plan any more public outreach efforts  
174 about the November vote on a proposed merger between the Village of Essex Junction and the  
175 Town of Essex. He said the cost is not to exceed \$8,000, and the Trustees could use the remaining  
176 \$2,000 for something else. The Trustees were in agreement to not spend the remaining funds on  
177 new outreach efforts. Mr. Tyler suggested the Trustees have a booth at the Out and About event to  
178 conduct outreach. Mr. Kerin revisited the discussion about the Out and About event, wondering how  
179 vouchers are not given multiple times to the same household.  
180

181 Ms. Cooper said she was volunteering at the Out and About event. She said many of the event  
182 strategies were carried over from an earlier, similar Essex event. She said the undertaking is very  
183 impressive and professional, with a designed logo; a Facebook page; a vendor page; strong inter-  
184 department collaboration; and care being taken with vouchers so they may not be duplicated or  
185 given multiple times to a household.  
186

187 **7. CONSENT ITEMS**  
188

189 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the Trustees**  
190 **approve the Consent Agenda:**

- 191 a. Consideration of and possible action on request for banner from Out and About Committee  
192 • To approve a banner for the “Out & About in Essex” event and waive the \$250 banner fee.  
193 b. Consideration of and possible action on request for banner from Essex Rotary  
194 • To approve the request to display the Essential Worker Recognition banner as detailed and  
195 presented by the Essex Rotary Club.  
196 c. Consideration of and possible action to extinguish spring easement provision from 14 Corduroy  
197 Road property deed  
198 d. Approve minutes: September 24, 2020; September 28, 2020 – joint  
199 e. Check Warrants #17218—9/25/20; #17219—10/2/20; #17220—10/9/20  
200

201 **The motion passed 5-0.**  
202

203 **8. READING FILE**

204 **a. Board Member Comments**

- 205 • The Trustees re-invited the public to make any comments on the Merger hearing if they  
206 arrived late to the evening’s meeting. The informational video available on the Village of  
207 Essex Junction’s website was praised.

- 208 b. Statement on newsletter from Andrew Brown  
209 c. Memo from Evan Teich re: COVID-19 update  
210 d. Village Budget Status Report through September 30, 2020  
211 e. Memo from Robin Pierce re: Village Center Development  
212 f. Email from Micah Hagan re: Rapid Flashing Beacon Quote  
213 g. **Memo from Dennis Lutz and Ricky Jones re: Winter Operations Plan for 2020-2021; and**  
214 **Town of Essex / Village of Essex Junction Public Works Winter Operations Plan with COVID**  
215 **19 Impacts**
- Mr. Brown suggested residents and Trustees carefully read this memo and remember that Public Works' winter operators are first responders. He said the report suggests staff tend to work when sick and asked Mr. Teich about this. Mr. Teich talked about the drivers' sense of duty and the challenge of rescheduling routes when someone is sick.
- 220 a. Chittenden County RPC September Newsletter  
221 b. Upcoming meeting schedule  
222

223 **9. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 224 a. **\*An executive session is not anticipated**  
225 No executive session took place.  
226

227 **10. ADJOURN**  
228

229 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, for the Trustees to adjourn.**  
230 **The motion passed 5-0 at 8:25 PM.**  
231

232 Respectfully Submitted,  
233 Cathy Ainsworth  
234 Recording Secretary  
235