

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES  
TOWN OF ESEX SELECTBOARD  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
October 20, 2020**

**SELECTBOARD:** Elaine Haney, Chair; Patrick Murray, Vice Chair; Vince Franco, Clerk; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Andrew Watts.

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

**TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION:** Dustin Bruso, Chair; Josh Knox, Vice Chair; John Alden (alternate); Tom Furland; David Raphael; John Schumacher.

**VILLAGE PLANNING COMMISSION:** John Alden, Vice Chair; Phil Batalion; Patrick Scheld.

**VILLAGE ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT:** Tom Weaver, Chair; Martin Hughes.

**TOWN ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT:** Tracy Delphia, Chair; Mike Plageman, Vice Chair; Nick Martin; Hubert Norton.

**ADMINISTRATION and STAFF:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager, Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Terry Haas, Village Assistant Zoning Administrator; Sharon Kelley, Town Zoning Administrator; Owiso Makuku, Interim Town Community Development Director; Robin Pierce, Village Community Development Director; Darren Schibler, Town Planner; Deana Stoneback, Administrative Assistant.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Annie Cooper; Patty Davis; Erin Dickinson; Russ Mills; Ken Signorello; Margaret S; Mariah Sanderson; Mike Thorne; Irene Wrenner.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

Elaine Haney called the meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:31 PM.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

No changes at this time.

**3. AGENDA APPROVAL**

No approval needed as the agenda was not amended.

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

**a. Comments from public on items not on agenda**

No comments at this time.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Introductions**

Members of the Village Trustees, Town Selectboard, Village Planning Commission, Town Planning Commission, Village Zoning Board of Adjustment, Town Zoning Board of Adjustment, and staff were introduced.

51 **b. Presentation and discussion of merger, proposed charters, and relevant impacts to**  
52 **Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards of Adjustment, and existing plans, codes, and**  
53 **regulations**  
54

55 Ms. Haney noted that the goal of bringing these boards together is to discuss the proposed  
56 Selectboard and Trustee versions of the charters for merging the Town of Essex and Village of  
57 Essex Junction, outline their differences, and discuss their implications for planning and  
58 development. She noted that the charters were relatively similar and outlined the differences.  
59

60 Mr. Alden noted his role on the Thoughtful Growth in Action Committee and his term on the  
61 Planning Commissions, saying that he does not have concerns about the proposed charters and  
62 that they are consistent with what the Thoughtful Growth Committee had discussed for planning  
63 and zoning. He said that merging the Planning Commissions and Zoning Boards makes sense in  
64 a merger of the Town and Village.  
65

66 Mr. Bruso suggested that the Town and Village could designate all current commissioners as  
67 either members or alternates, citing concern that the Town and Village could lose a substantial  
68 knowledge base by excluding potential members or alternates.  
69

70 Mr. Norton said the Town and Village must maintain their own Development Review Boards until  
71 they have a unified set of regulations. Ms. Haney said that both Land Development Codes will be  
72 merged if merger occurs. Mr. Tyler clarified that the Thoughtful Growth in Action Committee did  
73 not consider a merger but considered consolidation of planning and zoning between two  
74 communities.  
75

76 Ms. Delphia spoke in favor of having a defined term for the board member seats. She added that  
77 the integration of the Town and Village Comprehensive Plans will be a heavy lift, should merger  
78 occur. Ms. Haney clarified that terms would not be eliminated, but that the charter would be silent  
79 on term length. Ms. Delphia said that a specified term length in the governing document is helpful  
80 for planning purposes. Mr. Duggan further clarified that state statute allows for Planning  
81 Commission terms to range from 1 to 4 years and that the term could be specified in a policy.  
82

83 Mr. Plageman and Mr. Scheld echoed Mr. Bruso's suggestion to designate all current  
84 commissioners as members or alternates to preserve that institutional knowledge. Community  
85 Development Director Pierce agreed.  
86

87 Town Planner Schibler asked about the definition of "qualified voter" in the charter language as a  
88 requirement of serving on a board or commission. He noted that state statute requires a majority  
89 of the Planning Commission be residents of the community.  
90

