

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
 TRUSTEES
 REGULAR MEETING AGENDA
 REVISED

REMOTE ONLY
 Tuesday, February 8, 2022
 6:30 PM

E-mail: manager@essexjunction.org

www.essexjunction.org


Phone: (802) 878-6951

This meeting will be held **REMOTE ONLY**. Available options to watch or join the meeting:

- **WATCH:** the meeting will be live streamed on [Town Meeting TV](#)
- **JOIN ONLINE:** [Join Zoom Meeting](#)
- **JOIN CALLING:** (toll free audio only): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 944 6429 7825; Passcode: 635787

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [6:30 PM]
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. Welcome new Village Finance Director, Jess Morris
 - b. *Interview and possible appointment to Bike/Walk Advisory Committee – Aaron Todd
 - c. Second Budget Workshop including discussion of use of ARPA funds in the operating budget
 - d. Adopt FY21 Budget and Capital Programs
 - e. Consider Warning Budget Public Hearing
 - f. Discuss next steps for City Manager search and hiring committee
 - g. Discuss placing cannabis on the annual meeting ballot
 - h. Update on mask purchase initiative
 - i. Possible adoption of the Declaration of Inclusion
 - j. **Sale of sewer capacity to Town of Williston
 - k. ***Discuss personnel issue
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve minutes: January 25, 2022
 - b. Consider approval of 2022 Certificate of Highway Mileage, including accepting extension of Kiln Road and adoption of Kiln Road Extension as a Village Highway
 - c. Approve Check Warrants: #17287—01/28/2022;
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board member comments
 - b. Memo from Dennis Lutz re: Christmas Tree Pick-up
 - c. Village Annual Meeting schedule
 - d. Village Arbor Day 2022
 - e. Upcoming meeting schedule
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. *An executive session may be necessary to discuss the appointment of a public official
 - b. **An executive session may be necessary to discuss potential contract
 - c. ***An executive session may be necessary to discuss a personnel issue
9. **ADJOURN**

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Certification: 02/04/2022 

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**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 8, 2022**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Wendy Hysko, Library Director/Interim Co-Manager; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Brad Luck, Essex Junction Recreation & Parks Director/Interim Co-Manager; Jess Morris, Finance Director; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Bob Burrows, Kevin Collins, Sarah Macy, Roseanne Prestipino, Ken Signorello, Michael Thorne, Aaron Todd.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Andrew Brown called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None at this time.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

No approval needed as agenda was not modified.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Welcome new Village Finance Director, Jess Morris

The Trustees welcomed Jess Morris as the new Village Finance Director. Introductions were made.

b. *Interview and possible appointment to the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee – Aaron Todd
Mr. Todd spoke about why he is interested in the position and what he hopes to accomplish. He said that he is an active bicycle commuter and was attracted to the walkability of Essex Junction when he moved here. He spoke about the tradition of volunteerism in his family. He said that he is interested in the position on the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee to help keep the Junction bike-and-walk friendly and make improvements where necessary. He said that, for example, lane markings at Five Corners for bicycles would be a helpful improvement.

Ms. Thibeault clarified that Mr. Todd is interested in the three-year term.

DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to appoint Aaron Todd to the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee for a term ending June 30, 2025. The motion passed 5-0.

c. Second Budget Workshop including discussion of use of ARPA funds in the operating budget
Ms. Macy began the presentation, noting that there have been minor changes made to the operating budget since January. She noted that the operation budget includes \$325,000 in ARPA funding to offset the proposed increase in property taxes. She noted that they also removed \$40,000 for the IT contract and reduced funds for manager search by \$10,000. She noted that one outstanding item was how administration fees are charged to the enterprise funds. She said that this was happening because the formula was based on 50% of cost of staff in admin/finance costing centers. She said that in reflecting on that formula, a more reasonable approach for the next several years could be to take

54 the bottom line increase in the GF and trend costs that way. She said that the total operating budget is
55 \$6.3 million, which represents a 11.9% increase over FY22, driven by new staff. She said that the total
56 tax levy is 3.94 million, a 5.2% increase over last FY22, that the estimated tax rate would increase by
57 about 4.8% (\$44.52 over last year's level), and the impact to utility rates as result of the change in fee
58 structure is an increase of 6.3% or \$34.62.

59
60 She asked whether the Trustees want to use additional ARPA funds to offset tax increases more.

61
62 Mr. Tyler asked about rolling stock, noting that prior to last year they had been transferring
63 approximately \$250,000 to the rolling stock fund. He said that last year they instead transferred that to
64 the public works budget, which was then going to be transferred into the Town public works budget for
65 equitable sharing. He asked what will happen to rolling stock in this current budget when the Village
66 becomes a City. He suggested perhaps allocating an addition 50-60,000 in rolling stock, if there is a
67 discussion about ARPA funding. Ms. Macy noted that in the FY23 proposed budget there are no
68 changes to the existing highway or stormwater agreements. She noted \$145,700 in the highway
69 costing center and \$113,200 in the fire department costing center. She also noted that if ARPA funds
70 were added into the rolling stock, it would not impact the tax levy.

