

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
December 28, 2020**

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

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager.

OTHERS PRESENT: Alyssa Black, Alex Caron, Thomas Chittenden, Annie Cooper, Karen Dolan, Betsy Dunn, Dylan Giambatista, Lori Houghton, Adam Kavanaugh, Ethan Lawrence, Ginny Lyons, Linda Myers, Lynn Powers, Keshia Ram, Marybeth Redmond, Ken Signorello, Margaret Smith, Tanya Vyhovsky, Irene Wrenner, Lorraine Zaloom, Sharon Zukowski.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Elaine Haney called the meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Mr. Duggan requested to pull items C-E (regarding traffic ordinances) from the agenda since clarity is still needed in terms of process and management moving forward. He said that staff will work on providing additional information to the Joint Board prior to the discussion of these items.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, and VINCE FRANCO seconded, to remove items 5c-e from agenda.

Motion withdrawn.

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, and VINCE FRANCO seconded, to remove item 5d from the agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

VINCE FRANCO made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, to swap the order of items 5f and 5g on the agenda.

VOTING (by roll): Andy Watts – nay, Dawn Hill-Fleury – nay, Vince Franco – aye, Patrick Murray – aye, Elaine Haney – aye. The motion passed 3-2.

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, to remove Item 5d and swap items 5f and 5g on the agenda. The motion passed 4-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from public on items not on agenda

No comments at this time.

52 **5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

53 **a. Presentation of resolution of appreciation to Linda Myers**

54 Ms. Haney introduced Linda Myers, noting that she has been the Town of Essex Selectboard
55 chair, a Selectboard member, and a state representative for many years. She said that the
56 Selectboard has drafted a resolution of appreciation for her longtime services. Mr. Franco read
57 the resolution into the record:

58 *WHEREAS, Linda K. Myers has concluded her meritorious service as a Representative of the*
59 *Town of Essex (Chittenden-8-1) to the Vermont House of Representatives; and*

60 *WHEREAS, Linda has served the people of Essex in the Vermont Legislature as a state*
61 *representative since 2002; and,*

62 *WHEREAS, Linda, as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, worked tirelessly*
63 *with her Committee to meet the budgetary and economic challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic*
64 *on the State of Vermont; and*

65 *WHEREAS, Linda, in her role as Vice-Chair of the House Corrections and Institutions*
66 *Committee, played a vigorous and vital role in rebuilding Vermont's infrastructure following the*
67 *devastation of Tropical Storm Irene; and,*

68 *WHEREAS, Linda also served on the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules and the*
69 *Special Committee on School Construction; and,*

70 *WHEREAS, Linda served on the Town of Essex Selectboard for 13 years from August 2001*
71 *to March 2014 and as its Chair from August 2010 through March 2014; and,*

72 *WHEREAS, Linda's service to Essex started long before taking elected office; and,*

73 *WHEREAS, Linda guided the Essex High School cheerleading team to four state*
74 *championships and two second place finishes in six years as coach; and,*

75 *WHEREAS, Linda was active in teaching religious education at the Holy Family parish in Essex*
76 *Junction; and,*

77 *WHEREAS, Linda served as a community journalist and editor for the Essex Reporter for*
78 *nearly two decades;*

79 *NOW THEREFORE BE IT: RESOLVED, that the Selectboard and Board of Trustees, on behalf*
80 *of the citizens of the Town of Essex, hereby extend our gratitude to Linda K. Myers on behalf*
81 *of her many years of service to the people of Essex. Adopted this 28th day of December 2020.*
82

83 The boards expressed appreciation for Ms. Myers. Lori Houghton, Mary Beth Redmond, Ginny
84 Lyons, Kesha Ram, and Tanya Vyhovsky all spoke about Ms. Myers' work and expressed their
85 appreciation for her, thanked her for her years of service, and wished her luck in the future.

86
87 Ms. Myers thanked everyone for their kind words and the resolution.

88
89 Irene Wrenner raised a point of order noting that there was no opportunity for public input prior to
90 a vote on this resolution.

91
92 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, and VINCE FRANCO seconded, to approve the**
93 **resolution as written. The motion passed 5-0.**

94
95 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, to approve the**
96 **resolution as written. The motion passed 5-0.**

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98 **b. Discussion with Essex delegation about Vermont legislative issues**

99 Introductions:

100 Representative Redmond, Representative Vyhovsky, Representative Houghton, Representative
101 Black, Representative Giambatista, Representative Dolan, Senator Lyons, Senator Chittenden,
102 and Senator Ram all introduced themselves as the legislative delegation of either Essex or
103 Chittenden County to the state legislature.

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(DRAFT)**

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104
105 Andrew Brown introduced the item, thanking the delegation for their flexibility with municipalities
106 during COVID-19 and the State of Emergency, and asked them for their initial thoughts for this
107 upcoming legislative biennium.
108

109 Senator Lyons first noted a bill that the Government Operations Committee in the Senate has
110 been working on, which would allow Selectboards to move their Town Meetings--should that need
111 arise and would allow the use of paper ballots. She also noted a bill dealing with the increased
112 selling prices of residential properties as more out-of-state buyers come into the market and how
113 that could impact assessed valuation, saying that the bill would try to ensure that residential taxes
114 don't skyrocket.
115

116 Mr. Watts asked about whether the bill allowing flexibility to different Town Meeting dates would
117 apply to those towns that have specific Town Meeting dates called out in their charter. Senator
118 Lyons replied that she believes that is part of the discussion around the bill.
119

120 Representative Redmond spoke about her work in human services and the legislature's work to:
121 allocate Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) from the federal government to different areas of the
122 state; develop report-back requirements on how the funds were used; and whether they were
123 used effectively. She noted that funding was put towards: food security; increased mental health
124 resources; and rental assistance. She said that part of the next package would look at addressing
125 increased opioid overdoses, and assistance with childcare.
126

127 Representative Houghton spoke about her work on the House Health Care Committee, saying
128 they are focused on the impacts of COVID-19 and how the relief funds distributed throughout the
129 state can help ensure that the health system is stable through the duration of the pandemic. She
130 also said that they will be looking to address: issues with mental health; workforce shortages; and
131 healthcare disparities among different populations.
132

133 Senator Lyons noted that the legislature will spend the first year of the session looking at COVID-
134 19-related issues including: federal funding; economic issues; a nursing workforce bill; and the
135 vaccination process.
136

137 Mr. Murray asked about the postponed weighting study and talked about changes to the Common
138 Level of Appraisal (CLA), and how both of those could greatly impact tax rates in Essex.
139 Representative Giambatista said that there is a lot of complexity around making broad and quick
140 changes to weights for tax rate calculation, and that there is interest in evaluating that weight
141 application and more equitably funding educational opportunities in the state.
142

143 Mr. Watts noted a bill passed by the Senate on self-rule and asked for legislators' comments on
144 it. He asked about the status on both a citizen-initiated charter change in Essex that went to the
145 House Government Operations Committee and wasn't acted on, as well as a second charter
146 charge to make charter language more gender-neutral Senator Lyons said that the self-rule bill
147 would allow areas of statute to be eliminated for pilot municipalities, and that it went to the House
148 in 2019. Representative Houghton said that the self-rule bill has been controversial in the House
149 and that she will look into its status. Representative Redmond said that she is working to
150 reintroduce a draft of the citizen-initiated charter change bill back into the House Government
151 Operations Committee. She added that the Town must vote on the merger and then it will be sent
152 down to the State House for representatives to work up a bill to go through the legislative process.
153 Senator Lyons said that charter changes traditionally started in the House and then come to the
154 Senate where they are passed.

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156 Board members spoke about other general concerns and topics of interest. Mr. Murray brought
157 up the importance of arts funding and COVID-19's impact on that industry and asked that this be
158 considered when legislators work on the allocation process for additional COVID-19 relief funds.
159

160 Ms. Haney brought up waiving requirements of Act 250 in downtowns and village centers, which
161 would give businesses a way to expand or move into downtowns without the added expenses of
162 Act 250 requirements. She said that towns like Essex have the capacity to conduct studies and
163 issue permits related to Act 250 requirements and that asking developers to also conduct their
164 own studies is duplicative. Senator Lyons agreed with that point, saying that many towns in
165 Chittenden County have that capacity.
166

167 Mr. Watts voiced some concerns about the new cannabis legislation including: cannabis retail
168 establishments; the licensing fee structure; and the proposed cannabis control board's lack of
169 municipal representation. Ms. Haney said that municipal representation on that board is not
170 provided for in the legislation. Mr. Chawla also voiced concern about the ability of the community
171 to address zoning issues related to cannabis retail, since the Village is a walking district with
172 schools in close proximity to where retailers may want to establish locations. Senator Lyons said
173 that these are important points for legislators to be aware of, that there is a strong prevention
174 component to the cannabis retail legislation, and that there will be opportunities during public
175 hearings for Vermonters to weigh in on the rules. She added that the Vermont League of Cities
176 and Towns is very engaged on the cannabis resolution.
177

178 Mr. Murray spoke about the racial justice work conducted by the Essex community and said that
179 Essex was fortunate to be able to fund that work itself. He asked that legislators please consider
180 creating programs or funding for programs to allow for community-wide introspection on policing
181 and the community. Representative Vyhovsky said she has been in touch with the Racial Justice
182 Alliance about how to bring forward concerns and issues at the state level. Mr. Watts added that
183 the Essex Community Justice Center has funding concerns, and said that it would be important
184 to provide more support for these types of organizations throughout the state. Senator Lyons said
185 that the pandemic has exacerbated social disparity issues and that the Senate Health and Welfare
186 Committee discusses this frequently. She said it is helpful to hear these types of comments when
187 the legislature parses the federal guidelines for the use of the next round of funding. She said that
188 building racial equity across the state is extremely important.
189

190 Mr. Brown requested that the legislature not level-fund organizations and budgets, especially
191 given the lack of Cost of Living Allowances (COLA) increases. Representative Redmond agreed,
192 saying that community organizations and the social safety net are consistently level-funded and
193 that the legislature will need to figure out how to increase funding even with a lack of revenue.
194

195 Mr. Kerin mentioned some difficulties in Chittenden County around traffic and roadway
196 improvements and asked about any legislation moving forward around these issues.
197 Representative Redmond said that the next federal stimulus package will allocate funding for
198 transportation issues such as infrastructure. She also said that there is a transportation
199 modernization bill in the works to: electrify public buses; create better public transit systems; and
200 provide assistance for low- and-middle-income individuals to purchase hybrid and electric
201 vehicles. Mr. Franco suggested a tax credit for teleworking. Mr. Watts added that this undertaking
202 would address many of the issues around meeting the carbon-emission requirements.
203

204 Andrew Brown and Elaine Haney thanked the legislative delegation for their time and attention.
205

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206 c. **Discussion of potential revisions to Title 7, Motor Vehicles, Traffic and Parking of the**
207 **Town of Essex Municipal Ordinance (Selectboard) and Title 8, Motor Vehicles, Traffic**
208 **and Parking, Village of Essex Junction Municipal Code (Trustees)**
209

210 **ANDY WATTS made a motion, and DAWN HILL-FLEURY seconded, that the Selectboard**
211 **authorize staff to adjust the language of the Title 7, Motor Vehicles, Traffic, and Parking of**
212 **the Town of Essex Municipal Ordinance to modify the speed limit on Sand Hill Road in the**
213 **area around Founders Road to be 25 mph and to warn a public hearing for January 11th.**
214 **The motion passed 5-0.**
215

216 d. **Adopt revisions to Title 8, Motor Vehicles, Traffic and Parking, Village of Essex**
217 **Junction Municipal Code (Trustees only)**

218 This item was removed from the agenda.

219 e. **Passage of revisions to Title 7, Motor Vehicles, Traffic and Parking of the Town of Essex**
220 **Municipal Ordinance, and warn public hearing (Selectboard only)**

221 This item was removed from the agenda.

222 f. **Approve holding of annual meetings by Australian ballot (Selectboard only)**

223 Greg Duggan introduced this item, saying that the State has given municipalities the ability to hold
224 town meetings by Australian ballot and that the voters had already elected to do that in November
225 for the budget vote. The request is for the Selectboard to approve having Town meetings by ballot
226 in 2021, in order to communicate it to voters.
227

228 Mr. Watts said it made sense to do this for Town Meeting but is unsure about committing to it for
229 all meetings. Mr. Duggan replied that he'd be comfortable if the Board wants to authorize the
230 annual meeting in March being held by Australian ballot. Mr. Murray agreed with Mr. Watts.
231

232 **ANDY WATTS made a motion, and DAWN HILL-FLEURY seconded, that the Selectboard**
233 **vote to hold the Annual Meeting during 2021 entirely by Australian ballot. The motion**
234 **passed 5-0.**
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236 g. ***Discuss the evaluation of a public official**
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238 **VINCE FRANCO made a motion, and PATRICK MURRAY seconded, that the Selectboard**
239 **and Trustees enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public employee**
240 **in accordance with 1 VSA Section 313(a)(3) and to include Human Resources Director**
241 **Travis Sabataso.**
242

243 **VOTING (by roll): Andy Watts – nay, Dawn Hill-Fleury – nay, Vince Franco – aye, Patrick**
244 **Murray – aye, Elaine Haney – aye. The motion passed 3-2.**
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246 **DAN KERIN made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, that the Selectboard and**
247 **Trustees enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public employee in**
248 **accordance with 1 VSA Section 313(a)(3) and to include Human Resources Director Travis**
249 **Sabataso. The motion passed 4-0.**
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251 The Selectboard and Trustees entered into executive session at 8:25 PM.
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253 The Selectboard and Trustees exited executive session at 8:43 PM.
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6. READING FILE:

- a. **Board member comments:** Ms. Haney asked the Selectboard to review their budget packet and materials prior to the daylong budget meeting on January 4th.
- b. **Memo from Susan McNamara Hill re: 2021 Candidate Information**
- c. **Upcoming meeting schedule**

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. ***An executive session is anticipated to discuss the evaluation of a public official**

8. ADJOURN:

DAN KERIN made a motion, and **Amber** seconded, that the Trustees adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0 at 8:44 PM.

VINCE FRANCO made a motion, and **PATRICK MURRAY** seconded, that the Selectboard adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt
Recording Secretary

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2021

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

