

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 13, 2022**

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Brad Luck, Interim Village Co-Manager; Jess Morris, Finance Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Annie Cooper, Roseanne Prestipino, Ken Signorello, Gabrielle Smith, Harlan Smith, James Waite

1) CALL TO ORDER

In lieu of a chair, Mr. Luck called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2) REORGANIZATION

DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to nominate ANDREW BROWN as President. Motion passed 5-0.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to nominate RAJ CHAWLA as Vice-President. Motion passed 5-0.

3) AGENDA ADDITONS/CHANGES

None.

4) APPROVE AGENDA

Not required, no changes.

5) PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

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

None.

6) BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Consider and adopt meeting schedule for the year and discuss remote only vs. hybrid meetings

Mr. Luck said that the Board would be having a full discussion on the day of the week, start time, and hybrid/remote status for their meetings. Mr. Brown asked the Board how they felt about the idea of meeting once a month, rather than twice. Mr. Tyler expressed concern that this would delay the decision making process for major initiatives. He also said that the Board could always cancel meetings if need be. Mr. Chawla suggested meeting once every three weeks, or making the meeting schedule dependent on the workload of the Board. Ms. Thibeault said that she would prefer having two shorter meetings, rather than one longer one, Mr. Kerin concurred. Mr. Brown said that he would work with the Interim Co-Managers to see if there are any opportunities to cancel meetings or combine them. He also suggested having a printed schedule to show what major topics will be discussed at each meeting. Mr. Chawla suggested holding meetings on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month, all agreed that would be acceptable. Mr. Luck said that he encouraged the Board to regroup regarding meeting frequency in the fall, and said that the twice monthly meetings can dissuade members of the committee from running for the Board. He said that a reduced meeting schedule will allow the new manager to be more engaged in the community. In regard to meeting status, Mr. Kerin indicated a desire to hold hybrid meetings. Mr. Chawla requested that the Board hold off on in-person meetings, or require that attendees wear masks. Mr. Brown said that he will discuss this with Mr. Luck and Ms. Hysko. Public comment was requested, none was received.

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53 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT that the Trustees adopt a meeting**
54 **schedule for 2022-2023 with meetings occurring on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month**
55 **starting at 6:30 PM and that the meetings are hybrid. Motion passed 5-0.**

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57 **b. Discuss City Manager job description & starting salary range**

58 Mr. Luck provided information about surrounding communities starting salary ranges. Mr. Brown
59 discussed a desire to be upfront with the salary range in the advertisement, and suggested a range of
60 \$105,000-\$130,000 annually, the Board agreed. Mr. Chawla spoke of a desire to hire an innovative
61 manager with new ideas, and asked that more goals related to equity be included in the job description. Mr.
62 Brown said that the charter outlined many of the manager's responsibilities. He also requested that the
63 requirement that applicants have a Master's degree be removed. Ms. Thibeault requested that something be
64 included stating that attendance at night meetings is a requirement. The Trustees requested that HR Director
65 Ms. Dwyer edit the job description and bring it back to the Board. Mr. Brown requested public input, none
66 was given.

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68 **c. Discuss Annual Meeting outcomes**

69 Mr. Brown expressed his appreciation to everyone who voted, and for the approval of the budget and local
70 options tax. He also thanked the Clerk's office and election staff. Mr. Tyler said that the community
71 generally overwhelmingly approves large infrastructure improvement projects. Mr. Brown said that, due to
72 the passage of retail cannabis, the Board of Trustees will become the de facto Cannabis Control Board for
73 the Village. They will need to communicate with the community regarding where in the community they
74 would like to see cannabis, and what any potential regulations would be. Mr. Brown said that the tax
75 department will begin collecting the Local Option Tax at the beginning of the fiscal year, and will notify all
76 local businesses of this.

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78 **d. Discuss mask purchase initiative**

79 Mr. Luck said that the Board had passed an initiative to purchase kn95 masks in January, however the
80 COVID landscape has changed since then. He wanted to confirm that this was something that the Board
81 was still interested in doing, and if so, how they would like to implement it. Mr. Chawla suggested a
82 smaller purchase, and said that surgical masks were available from the Police Department but suggested that
83 both options be available to the public. In public comment, Ms. Cooper said that COVID cases are
84 increasing, and suggested that now is a good time for this initiative.

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86 **e. *Discuss Tree Farm contracts**

87 The bulk of this discussion will be held in Executive Session, however Mr. Brown requested public input.
88 None was given. Mr. Luck said that the Boards will be reviewing three contracts during Executive Session,
89 as they were set to expire this year.

90

91 **f. Annual review of Ethics Policy**

92 Mr. Luck said that this policy is reviewed annually. He brought language in Section 11 regarding its review
93 to the Board's attention, as he does not believe that each committee, volunteer firefighter, and employee
94 reviews this yearly. Ms. Thibeault suggested that Ms. Dwyer work with her to review and edit the policy, as
95 it seems cumbersome. She suggested that the new policy go in effect on July 1, to align with the new City
96 of Essex Junction. All were in agreement.

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101 **g. Discuss committee reappointment process**

102 Mr. Luck said that there are eleven people who are up for reappointment this year, and asked the Board
103 what they would like that process to look like. Mr. Brown said that he likes to meet candidates, and learn
104 more about their personal values. He suggested preparing scripted questions to be handed out to all
105 candidates. The Board discussed if this should be mandatory or optional, especially for long-serving
106 members. Mr. Chawla asked the Board to consider not doing automatic re-appointments, and opening up all
107 appointments to the public. He said that he would be in favor of the expedited process if there were no other
108 candidates who have applied. Mr. Kerin said that doing this would lengthen the process and add to the
109 current meeting load. Mr. Brown said that some of the Boards require a certain technical knowledge that
110 would make a long-serving member advantageous, however this is not the case for all. Mr. Tyler suggested
111 that the Trustees go to the various committee meetings and talk to members. Mr. Brown suggested that all
112 potential reappointees answer a few questions to the Board, followed up by and further interview if
113 necessary. In Public Comment, Ms. Cooper expressed support for requesting reappointees to interview or
114 answer questions. She also suggested that joint meetings between committees would be a good way to find
115 synergies. Mr. Smith also expressed support, and said that he considered it to be a review process to see if
116 candidates are still enthusiastic and said that it would be helpful for the general public to get an overview of
117 each committee during Trustee meetings. Ms. Prestipino said that there should be no automatic
118 reappointments, and there should be a process for all. After Public Comment, Mr. Kerin said that he would
119 like to see the creation of a process to ensure that everyone is treated fairly. Mr. Chawla said that this could
120 be tied into the process of creating the new Boards that will be required for the City to operate, and said that
121 this needs to be done by July. Mr. Tyler encouraged the Board to make this process as low-key as possible.
122 Mr. Brown said that it would be helpful to provide the questions in advance to the appointees so that they
123 can prepare. The Trustees decided that all eleven expiring positions will be advertised to the general public,
124 and current appointees can attend the Trustee meeting to discuss their appointment. He also encouraged
125 people to apply for more than one seat. Appointees are also able to pre-submit answers before the meeting
126 if they wish.

127

128 **h. Discuss City celebration(s)**

129 Mr. Brown said that the creation of the City of Essex Junction is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and should
130 be celebrated. Members of Our Village Our Voices (OVOV) have indicated interest in helping to plan the
131 event. Mr. Tyler suggested having a Trustee and staff celebration in addition to the community celebration.
132 Mr. Luck said that he plans to have a staff celebration on the Friday that the governor signs the charter. Ms.
133 Thibeault asked if a celebration on July 1 would cause problems for the July 4 celebration. Mr. Chawla
134 suggested that OVOV come up with a few ideas and bring it back to the Board in a month with a budget.
135 The Board indicated a willingness to spend up to \$40,000 on the event, and suggested the possibility of
136 spending some of the ARPA funds for this purpose. Mr. Brown requested public input, none was given.

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138 **7) CONSENT ITEMS**

139 **AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to approve the consent agenda:**

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141 **a. Consider approval of annual financial plan for town highways (TA-60)**

142 **b. Consider approval of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) standard allowance election**

143 **c. Approve check warrants: #17294-3/18/2022; #17295-3/25/2022; #17296-4/1/2022**

144 **d. Approve minutes: December 13, 2021; March 22, 2022**

145 **e. Street Vending Permit – Mr. Ding-A-Ling**

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147 **The motion passed 5-0.**

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149 **8) READING FILE**

150 a. **Board member comments:** Mr. Brown said that the governor has not yet signed the bill making Essex
151 Junction a City, however it is moving through the process. Mr. Tyler that information on the
152 construction of the pocket park at the Five Corners be on the next meeting agenda. Mr. Luck said that
153 the new Communications & Strategic Initiatives Director will begin in early May.

154 b. **February staff and directors report to Brownell Library Trustees**

155 c. **Letter to Gabriel Handy re: 197 Pearl construction and sidewalk obstruction**

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157 **9) EXECUTIVE SESSION**

158 a. **An executive session may be necessary to discuss contracts**

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160 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to find that premature general public**
161 **knowledge regarding the Village's contracts for the Tree Farm facility with the Town of Essex and**
162 **Tree Farm Management Group would clearly place the Village at a substantial disadvantage, because**
163 **the Trustees risk disclosing its negotiation strategy if it discusses the contract terms in public. Motion**
164 **passed 5-0.**

165

166 **DAN KERIN made motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER that the Trustees go into executive**
167 **session to discuss contracts for the Tree Farm facility with the Town of Essex and Tree Farm**
168 **Management Group under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a)(1) of the Vermont Statutes, and**
169 **include the Interim Co-Managers and EJRP Grounds & Facilities Director. Motion passed 5-0.**

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171 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, to exit Executive Session. The**
172 **motion passed 5-0 at 8:40 PM.**

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174 **Mr. Brown made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA that the Trustees enter into the confidential**
175 **disclosure agreement concerning information obtained by the Village and its staff that is related to**
176 **research and technology development of wastewater contaminants and authorize management to sign**
177 **all documents related to this matter. The motion passed 5-0.**

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180 **10) ADJOURN**

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182 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA to adjourn the meeting. The motion**
183 **passed 5-0 at 8:41 PM.**

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186 Respectfully Submitted,

187 Cathy Ainsworth