

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
January 26, 2021

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

**ADMINISTRATION and STAFF:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager; Sarah Macy, Finance Director; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director; Travis Sabataso, Human Resources Director.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Roseanne Prestipino, Sara Stultz, Mike Thorne, 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**

Unified Manager Teich noted additional agenda items: 5e. Discussion of a real estate matter; 6c. Approve temporary COVID-19 Emergency Leave Policy; and 8a. An executive session is anticipated to discuss 5e. He also noted additional handouts for agenda items: 5f. Memo from Evan Teich re: Executive Session for a real estate matter; and 6c. Memo and attachment from Travis Sabataso, HR Director.

**3. AGENDA APPROVAL**

**DAN KERIN made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, to amend the agenda as proposed. The motion passed 5-0.**

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

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

None at this time.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Discussion and possible action to place on the annual meeting ballot the extension of the Economic Development tax:**

Finance Director Macy introduced this item, which is to gauge whether to place a question on the Annual Meeting ballot regarding an extension to the Economic Development Tax. Mr. Brown noted that the memo details the impacts of merger on the tax and how it would be handled. He said that there had been interest in continuing this tax at a prior Trustees meeting and suggested asking voters to extend the tax for three years, which would carry it through the transitional governing board period and into the first year of a merged entity.

George Tyler added that the Village would still need to find additional funding for upgrading amenities in the Village core, such as the Crescent Connector project. Raj Chawla added that other upgrades include improving pedestrian access and facilities for cyclists as the population and businesses in Essex continue to grow.

Amber Thibeault expressed support for the three-year proposal.

Mr. Tyler confirmed that the taxing mechanism would change if merger were to occur and that this tax would not be put on the Town's tax rate. He said that if the Village no longer has a separate general fund,

48 this tax would cease and the money that is in the Economic Development Fund would be used for those  
49 specific development activities.

50  
51 Mr. Chawla asked if this would only be attached to the General Fund, not any remaining taxes for the  
52 sidewalk and capital districts. Mr. Teich replied that those districts will be activated upon merging.

53  
54 There was no public comment.

55  
56 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, that the Trustees place a question on the**  
57 **2021 Annual Meeting ballot asking voters to extend the Economic Development tax for a period of three**  
58 **years. The motion passed 5-0.**

59  
60 **b. Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Workshop and Schedule—Sarah Macy**  
61 Ms. Macy began the workshop by providing an overview of the budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. She noted  
62 that the budget being presented is for General Fund only. She said that currently the budget total is \$5.6  
63 million, which is approximately a 5% increase over the prior fiscal year. She noted that the estimated tax  
64 rate is ¼ of a penny over FY2021 using average grand list growth, which would be a \$7 increase on the  
65 average property year-over-year. She said that an increased stipend for Trustees, the Zoning Board of  
66 Adjustment, and the Planning Commission have been discussed, and that the Village Attorney has said  
67 that any increase in Trustee stipend must be its own article on the ballot. She also noted that an additional  
68 \$62,774 has been allocated to the building fund on top of an existing increase, which means that two  
69 priority projects (on the Brownell Library roof and Lincoln Hall electrical configuration) can both be worked  
70 on in FY2022. She finally noted that the Village has the flexibility to warn two public hearings on the budget  
71 instead of one, if they choose.

72  
73 Mr. Brown confirmed that all board stipends be funded at a full level and will be more “opt out” rather  
74 than “opt in”; and that the amount for Trustees is \$1,000. Ms. Macy made these adjustments to the  
75 budget, which brought totals to a 5.1% increase, or a \$9.80 increase on the average property.

76  
77 The Trustees discussed whether to hold two public hearings on the budget or one and discussed dates for  
78 said hearings.

79  
80 Irene Wrenner asked if the increase from \$7 to \$9.80 on the average property would impact the merger  
81 estimate numbers given previously. Sarah replied in the affirmative, saying that they would start with  
82 \$67,500 tax levy change year over year and that this increase would be about \$11,300 more than that.  
83 She said that since the tax levy is being increased in phases, there would be a small but noticeable impact.

84  
85 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, to warn a public hearing on the Fiscal Year**  
86 **2022 general fund budget for Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and a second public hearing on the Fiscal Year**  
87 **2022 general fund budget for Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. The motion passed 5-0.**

88  
89 **c. Consider approval to hold Village meetings by Australian ballot**  
90 Mr. Teich said that Act 162 as passed by the Vermont legislature allows municipalities to hold annual  
91 meetings entirely by Australian ballot. He noted that the Trustees had previously approved holding the  
92 budget vote by Australian ballot, but would need to make a similar decision about its Annual Meeting. He  
93 said that staff are recommending action to approve holding an annual meeting by Australian ballot.

94

95 Mr. Brown asked about holding special meetings by Australian ballot, noting that no special meetings are  
96 currently warned, but that they could be called-for in future. Mr. Teich replied that there may be one  
97 special meeting needed around cannabis legislation later in the year and that the Village can make a  
98 decision around Australian ballot for special meetings as they arise.  
99

100 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, to hold the 2021 Annual Meeting entirely**  
101 **by Australian ballot. The motion passed 5-0.**

102  
103 **d. Discussion and possible action re: clock on Village kiosk at Railroad and Main**

104 Mr. Teich noted that the bulletin board at Railroad and Main has been vandalized and that the clock is  
105 missing. He asked if the clock should be replaced or if something should be put in its place. Mr. Teich  
106 suggested replacing it with either the year of establishment for the Village, the logo for the Village, a  
107 digital clock with thermometer display, or an artistic metal art piece. Staff will research what is feasible  
108 and report back to the Trustees at a future meeting.  
109

110 **6. CONSENT ITEMS**

111 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, that the Trustees approve the**  
112 **Consent Agenda:**

- 113 a. **Approve minutes: January 12, 2021**
- 114 b. **Check Warrants #17234—1/15/21; #17235—1/22/21**
- 115 c. **Approve Temporary COVID-19 Emergency Leave Policy**

116  
117 **The motion passed 5-0.**

118  
119 **7. READING FILE:**

- 120 a. **Board member comments:** Evan said that staff are looking into vaccinations for seniors and  
121 are asking the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) whether the currently closed senior  
122 center could be a vaccination site. He also said that staff are looking into whether AmeriCorps  
123 members could be asked to help seniors make appointments for vaccinations, since they need  
124 to be made online.
- 125 b. **Unemployment update:** Andrew said that Vermont's unemployment numbers are  
126 rebounding and are improving.
- 127 c. **Village Annual Meetings/Elections Preparation Schedule:** Mr. Teich noted that two Trustees  
128 (Mr. Brown and Ms. Thibeault) have terms expiring soon.
- 129 d. **Memo and attachment from Susan McNamara-Hill re: 2021 Candidate Information**
- 130 e. **Final version of Essex Plan of Merger and Charter as approved by Selectboard on 1/11/21**
- 131 f. **Memo and proposal from Dennis Lutz re: CCRPC/UPWP**
- 132 g. **Upcoming meeting schedule**

133 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

- 134 a. **To discuss a real estate matter**

135  
136 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, that the Trustees enter into executive**  
137 **session for the purpose of negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options, pursuant to**  
138 **1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2), to include the Unified Manager, Village Engineer, Village Attorney, and Community**  
139 **Development Director. The motion passed 5-0 at 7:44 PM.**

140  
141 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, to exit executive session. The motion**  
142 **passed 5-0 at 7:54 PM.**

143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157

**9. ADJOURN:**

**ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 7:54 PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Coonradt  
Recording Secretary

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021

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

DRAFT