71
72 Mr. Brown asked whether additional ARPA funding should be allocated to the operating budget to
73 offset tax increases. Ms. Thibeault asked what the impact would be if those funds are used. Ms. Macy
74 replied that there is currently a 5.2% tax levy increase and 4.9% projected tax rate increase using
75 three-year average grand list growth, and that if another 50,000 is added to the proposed ARPA
76 funding, it would decrease to 3.9% tax levy and tax rate increase would be around 3.5% (or \$32 for
77 average assessed home in Village).

78
79 Mr. Kerin said that the Village has tried to keep increases to the budget in alignment with cost of living
80 increases in the region, and said that it would be good to keep doing that, if possible. Mr. Tyler agreed,
81 saying that keeping the tax rate down is one of the most significant ways that the Village can help its
82 residents. Ms. Thibeault said she would be in favor of adding extra ARPA funds and minimizing the tax
83 rate increase.

84
85 Mr. Chawla asked how and how much of the ARPA funds could be used for improvements to 2 Lincoln
86 Street or other needs. Mr. Brown replied that there are \$2.9 million in ARPA funding that remain
87 uncommitted. Ms. Macy noted that in terms of qualified uses of the funding, municipalities are
88 permitted to use up to \$10 million of funding for the provision of government services. Mr. Tyler said
89 that the Public Works Department facilities also need approximately \$1.5 million in renovations and
90 flagged that as a high-needs area. He said it would also be important to place this conversation in the
91 context of other increases, such as water, sewer, and the Town tax increase.

92
93 Mr. Luck suggested allocating an amount and focusing on 2 Lincoln Street until that project is done,
94 using the current estimate of at least \$1.5 million for that work. He suggested allowing that entire
95 project to be constructed and built before they begin discussing what's left and what it can be used for.
96 He said that they have until the end of FY24 to allocate the funding.

97
98 Mr. Brown suggested sticking with \$50,000 of additional ARPA funds allocated into the budget, for a
99 total of \$375,000 in ARPA funding to help with offsetting tax increases. The other Trustees concurred.

100
101 d. Adopt FY21 Budget and Capital Programs
102 No discussion or action was taken at this time.

103

104 e. Consider Warning Budget Public Hearing

105
106 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees warn a public**
107 **hearing on the Fiscal Year 2023 Village budget for February 22, 2022 at 6:35 PM. The motion**
108 **passed 5-0.**

109
110 f. Discuss next steps for City Manager search and hiring committee

111 Mr. Luck provided an update, noting that 11 applications were received from interested citizens to
112 serve on the 9-person search and hiring committee. He clarified that the committee would be tasked
113 with developing a plan to search for and recruit a City Manager, not recruit the City Manager directly.

114
115 Mr. Brown said that next steps could involve interviewing candidates, or that they could also have
116 applicants submit documentation, so that the Trustees don't need to interview the candidates. He said
117 interviewing 11 people would take a significant amount of time. Mr. Tyler said that the Junction should
118 review the charter as it pertains to hiring a manager, noting that it is restrictive in terms of who does
119 the hiring and the criteria by which a manager is hired. He noted that Winooski has used a similar
120 process and has not yet hired a manager. Mr. Brown noted that hiring a manager is one of the most
121 important tasks that a City Council undertakes. Mr. Kerin agreed that interviewing 11 candidates would
122 be a lengthy process, and that anything that can be done to expedite the process would be great. Mr.
123 Chawla said that he is familiar with the non-youth candidates, and suggested having a group
124 conversation with the adult applicants and interview the youth members to pick one for the committee.
125 Mr. Brown suggested forming a sub-group of the Trustees to interview candidates. Mr. Tyler
126 suggested letting the 3 youth member applicants participate. Ms. Thibeault suggested having the sub-
127 committee members also be the Trustees that would sit on the search and hiring committee.

128
129 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees appoint Raj**
130 **Chawla and Amber Thibeault to the City Manager search and hiring sub-committee committee.**
131 **The motion passed 5-0.**

132
133 g. Discuss placing cannabis on the annual meeting ballot

134 Mr. Luck said that this is a continuation of a prior discussion as the Village continues to debate
135 whether or not to put a retail cannabis question on the ballot in April. He said that there has been more
136 information supplied in terms of zoning regulations and maps of potential buffer zone around the
137 schools. He noted that the Village must decide by March 8, 2022.

138
139 Mr. Chawla noted that the Town will likely put it on its ballot, and so the Junction should follow suit. He
140 also said it would be interesting to view the Town meeting and watch the discussion. He also said he'd
141 like to learn more about zoning regulations and the Planning Commission's activities around this. He
142 also asked about timeline. He noted that there would be more limited local control in terms of cannabis
143 than there are in terms of alcohol. Mr. Brown agreed. Mr. Chawla noted that the State legislature has
144 discussed sharing excise tax with municipalities, in addition to giving municipalities the ability to use
145 local option tax.

146
147 Mr. Pierce noted that he conducted a question-and-answer forum and will conduct a second one on
148 February 16, 2022. He said that retail cannabis can't be treated differently than other businesses,
149 except that there would be buffer zones around retail cannabis locations with respect to schools. He
150 said that once municipalities vote on retail, they will not have any say on integrated licenses. He also
151 noted that there is no sunset date on opting in.

152
153 h. Update on mask purchase initiative

154 Mr. Chawla said that the CDC has recommended that everyone go out and get N95s, which have
155 become very difficult to find. He said that the supplier he had found has become overwhelmed and not
156 able to keep up with demand. He said that they are working with a nonprofit called ProjectN95. Mr.
157 Luck concurred, saying that the Junction is in a holding pattern in terms of an order of masks and
158 doesn't have a link to a good supply.

159
160 i. Possible adoption of the Declaration of Inclusion

161 Mr. Brown noted the use of a declaration of inclusion by the town of Milton. He asked if Trustees have
162 other statements that they would like included in the Junction's version of a declaration of inclusion.
163 He said that this is an important statement that the Junction should make in order to demonstrate that
164 it is a welcoming community. He noted that many other communities are drafting and issuing this type
165 of declaration. He suggested several additions to the declaration, including a statement regarding
166 Essex BEST, a statement on staff efforts to change hiring and outreach practices, and a statement on
167 the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion. He noted that Essex BEST is issuing a report soon,
168 and there could be content from that included in the declaration.

169
170 Mr. Chawla noted that he has sent the Essex BEST final report to Mr. Brown. He said that the
171 declaration of inclusion should come from the Trustees, but incorporate content of the final report. He
172 asked if the final report could be distributed to the rest of the Trustees. Ms. Ladd replied that she can
173 send the report out for the Trustees to review. She noted that one big topic that has come up is that
174 the statements that municipalities make should not be performative and that the municipalities follow
175 through on them. She suggested that the Junction run the content of the declaration by the group for
176 their review and input. She added that some of the recommendations from the report could help inform
177 the topics included in the statement.

178
179 Mr. Chawla asked whether the declaration should identify areas of work for the community or
180 reference a work plan. Mr. Brown said that incorporating an action plan into the declaration would be
181 important. Mr. Tyler said that the declaration should leverage the great work done by Essex BEST,
182 since they are the subject matter experts on this topic.

183
184 j. ** Sale of sewer capacity to Town of Williston

185 No discussion during public session.

186
187 k. ***Discuss personnel issue

188 No discussion during public session.

189
190 6. **CONSENT ITEMS**

191 a. Approve minutes: January 25, 2022

192 b. Consider approval of 2022 Certificate of Highway Mileage, including accepting extension of Kiln
193 Road and adoption of Kiln Road Extension as a Village Highway.

194 c. Approve Check Warrants: #17287—01/28/2022;

195
196 **AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA to approve the consent**
197 **agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.**

198
199 8. **READING FILE**

200 a. Board member comments: Mr. Tyler said that the Trustees should make a commitment at an
201 upcoming meeting to assess what renovations are needed for the public works department and set a
202 course of action to secure funding. Mr. Brown agreed. Ms. Thibeault said that staff need assistance to
203 prepare for Town Meeting Day and assistance working at the polls on Town Meeting Day. Mr. Brown

clarified that at a prior meeting, the Trustees had tasked staff with researching regulation around short-term rentals, not the Planning Commission nor the Housing Committee. Mr. Chawla thanked the public works department for their work during the past snowstorm to take care of the roads quickly. Mr. Kerin said that at the intersection of Susie Wilson Road and Route 15, there are homeless people in the median soliciting funds and expressed concern for them, especially during heavy traffic, saying that it should be addressed. Ms. Thibeault said that there has already been outreach to try and encourage those individuals to access community support services rather than soliciting, and that there is no ordinance that precludes them from doing soliciting.

b. Memo from Dennis Lutz re: Christmas Tree Pick-up

c. Village Annual Meeting schedule

d. Village Arbor Day 2022

Upcoming meeting schedule

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

a. *An executive session may be necessary to discuss the appointment of a public official

b. **An executive session may be necessary to discuss potential contract

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees enter into executive session to discuss the potential sale of sewer capacity to the Town of Williston in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(1) and to include the Interim Co-Managers and Assistant Manager. The motion passed 5-0 and the Trustees entered into executive session at 8:13 PM.

c. ***An executive session may be necessary to discuss a personnel issue

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees enter into executive session to discuss a personnel issue, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), and to include the Interim Co-Manages and Assistant Manager. The motion passed 5-0 and the Trustees entered into executive session at 8:13 PM.

10. **ADJOURN**

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN to exit executive session. Motion passed 5-0.

DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt