

1
2
3 **VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION**
4 **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
5 **MINUTES OF MEETING**
6 **July 13, 2021**

7 **TRUSTEES PRESENT:** Andrew Brown, President; Raj Chawla, Vice President; Dan Kerin, Amber
8 Thibeault; George Tyler

9 **ADMINISTRATION:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Rick Hamlin, Professional Engineer; Wendy
10 Hysko, Brownell Library Director; Brad Luck, Director, Essex Junction
11 Recreation and Parks; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Nicole Mone-
12 St.Marthe, Program Director, Senior Services; Ally Vile, Director, Essex
13 Parks and Recreation; Tom Yandow, Facilities Manager.

14 **OTHERS PRESENT:** Bridget Downey-Meyer, John Gebo, Sara Gebo. Pauline Giancola, Elaine
15 Haney, Kathleen Kanz, Deb McAdoo, Nick Meyer, Paula Sargent, Ken
16 Signorello, Gabrielle Smith, Mike Sullivan, Jess Wislowski, Irene Wrenner,
17 Ann Wadsworth, Cindy.

18
19 **1. CALL TO ORDER**

20 Andrew Brown called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

21
22 **2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

23 Mr. Tyler requested adding the letter from Peter Firkey from the reading file to Business Item 5a for a
24 brief discussion.

25
26 **3. APPROVE AGENDA**

27
28 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, to approve and adopt the**
29 **agenda as amended. The motion passed 5-0.**

30
31 **4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

32 None at this time.

33
34 **5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

35 a. *Work Session on Essex Junction Independence Initiative

36 Mr. Luck began the work session by noting the topics for the work session, which will include a
37 discussion of contract options for services, police department contract and goals, what the Village's
38 strategy will be should anything fail in terms of votes, an update on Our Village Our Voices, a
39 discussion of the summit concept and scheduling, and then further discussion about contracts with the
40 Town.

41
42 Mr. Brown said that this is the opportunity for the community to bring information and concerns forward
43 about the topics noted above. He opened the discussion up for public comment. There was no public
44 comment.

45
46 Mr. Luck began by reviewing the contract options as they start to explore contracting with the Town for
47 police services and other considerations. He reminded the Trustees that they'd talked about interlocal
48 contracts, intermunicipal districts, and intermunicipal service agreements as the three mechanisms for
49 sharing these services. He asked if Trustees had a preferred approach.

50
51 Mr. Brown said that he'd wanted to talk about this because he received a request for clarification about
52 sharing, and wanted to clarify that it means contracting through the union municipal district or

53 intermunicipal contract. He said that it needs to be clearly spelled out and articulated between the
54 Essex Junction entity and the other municipality.

55
56 Mr. Luck then asked whether they wanted to discuss general goals of the police department contract.
57 He asked about what the most important components for developing a long-term contract with the
58 Town of Essex for police services should be. Mr. Tyler said it would be disruptive to just replace the
59 police services. For a sense of security, he expressed preference for a solid contract and emphasized
60 the importance of stability. Mr. Brown noted that this would encompass not just services related to law
61 enforcement, but also dispatch services and the community justice center, which are integral to the
62 success of the City. He also noted that the Essex Junction entity would also help to maintain the police
63 facility, since its funding helped to build it. He said that in terms of oversight, it would depend on
64 whether they settle on a contract or a union municipal district. He said that he thinks they are headed
65 in the direction of an interlocal contract for police services in the short term, with the potential to study
66 the feasibility of a union municipal district in future.

67
68 Mr. Tyler added that a union municipal district or any action that requires a vote would present a
69 complicating wrinkle, since voting on a separation charter and then voting on a police-sharing contract
70 might be too many votes at one time. He said that the most predictable route would be to establish a
71 contract and then potentially engage the Selectboard in future to explore the union municipal district
72 option.

73
74 Mr. Chawla asked whether joint oversight is possible with an interlocal contract and emphasized the
75 importance of including the police chief in the process. Mr. Luck replied that an interlocal contract can
76 have an advisory group for oversight and the contract can also establish the expectation to explore
77 further oversight in future. Mr. Brown said that a concern about oversight came up about a year ago
78 when the Village ended up leading a virtual meeting related to receiving feedback from the community
79 about policing and equity. He said it will be important to ensure that Essex Junction as a municipality
80 has some level of control over the services that it is paying for. He also briefly noted the budget and
81 funding for police services, saying that he would like a stable, formulaic approach, such as relying on
82 the grant list, rather than a fee-for-service approach. Mr. Tyler said that the breakdown of the budget
83 should be based on the grand list. Mr. Teich advised to look at methods that are stable and general, in
84 terms of determining cost. Mr. Tyler spoke about the Tri-Town agreement for water, which could
85 potentially be a model. Mr. Kerin said it will be important to take into account the higher-cost events,
86 like the Champlain Valley Fair, and that basing cost on the grant list seems like the fairest way to do it.

87
88 Mr. Chawla asked about ordinances and how they could still be aligned, if possible. Mr. Brown replied
89 that it'd be good to explore that further. He also said it'd be interesting to see whether there are public
90 safety grants that apply to Cities but don't apply to Towns. Mr. Teich said that any grants or money
91 received from the federal government should be examined as a component of the financial streams.

92
93 Mr. Luck then began the discussion of strategies, should this initiative fail to pass on the ballot. He
94 said that if it fails by vote in November, that could be addressed in April, but that if it fails in the
95 legislature, it would need to come back and then go through another vote and then return to the
96 legislature again. He said that if it fails, the Junction will need to develop its FY24 budget in addition to
97 the FY23 budget. He referenced feedback from consolidated department heads, who feel caught in
98 the middle. Mr. Brown said that strategies and approaches depend on where in the process the
99 initiative fails. He said that if it fails in November, they should determine why it failed, and if separation
100 isn't the desired solution, the Junction should explore a different path. He said that if fails at the
101 legislature, they may be able to propose an alternative resolution and return to the legislature the
102 following year. Ms. Ladd noted that the legislature might not give a justification for not approving a

103 charter change. Mr. Chawla said that in the meantime, the Junction should continue the work on tax
104 equity. He said that an overwhelmingly positive vote on separation would send a strong signal to the
105 legislature. Mr. Tyler said that he doesn't want to see the Village or Town lose valuable staff because
106 of uncertainty around this issue. He said he doesn't anticipate a big loss of jobs at the Village or Town
107 happening as a result of separation. Mr. Teich recommended discussing tax equity, as it will still be an
108 issue should this independence initiative fail. He emphasized the importance of the two boards
109 maintaining a positive, constructive relationship between them.

110
111 Ms. Haney provided an update on Our Village Our Voices, saying that they are working on
112 communicating with residents and having them learn about separation. She noted work around
113 several sets of FAQs that have been worked on and posted to the OVOV website. She also noted
114 planned events in the community coming up. She noted that some residents have asked questions
115 around what the cons are for the Village if they separate, how things will be different, what the new
116 name of the Village would be, and also noted confusion about the relationship between Town and
117 Village around costs and taxes. She thanked Mr. Tyler for his work on the FAQs.

118
119 Mr. Brown said that there is a Village summit proposed for September 11th, and wondered if smaller,
120 neighborhood-style events would be helpful. Ms. Haney agreed that that is a good approach and that
121 people are generally more willing to talk in smaller groups or less formal settings. She suggested that
122 there is outreach that can occur door-to-door and that maybe a Trustee presence would be helpful.
123 She also suggested doing neighborhood walking tours. She said that she will plan on moving forward
124 with scheduling community events.

125
126 Mr. Luck asked whether the Village wants to do a large summit or smaller events, which would be a
127 culmination of conversations from OVOV, a review of the charter, budget, and organizational chart,
128 and opportunity for residents to ask questions and provide feedback. Mr. Brown said that the smaller
129 groups would allow for more personalized conversation, though it may mean a larger commitment
130 from the Trustees. Mr. Tyler agreed, though a larger summit in the fall may also be good. He
131 suggested making the first public hearing a summit.

132
133 Mr. Tyler noted that a communication from Mr. Firkey recommended that instead of City of Essex
134 Junction, the entity should be called City of Essex (like City of St. Albans and Town of St. Albans), and
135 Mr. Tyler noted that that may cause more confusion at this point. Mr. Brown said that the entity is
136 Essex Junction, and that the junction of the train tracks has been a prominent feature for a long time.
137 Other Trustees concurred.

138
139 Mr. Luck said that he wants to ensure that there's consensus on approach for contracting services
140 between the two municipalities. He provided a summary and timeline of Trustee conversations about
141 contractual relationships with the Selectboard for a number of service areas, including information
142 technology (IT), Police, Finance, Recreation & Parks, Finance, and Clerk/Treasurer services. Trustees
143 noted that there was general consensus on sharing services for different departments but will ask the
144 Selectboard what their preference is for sharing assessing services.

145
146 Mr. Luck asked if other contracts are necessary for the transitional period, or for future state, such as,
147 for example, assets, money, the very specific details of who pays for what, how that is determined,
148 and for how long. The Trustees decided to discuss this more in depth in executive session, since
149 some of the matters pertain to personnel and other sensitive issues.

150
151 b. Presentation from Cathedral Square about Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP)
152 grant

153 Ms. Macy noted that Cathedral Square is looking to take over the Vermont Community Development
154 Program (VCDP) from the partnership, and is looking for authorization to assume the debt of
155 Whitcomb Terrace.

156
157 Ms. Kanz spoke about Cathedral Square, noting that they are a non-profit housing services provider
158 primarily for older adults and people with disabilities. She said that Whitcomb Terrace is a 19 mixed-
159 income unit building with an emphasis on barrier-free living (for people with mobility needs). She noted
160 that this property is in the tax credit period, and the partnership dissolves after 15 years of compliance.
161 She noted that the non-profit sponsor has right of first refusal for the property. She asked for the
162 Trustees' authorization for Cathedral Square to assume the debt, noting that they will continue to run it
163 as affordable housing and meeting the intent of the program. She noted that the transfer would be
164 effective 10/1/21.

165
166 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Trustees authorize**
167 **Cathedral Square Corporation to assume and continue to defer the Village of Essex Junction**
168 **(VCDP) loan of \$260,000 at zero percent interest. The motion passed 5-0.**

169 c. Update on opening for Senior Center, Brownell, and 2 Lincoln St.

170 Ms. Vile provided a summary of the senior center update, saying that the priority was to develop a plan
171 to reopen it in a thoughtful and planned way. She noted that summer programming was planned using
172 Memorial Hall and local parks to allow for proper adherence to social distancing guidelines set by the
173 State. Mr. Brown added that the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL)
174 protocols for social distancing need to be adhered to (100 sq ft per person) and this is why the Village
175 can't accommodate all activities and as many seniors at the same time.

176
177 Mr. Brown opened up the discussion for public comment.

178
179 Bernadine H___ expressed concern about the limited hours for senior programming, noting that many
180 seniors enjoy visiting the senior center later in the afternoon. Ms. Vile noted that the limited hours will
181 be temporary and they are severely limited by staffing capacity. She said that they are relying on
182 municipal space because they are not able to access school spaces. Mr. Tyler said that the Senior
183 Center is at Lincoln Hall and there is no plan to shut it down and that the goal is to eventually restore
184 services at pre-pandemic levels.

185
186 Carol ___ expressed concern that seniors would only be able to have the center available for 15
187 hours a week, when pre-pandemic they could visit it 30 hours per week. Ms. Vile said that these are
188 temporary hours and will continue to open more and more of the senior center as time progresses. Mr.
189 Brown asked for continued patience as this is ironed out.

190
191 Madeleine Arsini expressed concern about the senior center hours being limited, and thanked Ms. Vile
192 for her explanations.

193
194 Pauline Giancola spoke about how valuable the senior center is for her. She asked why there is such
195 a concern to move the seniors to a place where they have adequate square footage when the vast
196 majority of them have been vaccinated, whereas there are no such limits on younger children, many of
197 whom have not yet been vaccinated. Mr. Brown said that children under 12 are not legally allowed to
198 be vaccinated, but the Agency of Education removed all of their social distancing guidelines; however,
199 DAIL still has social distancing requirements for seniors 65 and older. Ms. Giancola emphasized the
200 importance of the senior center as an integral part of the social fabric of Essex Junction.

201

202 Paula Sargent reiterated the importance of the senior center, saying that people in Essex are
203 desperate to socialize with each other. She said the seniors need the support of the community and
204 need to not have the hours of their senior center cut. Mr. Brown acknowledged the hardships suffered
205 by seniors and others during Covid due to social isolation.

206
207 Deb McAdoo asked whether the fairground could be used as a space for seniors to socialize. Mr. Tyler
208 said that the issue seems to be more about the senior center space itself. He said that Essex Junction
209 should remain updated on regulatory changes from the State level regarding social distancing
210 requirements at senior centers.

211
212 Ms. Hysko then provided an update on Brownell Library and its services, saying that they are open for
213 browsing hours four days a week and have appointments and curbside/self-service pickup. She noted
214 that the library has lost three staff members, which is impacting operations. Mr. Brown said one
215 question he has been hearing is about the differing hours between Brownell Library and the Essex
216 Free Library, and why Brownell is not as open as other libraries. Ms. Hysko said that staffing
217 shortages are definitely impacting Brownell. Mr. Teich noted that Essex Junction took an extremely
218 conservative and cautious approach to the pandemic and that the library strove to provide excellent
219 service whenever it has been open. He said the library is taking a measured approach to reopening up
220 to full capacity.

221
222 Jess Wislowski expressed concern that the library is still shut. She noted that other libraries are open
223 for far more hours per week than Brownell Library.

224
225 Mr. Teich provided an update about the Village office at 2 Lincoln Street. He said they are conducting
226 community development by appointment, staff is returning to the building, and that there are office
227 hours for staff in the building. He said that they are installing an intercom system at the back door to
228 be able to let visitors in. He said that residents can still place tax and water bills in the drop box
229 outside.

230
231 d. Consider awarding bid for electrical redistribution project at 2 Lincoln Street and Village Fire
232 Department

233 Mr. Yandow provided a brief summary of the project, saying that it began when CHIPS asked to install
234 an oven at 2 Lincoln Street, and that when he looked into the building's current electrical system, he
235 consulted with an electrical engineer who determined that it needed transformer upgrades. He said
236 that additionally, 2 Lincoln St. and the Fire Department don't have independent electrical meters and
237 share cost. He said that this bid would be for work to bring the electrical service at 2 Lincoln St up to
238 current code and establish an independent meter for the Fire Department.

239 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Trustees authorize the**
240 **Electrical Redistribution Project to move forward this summer with using Pratt & Smith Electric**
241 **with the total bid of \$57,557.00 The motion passed 5-0.**

242 e. Consider accepting petition for traffic calming in the Pleasant Street neighborhood and direct staff
243 to work with the neighborhood on traffic calming measures

244 Mr. Teich said that the residents of Pleasant Street have petitioned to have traffic calming measures
245 put in place on their street. He also noted that Pleasant Street is scheduled for resurfacing from the
246 westernmost edge of East/Pleasant Streets down to Mansfield Street.

247
248 Bridget Downey-Meyer summarized a petition from Pleasant Street residents. She noted that it is more
249 of a letter of request than a petition, and that it asks the Village to develop a process for fielding

requests around safety asks such as this one. She spoke about other municipalities that have traffic calming procedure manuals. She said that the residents of Pleasant Street have been concerned for a while about traffic and speeding on the street, as it is used for a cut-through to bypass the Five Corners Intersection. She noted that the speed tables that were installed have not been as effective as desired, and that the residents are asking for additional traffic calming measures.

Mr. Brown said it is important to think about how the staff could best engage with Village residents to hear and field these types of concerns. Ms. Downey-Meyer suggested engaging Local Motion for assistance with standing up a process. She also elaborated on the definition of traffic calming measures, which are physical treatments that are self-enforcing.

Mr. Hamlin outlined the process by which residents can request traffic calming measures. He said that the first step is requesting a speed study. He noted that the Police Department has already begun monitoring speed on Pleasant Street. He said that once that can be quantified, the next step would allow the installation of a speed table, but that since that is already installed and is insufficient, the next step would be to determine whether the Trustees wish to alter the 2004 policy to address current concerns. Mr. Brown agreed that the policy should be revisited and that the Village should look at examples of traffic calming measures from other municipalities in Vermont as well as examples from other states.

Mr. Chawla suggested that the petitioners attending a Planning Commission meeting because that group is currently updating the Junction's Land Development Code, and that's another area that can be modified to address traffic calming.

Mr. Brown said that the Trustees' bandwidth is low currently, since they are addressing the independence initiative, and that they will likely rely on residents to help craft a revised policy.

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and George Tyler seconded, that the Trustees authorize the Village Engineer to speak with the Pleasant Street neighborhood on this issue. The motion passed 5-0.

Sara Gebo said that as traffic calming measures are implemented, the Village should consider drainage, since the current speed tables pool water and can get very icy and dangerous.

Nick Meyer said that the Village should be open to creative ideas and look at what other municipalities are doing around the state in terms of traffic calming measures. He said that one possibility is bump-outs framed by planters that could be removed seasonally, to accommodate plowing.

Jen Ellis said that with regard to how traffic calming measures could affect snow plows, she believes that snow plows should also be slowed down, as they frequently go quickly through neighborhoods.

f. Amtrak Reopening Celebration

Mr. Teich noted that the Village requested that Senator Leahy put the Essex Junction Amtrak Station on his funding list for the Senate Transportation Bill. He noted that the Amtrak Station has received funding for ADA upgrades for asphalt and bathroom updates inside the station, but that this earmark would be for an additional \$3 million and would allow for multi-modal transportation upgrades at the station.

Mr. Tyler noted that an event will occur on July 19th that will celebrate the reopening of Vermont Amtrak routes to points south. He said that the Congressional delegation will be in attendance, as well

as state representatives and state and federal officials. He said that the Village would like to take the opportunity to highlight the need for accessibility and upgrades to the Amtrak Station. Mr. Brown added that the Congressional delegation will be given a tour of the Village center.

- g. **Discussion of public employee
This topic was discussed in executive session.

6. **CONSENT ITEMS**

- a. Consider adoption of Revisions to General Rules and Personnel Regulations
b. Consider authorizing President and Unified Manager to sign on to any efforts to have American Rescue Plan Act money currently designated for Vermont counties to instead be allocated to cities, towns, and villages.
c. Consider approval to accept allocation of Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funding (CLFRF)
d. Consider approval of adjustment to Fiscal Year 2022 Water Revenue Budget
e. Approve minutes: June 22, 2021
f. Check Warrants: #17257--6/25/21; #17258--7/2/21; #17259—7/9/21

AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.

10. **READING FILE**

- a. Board member comments: Ms. Thibeault commended the Brownell Library on their good work.
b. Email from Travis Sabataso re: Insurance change
c. Email from Evan Einhorn re: Resignation from Housing Commission
d. Email from Andy Champagne re: Packet Notes and Survey
e. Brownell Library staff receives recognition from Vermont Libraries Association
f. Email from Heidi Clark re: Separation
g. Email from Julie Cimonetti re: Sharing of Parks and Recreation – NO
h. Email from Tim Miller re: Sharing of Rec
i. Email from Peter Firkey re: Essex Junction Independence
j. Email from Steve Eustis re: Tree Farm property
k. News from Vermont Rail Council
l. List of strategic planning session priorities with Essex Selectboard
m. Memo from Greg Duggan re: Meeting schedule for joint board meetings
n. Upcoming meeting Schedule

11. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. *An executive session may be needed to discuss negotiation of contracts and agreements with the Town of Essex

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the find that premature general public knowledge regarding the Village’s contracts with the Town of Essex and the future City of Essex Junction would clearly place the Village at a substantial disadvantage, because the Village risks disclosing its negotiation strategy if it discusses the proposed contract terms in public. The motion passed 5-0.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Trustees enter into executive session to discuss contracts with the Town of Essex and the future City of Essex Junction in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(1)(A), to include the Trustees, Assistant Manager, and Essex Junction Recreation & Parks Director. The motion passed 5-0.

347

348

349

350

351

352

353

354

355

356

b. ** An executive session is anticipated to discuss the employment of a public employee.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Village Board of Trustees enter into executive session to discuss the employment of a public employee in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the Unified Manager, Evan Teich, Assistant Manager Marguerite Ladd, and Director of Essex Junction Recreation and Parks Brad Luck. The motion passed 5-0.

12. **ADJOURN**

357

358

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and GEORGE TYLER seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

359

360

361

362

The meeting adjourned at 11: 40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Coonradt