



VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Online & 2 Lincoln St.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Thursday, November 4, 2021
8:30 AM

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This meeting will be held both remotely and in person. Available options to watch or join the meeting:

- **JOIN ONLINE:** [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#). Depending on your browser, you may need to call in for audio (below).
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1. **CALL TO ORDER** [8:30 AM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
 - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Work Session
6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. An executive session is not anticipated
7. **ADJOURN**

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair or President, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the Chair or President. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings, like all programs and activities of the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Unified Manager's office at 878-1341 TTY: 7-1-1 or (800) 253-0191.

Certification: 10/29/2021

TRUSTEE MINUTES

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES BUDGET DAY MINUTES THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2021

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Megan Allison, Youth Librarian; Courtney Bushey, Assistant Finance Director; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Chris Gaboriault, Fire Chief; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager; Wendy Hysko, Library Director; Jim Jutras, Water Quality Superintendent; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Brad Luck, Recreation Director; Susan McNamara-Hill, Town Clerk; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director; Hannah Tracey, Assistant Library Director; Tom Yandow, Buildings Manager

OTHERS PRESENT: Dottie Bergendahl, Irene Wrenner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees to order at 8:30 AM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

No changes, approval not required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Work Session

Overview, Revenues

The proposed FY23 Village General Fund budget is a 13.1% or \$740,137 increase from FY22. The biggest change in this budget is staffing, as the Village is hiring a new manager and assistant manager but will no longer be paying for Town administrative staff. Two part-time positions, one in recreation and another in the library have been requested to be filled as full-time. Ms. Macy informed the Board that she will no longer be serving as the Town or Village Finance Director as of December, and that a transition plan is being developed. Additional funding for stormwater, website updates, traffic control and code enforcement are also included in this proposal. Ms. Macy said that any department specific revenues are reflected in their respective department. She said that staff has been encouraging the development of a local option tax, but that this should not be included in the budget as it may not be approved by the voters.

Debt

Ms. Macy said that the only Village general fund debt is the Capital Improvement Bond. Interest decreases yearly.

Fire

Mr. Gaboriault said that the Department would like to increase the base hourly wage from \$15.50 to \$17.50 and incorporate a three-step system to the pay scale. This is planned to start in the middle of the fiscal year to mitigate costs. The approximate full year cost for this program is \$45,000 and this has been reduced to \$25,000 with a midyear start. This system will reward long-term commitment to the Fire

Department, as well as to help offset the cost of living in the area. Mr. Gaboriault said that call volume has increased since 2020, and the primary driver for this increase is for EMS services. Mr. Gaboriault said that the Fire Department has been able to purchase commercial washing machines as a result of a surplus last year and plans to replace thermal imaging cameras during the current fiscal year. Mr. Brown asked about department morale, and Mr. Gaboriault said that it has been good, and that turnout to calls has been high. The Fire Department has a roster of thirty-three, and some new members have arrived fully trained by other departments. Ms. Macy noted rolling stock transfers in this budget and said that the next planned fire truck replacement is not until 2029. Mr. Gaboriault said that the fire station will need to be replaced soon and said that a study will be required for this purpose. At some point, the department will need full-time staff and have a building that can allow for this.

Library

Ms. Hysko said that increases to the library budget are driven by the move from a .6 FTE in the Tech Services Assistant position to a 1.0 FTE in that role (\$51,000) and an increase from 14 hours/week to 20 hours/week of sub time to help with coverage issues and free staff to do additional programming and assist with safety protocols. The library has also added additional digital subscriptions and will soon offer self-service lockers that will enable community members to pick up materials 24/7. The Overdrive service has been used heavily by the community since the pandemic. The library is back to almost pre-pandemic hours and plans to do collaborative activities with the Teen Center. Ms. Allison said that the library is working to host more programs on Saturdays, as well as inter-generational activities. Ms. Hysko said that, at some point, the library hopes to move toward offering streaming services, but this has proved to be cost-prohibitive. Mr. Tyler said that he is happy to see the outdoor pavilion being used extensively, and Ms. Hysko said a lot of community meetups are happening in this space. Ms. Hysko mentioned some problems that the library has been having regarding the homeless population and said that she is working with the Howard Center and Essex Police to resolve problems. Mr. Chawla asked if there was a need for additional staff training on this issue and said that Howard Center offered training for employers. Ms. Hysko said that this is offered yearly, and that staff was recently training on de-escalation, run/hide/fight, and mental health. The goal is to keep the building as welcoming as possible and to ensure that everyone is expected to follow the rules. Ms. Hysko said that she started working at Brownell in 2009, and that significant safety improvements have been made since then. Ms. Hysko said that asbestos removal and roof replacement are building future needs for the library. Mr. Teich said that it may be possible for ARPA funds to pay for some of these improvements.

