



VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
 INFORMATIONAL MEETING FOR  
 INFORMATIONAL HEARING AGENDA

April 7: Online  
 Essex Junction, VT 05452  
 April 13: Essex High School  
 2 Educational Drive

E-mail: [manager@essexjunction.org](mailto:manager@essexjunction.org)

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Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, **this meeting will be held remotely**. Available options to watch or join the meeting:

- **WATCH:** The meeting will be live-streamed on [Town Meeting TV](#).
- **JOIN ONLINE:** Join via Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/95576633602?pwd=VFN4YWhYSUJhvb3dNQ0N0T3lNeU5tZz09>
- **JOIN CALLING:** (646) 558-8656 US (New York) Meeting ID: 955 7663 3602, Passcode: 538553
- **MODERATOR:** All instructions for conduct of the hearing will be guided by the Moderator.  
 If you have difficulty accessing the hearing, please call (802) 878-1341 or email [manager@essex.org](mailto:manager@essex.org).

**Informational Hearing**  
**Wednesday, April 7, 2021**


1. **CALL TO ORDER** [7:00 PM]
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
3. **NATIONAL ANTHEM**
4. **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENT** regarding different format for 2021 Village Annual Meeting
5. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 1:** Shall the voters approve an annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$5,641,278 for fiscal year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, \$3,745,866 of which is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?
6. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 2:** Shall the Village authorize the transfer of the remaining balance in the Land Acquisition Fund, estimated balance to be approximately \$82,700 to the Economic Development Fund to be used for downtown development.
7. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 3:** Shall the voters approve extending the one cent Capital Improvement tax (also known as Economic Development tax), as established in 2016, to be reconsidered at annual meeting in 2024.
8. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 4:** Shall the annual stipend for the position of a Trustee of the Village Board of Trustees be raised from \$500 to \$1,000?
9. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 5:** Shall the voters approve holding the 2022 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 6, 2022 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 to vote for the Village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot?
10. **ANNOUNCEMENT AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 6:** By a non-binding resolution, shall the Essex Junction Board of Trustees be advised to draft a charter to create the independent City of Essex Junction, for consideration by the Village of Essex Junction voters no later than November 2021, should efforts seeking a vote for reconsideration on the issue of merger fail. We advise that the charter shall not include any union municipal districts, interlocal contracts, special tax districts or other relationships within the Town of Essex for the provision of Village Government services. The only exception may be for the consideration of police services.
11. **ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ARTICLE 7:** To elect Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one-year term); two Village Trustees (2 three-year terms); one Library Trustee (five-year term)?
12. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
13. **ADJOURN**

**Annual Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 13, 2021**

[7:00 AM]

The legal voters of the Village of Essex Junction are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Essex Community Educational Center on Educational Drive in the Village of Essex Junction on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 to transact the following business by Australian ballot. Said voting by Australian ballot to begin at 7:00 AM and close at 7:00 PM.

This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the Trustees, like all programs and activities of the Village of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Unified Manager's office at 878-6951.

Certification: 04/02/2021   
 Date Posted Initials

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
INFORMATIONAL HEARING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY APRIL 7, 2021**

**VILLAGE TRUSTEES:** Andrew Brown, Village President; George Tyler, Vice President; Rajan Chawla; Dan Kerin; Amber Thibeault

**ADMINISTRATION and STAFF:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager; Wendy Hysko, Brownell Library Director; Rick Jones, Public Works Superintendent; James Jutras, Water Quality Superintendent; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Karen Lemnah, Assessor; Brad Luck, Essex Junction Recreation & Parks Director; Sarah Macy, Finance Director; Linda Mahns, Administrative Assistant; Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Alice Allen; Joel Baird; Jonathan Breen; Joe Breuer; Jennifer Catella; Diane Clemens; Annie Cooper; Erna D; Jeff Deslauriers; Tracey Delphia; Rep. Karen Dolan; Roy Gates; Maureen Gillard; Rep. Lori Houghton; Wendy Hysco; Joan MacKenzie; Scott Moore; Mike Czaplicke; Mike Resa; Saramichelle Stultz; Mike Sullivan; Andy Suntup; Linda Suntup; Ann Wadsworth; Andy Watts; Jess Wisloski; Irene Wrenner; George; iPhone; Ken; Ken's iPhone; Roy5

**MODERATOR:** Steve Eustis

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Eustis introduced himself as the meeting's moderator. He called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Eustis invited the assemblage to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. NATIONAL ANTHEM**

The National Anthem was performed by Emma Blatt.

**4. WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENT**

Mr. Brown introduced all staff in attendance, members of the Board of Trustees and distinguished guests. Mr. Eustis explained how the 2021 Village Annual Meeting would differ from previous years and requested civility and respect throughout.

**5. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 1:**

Mr. Eustis read Article I at 7:08 PM: Shall the voters approve an annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$5,641,278 for fiscal year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, \$3,745,866 of which is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?

Mr. Brown presented information about Article 1. He described the budget as status quo, constructed to continue current services. He talked about the rolling stock funds, which moved to department budgets, and funds for buildings maintenance. He stated the budget reflects stable costs for staff. Mr. Brown provided a summary of the general fund. He said contributing Factors for the 5.1% increase in the general fund were salaries and benefits; capital transfer; restoration and maintenance of buildings; board stipends; professional services; salary study; paving; salt costs and a net decrease. He talked about the reasons behind increasing stipends for the Trustees, and committee members. He said the increases will help people overcome barriers to participating and incentivize the opportunity for people who have historically been marginalized to serve on committees and boards. Mr. Brown said the estimated tax impact of

54 the budget will bring the tax rate to 0.97%, resulting in the estimated tax increase to a \$280,000  
55 property of \$8.96. Mr. Brown provided an overview of where Village resident tax dollars go by  
56 percentage to Village services, Town services and the School budget. He shared examples of  
57 how capital funds are planned to be spent in the upcoming year on the completion of the  
58 Densmore Drive Culvert replacement and road reconstruction; a truck purchase; playground  
59 equipment purchase; a manhole repair and conservation efforts.  
60

61 Mr. Eustis opened public discussion of Article 1. There were no comments from the public at  
62 this time.  
63

64 **6. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 2**

65 Mr. Eustis read Article 2 at 7:18 PM: Shall the Village authorize the transfer of the remaining  
66 balance in the Land Acquisition Fund, estimated balance to be approximately \$82,700, to the  
67 Economic Development Fund to be used for downtown development?  
68

69 Mr. Tyler provided overview of the land acquisition fund. He said it was originally created to  
70 accumulate money to purchase property in the Village center as a downtown revitalization  
71 strategy. He said \$300,000 was used for capital expenses and the remainder was left  
72 accumulating interest. Mr. Tyler said it would be appropriate for voters to choose to transfer the  
73 fund's \$82,700, balance to the Economic Development fund because it is for similar purposes.  
74

75 **7. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 3**

76 Mr. Eustis read Article 3 at 7:21 PM: Shall the voters approve extending the one cent Capital  
77 Improvement tax (also known as Economic Development tax), as established in 2016, to be  
78 reconsidered at annual meeting in 2024.  
79

80 Mr. Tyler presented information about Article 3. He said the Economic Development fund, also  
81 known as the penny on the tax rate, generates about \$120,000 per year. He said the fund was  
82 set up for three years, with a requirement that, after the third year, voters would be asked to  
83 approve the continuation of the tax. He described the fund a good investment into the  
84 downtown. He said int 2021, it was used to purchase space near the Firebird Café, where a  
85 park can be built. He showed an artist rendering of potential use for the park. He said the fund  
86 also helped pay for Open and Outside event costs; small improvements at Village center; and  
87 to purchase 33 public parking spaces in a parking garage being constructed.  
88

89 Mr. Eustis opened public discussion of Article 2. There were no comments from the public at  
90 this time.  
91

92 **8. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 4**

93 Mr. Eustis read Article 4 at 7:26 PM: Shall the annual stipend for the position of a Trustee of the  
94 Village Board of Trustees be raised from \$500 to \$1,000?  
95

96 Ms. Thibeault provided information about Article 4. She said the stipend increase for Trustees  
97 is intended to help diversify participation on the Board. She showed how the increase from  
98 \$500 to \$1000 equates to a per meeting payment of \$18, and she described how it would make  
99 the stipends equitable, as compared to Essex, Colchester, and Burlington. Ms. Thibeault talked  
100 about additional stipend increases, for those who serve on various other committees in the  
101 Village, to \$50 per meeting per person. She said this was intended to help people cover  
102 expenses that may result from attending meetings.  
103

104 Rep. Dolen said she appreciates the Trustees asking for reasonable compensation in an effort  
105 to bring new voices to the table. She talked about how stipends can make a difference in  
106 people's ability to participate.  
107

108 **9. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 5**

109 Mr. Eustis read Article 5 at 7:31 PM: Shall the voters approve holding the 2022 Annual Meeting  
110 on Wednesday, April 6, 2022 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot  
111 and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 to vote for the Village officers and transact any  
112 business involving voting by Australian ballot?  
113

114 **10. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 6**

115 Mr. Eustis read Article 6 at 7:32 PM: By a non-binding resolution, shall the Essex Junction  
116 Board of Trustees be advised to draft a charter to create the independent City of Essex  
117 Junction, for consideration by the Village of Essex Junction voters no later than November  
118 2021, should efforts seeking a vote for reconsideration on the issue of merger fail. We advise  
119 that the charter shall not include any union municipal districts, interlocal contracts, special tax  
120 districts or other relationships within the Town of Essex for the provision of Village Government  
121 services. The only exception may be for the consideration of police services.  
122

123 Mr. Kerin explained that Article 6 is being asked because 5% of the Village voters signed a  
124 petition to find a direction for moving forward, if the merger revote does not pass. He said the  
125 petitioners are hoping for a charter that separates the Village from the Town. He clarified that if  
126 a vote on Article 6 passes and a charter is created, any charter changes need approval from  
127 the legislature. Mr. Kerin said the Trustees are planning to develop an advisory board to  
128 consider options if the merger revote fails. He said he believes that merger would make Essex  
129 stronger but, if it fails, the communities will find a way to move forward amicably.  
130

131 Mr. Eustis opened public discussion of Article 6.  
132

133 Rep. Houghton thanked the Trustees for their fast response to the petition and for their  
134 leadership on this issue.  
135

136 Mr. Sullivan thanked the Trustees for the hard work involved with the merger issue and  
137 commended everyone involved in the effort.  
138

139 Mr. Deslauriers asked what the benefits would be if the Village were to become its own,  
140 independent city. Mr. Kerin said that taxing would change so Village residents would no longer  
141 also pay taxes to Essex Town. He explained that the Town outside the Village grew services in  
142 recreation, fire and more over time, and the Village helps pay for these, even though there are  
143 redundancies. He talked about how the conclusion or IBM's machinery equipment tax resulted  
144 in increased taxes transferred to the Village, which began some of the tax equity discussions.  
145

146 Mr. Czaplicke asked for clarification on what services the Village taxes to the Town pay for. Mr.  
147 Brown said the taxes go toward everything in town government, which includes some  
148 duplicative services. Mr. Kerin explained that, when the Village originally was formed within the  
149 Town, it established services that the Town did not need or want. He said the Town outside the  
150 Village grew, over 150 years, to a point where they wanted similar services. He said the Village  
151 is an incorporated municipality within the Town, which is why the taxpayers have to pay for  
152 both. Mr. Tyler added that, under state statute, an incorporated village must exist inside a town,  
153 and must continue to pay taxes to the town, but the town is not required to pay for services into  
154 the incorporated village. He said that many other Town and Village arrangements in Vermont  
155 have found equitable status quo ways to deal with the structure, but when the Town outside the  
156 Village grew the Essex municipalities did not find a status quo.  
157

158 Mr. Sullivan asked if the Town could hold a second revote if the merger revote on April 13  
159 passes. Mr. Brown explained that a second revote cannot take place because a question can  
160 only be asked of voters one more time during a year and this revote constitutes as that.  
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**11. ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ARTICLE 7**

Mr. Eustis read Article 7 at 7:54 PM: To elect Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one year term); two Village Trustees (2 three-year terms); one Library Trustee (five-year term)?

Mr. Eustis explained that polls at the Highschool would be open on Tuesday April 13 from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM but people could instead choose to mail-in or drop off ballots at the Town office until April 12. Ms. McNamera-Hill said ballots must be received by the end of polls on Tuesday.

Mike Sullivan suggested that people should consider taking their ballots to the Town offices or polling location instead of mailing them, due to the short window of time left.

Mr. Teich explained that when a ballot is mailed locally, it will go to a poll mailing center in a different part of the state before coming back to Essex. Ms. McNamera-Hill thanked the US Postal Service workers for their hard work.

Rep. Dolan thanked staff for their experience and work to conduct an effective vote.

**12. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

Mr. Tyler stated there is false information circulating claiming he is the sole writer of the proposed plan of merger charter being voted on. He clarified that the process was all-inclusive of Trustees, Selectboard members and Legal Counsel.

Mr. Chawla presented an overview of VT Act 164, which will regulate the production and sale of cannabis. He said municipalities can opt-out of cannabis sales, but not production. He talked about the types of licenses that will become available and explained the legislature's timeline for discussions and license development. Mr. Chawla said that communities will need to opt-in if they want to be able to allow retail sales but they could then control the locations of cannabis sales through zoning. He invited the public to attend Village Planning Commission and Trustee meetings to be part of this discussion. He said towns will be able to issue Cannabis sale licenses to establishments but incorporated villages cannot. Mr. Teich said that, once elections are over, this topic will be prioritized and Community Development Directors are conducting outreach on the topic. Mr. Duggan said a combined effort will include appointments from the Trustees, Police Department and Economic Development Commission to address the issue.

Mr. Brown provided an update on the Crescent Connector. He showed a map of Pearl, Lincoln Park, Maple, and Main streets which illustrated the road to be established. He said federal funds will be used to link streets and bypass train tracks to improve travel from Essex to Williston. He said plans include increased public parking; improved property development; better opportunities for walk and bike transportation; and traffic diversion away from the Village center. He said this year's first phase of the project will replace train crossing intersections to improve driving, including establishing rail guards. Mr. Brown said that the second phase of the project, next year, will establish the road. Mr. Tyler thanked the Village attorney, engineer, and Community Development Director for their efforts on this major rebuild.

Mr. Sullivan wondered whether the train crossings could be established as quiet crossings where horns are not blown. Mr. Teich said that Central Railroad may consider this in the future but were not ready to consider addressing the federal rail administration guidelines for quiet crossings with the Crescent Connector project.

Mr. Sullivan requested that the Police Chief address the issue of people on high speed motorbikes at 2:00 AM in the Town and Village.

215 Mr. Brown expressed gratitude to the community over this pandemic year, for coming together  
216 to help each other and share acts of kindness.  
217

218 **13. ADJOURN**

219 Mr. Eustis adjourned the meeting at 8:23 PM.  
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221  
222 Respectfully Submitted,  
223 Cathy Ainsworth  
224 Recording Secretary  
225  
226