91 **c. Discussion of how to reconcile two community centers**

92 George Tyler walked through a presentation focused on comparing the center of the Village with  
93 the center of the Town. He noted that the Village's center is more traditionally walkable,  
94 developed, and connected by sidewalks, while the Town center is largely hemmed in by state  
95 highways and is more of a suburban center. He noted that development in each poses its own  
96 unique set of challenges and issues. He spoke about the current development projects in the  
97 Village, such as the Design Five Corners project, and spoke about redevelopment projects in  
98 other large cities, such as South Burlington, Burlington and Rutland. He walked through an  
99 example of what a consolidated Essex Community Development/Planning office could look like.  
100

101 Ms. Haney reassured Mr. Tyler that the momentum around development projects in the Village  
102 would not be lost should a merger occur. She pointed out that the Village leadership has  
103 experience with more urban development in the Village center but does not have experience with  
104 rural development that occurs in the Town. She emphasized the importance of not putting  
105 limitations on future boards, which will be responsible for doing the work laid forth in the charters  
106 being developed.

107  
108 Ms. Delphia said that many of the questions in Mr. Tyler's presentation can be answered by  
109 reviewing the entity's Comprehensive Plan. She also stressed the need for a joint Comprehensive  
110 Plan as important merger materials, which should be the guiding document for strategy around  
111 planning and development.

112  
113 **d. Discussion of how to reconcile different approaches to community development**

114 This item was discussed in business items above.

115  
116 **e. Discussion of continued political and financial investment in redeveloping the Village  
117 Center**

118 This item was discussed in business items above.

119  
120 **f. Discussion of other planning and zoning topics not yet considered**

121 This item was discussed in business items above.

122  
123 **g. Comments from public**

124 Annie Cooper said that residents and board members should trust the community to make sure  
125 that it carries on its traditions and culture and identity through the merger, should one occur.

126  
127 Patty Davis said that learning about the Comprehensive Plan was illuminating, and that the Town  
128 and Village comprehensive plans should be used as guiding documents as the Village and Town  
129 Outside the Village move forward.

130  
131 Irene Wrenner requested that the boards have an even number of seats, to show respect for the  
132 voters' preferences for wanting an even-numbered Selectboard.

133  
134 **h. Discussion of possible changes to draft charter**

135 Unified Manager Teich noted that boards should have an odd number, since they will be  
136 appointed.

137  
138 Ms. Haney noted a potential change in charter language to modify the "qualified voters"  
139 requirement and potentially include language that allows for non-voting residents and actual non-  
140 residents be able to serve on boards in order to align with state statute.

141  
142 **i. Discussion of next steps**

143 Mr. Tyler suggested holding another forum like this in the middle of January.

144  
145 Ms. Delphia suggested having an annual meeting between the Town Selectboard, Zoning Board  
146 of Adjustment, and Planning Commission, and a similar annual meeting for the Village boards, to  
147 have in-person communication and goal-setting about planning priorities. Mr. Chawla suggested  
148 adding the Housing Commission to these meetings. Director Makuku suggested coordinating  
149 meetings between board chairs on a regular basis to ensure that communication points are  
150 established.

151

**TRUSTEES & SELECTBOARD  
(DRAFT)**

**October 20, 2020**

152 Mr. Tyler noted that a second public hearing on the Trustees' proposed merger charter will occur  
153 next week.

154  
155 Ms. Haney noted that listening sessions about the Selectboard version of the merger charter will  
156 occur on November 2 and 16 and that the Selectboard will use its first December meeting to vote  
157 on whether to put the charter on the ballot in March. She noted that the Town and Village versions  
158 will both be sent to the legislature for approval, if approved by voters.

159  
160 **6. READING FILE:**

161 **a. Board member comments:** Mr. Martin suggested a presentation from the Town's  
162 perspective similar to the Village center development presentation. Director Makuku  
163 noted that the Essex Town Center proposed plan will be presented to the Selectboard  
164 in December. Mr. Plageman thanked the Selectboard, Trustees, and staff for  
165 organizing and facilitating the meeting.

166 **b. Upcoming meeting schedule**

167  
168 **7. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

169 **a. \*An executive session is not anticipated**

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171 **8. ADJOURN:**

172 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, and VINCE FRANCO seconded, that the Selectboard**  
173 **adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:49 PM.**

174  
175 **DAN KERIN made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Trustees adjourn the**  
176 **meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:49 PM.**

177  
178 Respectfully Submitted,  
179 Amy Coonradt  
180 Recording Secretary

181  
182 Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020

183  
184 **(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)**  
185  
186