Buildings, Capital

This budget covers all the buildings that are owned by the Village, including Lincoln Hall, the parks buildings, the Wastewater Treatment Facility, the Public Works Garage, the library, and parking lots. Mr. Yandow said that repair and maintenance is the biggest factor in this budget. He said that the replacement of the Village Public Works garage is the most pressing issue in the buildings. Mr. Jones said that the size of the building is an issue, as some of the newer vehicles are not able to fit in, which can reduce their efficiency and life expectancy. Maple Street Park will need a roof replacement this year. Mr. Brown said that the Fire Department and Public Works garage both need new buildings, and changes are needed to make Lincoln Hall a center of the community. He said that a study should be done to determine the space needs for the City. The Board will keep this in mind for possible consultant funding in FY24. Ms. Macy said that there are a few areas, such as website redevelopment and code enforcement, that could have money reallocated for this purpose. Mr. Teich said that he has requested that CVE contact the Village first should they wish to sell any of their land. Conversations were also had on reducing the electric costs for municipal buildings. Mr. Teich said that the school district currently has a lease for the Park Street School space and is interested in relocating the program which is in that space. Should this occur, the

Village would like to use this space for childcare. Mr. Teich will follow-up with the school district on this issue. Ms. Macy said that the overall cost increase is \$30,000, and that much of that is due to repair and maintenance. No new Public Works equipment is planned to be purchased in the upcoming fiscal year. Regarding Capital Projects, the Capital Committee has recommended a 15% increase. Mr. Teich said that the new Densmore Drive culvert has been competed, and no problems or flooding have occurred after recent heavy rainstorms.

PW/Water/Sanitation

Ms. Macy said that highway costs are up 5% this year. The highway budget reflects an additional 0.17 FTE from moving the WWTF Admin position from half time to full time. An increase of \$16,000 is included in Traffic Control to reflect the actual costs of line striping. Paving related costs have increased \$31,000. Ms. Macy said that an additional public works employee was originally proposed but is not included in this year's budget. Mr. Jones provided an overview of departmental responsibilities, including mowing, sewer flushing, snow removal, and sewer breaks. The department is still in the process of changing out all water meters. Mr. Jones said that salt prices are similar to last year, and that no shortages are anticipated.

Water/Sanitation

Ms. Macy said that water, sewer, and sanitation pay a percentage of administrative fees. This has gone up as a result of an increase in administrative spending. She said that as part of the FY23 Water Fund budget the operating segment the pass-through water purchased and sold to Global Foundries has been removed. Water usage has not changed substantially. Mr. Teich said that, as the price of water goes up, conservation goes up in tandem. He also said that water loss in water main breaks is something that needs to be calculated. Regarding the Sanitation fund there is a \$71,144 or 12.2% increase. This is almost entirely due to the increase in administration fees. Mr. Jutras said that he would like to see a breakdown on administrative fees, and the specifics of which positions are being covered. He also highlighted problems in IT services at the WWTF and said that failed communications at the pumping station are becoming expensive, as it requires an overtime in-person visit to resolve.

Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF)/Stormwater

The Wastewater Fund is proposed to have an 11.8% or \$262,597 increase. The increase to Village user fees is \$57,673 or 7.4% increase. Administrative fees are the main driver, however and \$11,000 increase is a result of moving from a half time Admin position to a full-time position with full benefits and moving a vacant part time position to full time. Several staff members are retirement eligible, and one has made it known that they plan to retire in the FY23 fiscal year. Chemical prices have also increased, and supply chain issues have caused some delays. The WWTF has been working to resolve additional odor complaints. Mr. Jutras discussed recent activities and developments at the WWTF, as well as studies conducted on best practices and a recent patent application. A line item for matching grant funds has been added to the stormwater budget.

Community Development

Ms. Macy said that the permitting fee structure was revamped last year, and that the development of a Code Enforcement program is budgeted for in FY23. Mr. Pierce shared some potential grant opportunities with the Trustees to highlight the need for the matching grant fund. Mr. Chawla encouraged funding to be including for crosswalk improvements and highlighted in importance of a Village-wide biking plan.

Economic Development

This is level-funded and includes money for community events and the matching grant fund. It also includes contributions to other governmental agencies, such as Essex Rescue and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Teich said that Essex Rescue is requesting a large increase due to their call volume from the Town of Essex. Discussion was had regarding the current funding structure for EMS and other emergency services. Mr. Tyler said that it is possible that Essex Rescue could be expanded in tandem with the Essex Junction Fire Department in the future. The possibility of having a professional fire department and EMS was discussed. Ms. Macy said that the penny on the tax rate was reapproved in April and is anticipated to grow by \$111,983 plus interest earnings during FY22. At Annual Meeting 2021 voters approved the transfer of \$82,555 from the Land Acquisition Fund to the Economic Development Fund. This can be used for any capital improvements, as designated by the Trustees.

EJRP General Fund

Ms. Macy said that the general fund is the only element of the EJRP budget that will be discussed today, and the other funds will be discussed at a later meeting. Mr. Luck said that an additional customer service representative will be added to the FY23 budget, due to the end of colocation with Essex Parks & Recreation. The communications coordinator contract position has been removed, and work has been reallocated to an existing full-time employee. Mr. Luck said that the recreation department does much of its own work that administration and finance handles for other departments. While the department has 23 employees, the majority of these are financed by the enterprise fund. Mr. Luck said that most of the recent increases in staff has been program related, especially in childcare and preschool programming. The program fund does generate revenue; however, it does not pay the entire cost of the department. Regarding Parks, Mr. Luck said that most of the increase is due to personnel and the rising cost of supplies. Mr. Tyler asked if, should negotiations with the Selectboard regarding senior services fail, will EJRP be able to fully provide senior services. Mr. Luck said that he does not think that the current arrangement is working, and that an outside vendor should not be conducting business in a Village owned space. He encouraged the Board to pursue a path where the Trustees have direct control over senior services. Mr. Tyler said that the Board wants to keep the senior center open and available to all seniors, regardless of where they reside.

Finance & Admin

Ms. Macy said that the City will need separate databases to run its own information on, and has budgeted for this transition. Currently, the financial information for both the Village and the Town is on a shared server housed at the Town Offices. She explained the processes used by the Finance Department to allocate money to each municipality. She said that the Village would need to start fresh with account structures, as the historical data will be very difficult to separate. Professional services funds are included in the budget to work towards achieving this. Mr. Brown asked if additional funds would help to expedite this. After some discussion, it was determined that this would not be ideal. Mr. Tyler asked Ms. Macy if it was difficult for her to manage working for two Boards. She said that it was not when the two Boards were working towards the same goal, however it has been difficult since the two communities are moving in different directions. Ms. Macy said that operating a shared finance office is no longer an option. She said that the entire framework of the finance department needs to change, and training needs to occur. Ms. Macy said that, at minimum, each entity needs three full-time employees to run their finances, and that the current proposal includes two full-time equivalents.

Regarding the administration budget, the net increase in personnel costs is \$173,190 which includes hiring a manager, an assistant manager/HR position, eliminating the cost of shared employees with the Town,

and not filling the currently vacant administrative assistant position but assigning those duties to the assistant to the manager position once shared management is terminated. Ms. Macy asked the Board if they agreed with the establishment of these positions, and they answered affirmatively.

General Discussion

Mr. Chawla asked if it made sense to fill both manager positions in FY23, as Essex Junction will not be an independent city at this time. Staff will look into the possibility of funding the interim City Manager as a contract position. The Trustees decided to pause code enforcement work and website updates, and requested more information regarding the need for a new position at the library. Mr. Teich said that any admin or finance position that is not fully funded on July 1 has the advantage of also reducing the water, sewer, and wastewater funds. He also said that an increase to the Capital Fund or paving fund could be cut. Fund balance excess of \$45,000 will be used to offset the increase. The Board also discussed the possibility of using ARPA funds for some governmental services, as well as the penny on the tax rate. More research needs to be done to ensure that these funds are spent in accordance with federal and state guidelines. Mr. Teich said that additional funding may be available through the state via grant funds. Ms. Macy said the Town funds fully or partially funds several different Village departments, such as stormwater, IT, library, and public works. The Village also pays half of the Unified Manager's salary and a portion of the human resources budget for the Town. Mr. Brown noted that, until the City is fully independent, cost savings will not be seen. To save money, the Trustees also discussed reducing the capital fund transfer, delaying maintenance projects, and utilizing additional fund balance. The Trustees will be discussing this budget again at their second meeting in November, as well as subsequent meetings. The Town of Essex will be discussing their budget next week.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. An executive session was not held.

7. ADJOURN

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, for the Trustees to adjourn.

Motion passed 5-0 at 3 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary