

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
May 25, 2022**

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

**ADMINISTRATION:** Wendy Hysko, Library Director/Interim Co-Manager; Brad Luck, Essex Junction Recreation & Parks Director/Interim Co-Manager; Rick Jones, Superintendent of Public Works; Jess Morris, Finance Director; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Heidi Clark, Annie Cooper, Rick Hamlin, Tim Miller, Bridget Meyer, Harlan Smith, Katie Vanni, Miles Waite, Irene Wrenner.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

Mr. Brown requested adding 5e to consider a reduction of Planning Commission membership from 7 to 5.

**3. APPROVE AGENDA**

**GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, to add Business Item 5e: a reduction in Planning Commission membership from 7 to 5. The motion passed 5-0.**

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda  
There was no public comment.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Department Head Conversation: Rick Jones, Public Works Superintendent  
Mr. Luck began the discussion by noting that they would like to begin having a department head conversation at the second Trustee meeting each month, as a way for the Trustees to connect with department heads on updates and an opportunity for Trustees to learn more about what each department head and functional area do.

Mr. Jones noted that the biggest issue in his department had been staffing shortages over the winter, however they are now fully staffed.

Mr. Chawla asked what the main challenges are for the current space in which the Public Works Department is housed. Mr. Jones replied that storage of equipment is difficult, given the limited space within the facilities. He added that height clearance is also an issue and limiting factor to storing equipment inside. He further added that the current building is from the 1950s and that they have outgrown it.

Mr. Tyler asked if increasing green areas and gardens in public areas is a burden for the Public Works Department. Mr. Jones replied that it is not a large burden and they are able to fit them into the Department's overall scope of work.

b. Discuss local option tax revenues use

Mr. Luck said that the Trustees need to discuss and decide how to allot the local option tax (LOT) revenue, and that staff have developed proposals for their consideration. He said that though the first

54 revenues will come in after October 1, 2022, the first suggestion is not to use revenues in the Fiscal  
55 Year 2024 budget, but to wait for them to accumulate for one year to gauge how much they can  
56 anticipate receiving annually. He recommended five buckets of capital spending for the revenues: road  
57 restoration, pedestrian transportation, rolling stock, municipal grounds and facilities, and participatory  
58 budgeting (which empowers the community to decide together how to spend public money). He  
59 suggested a funding split of 65% for road restoration and municipal grounds and facilities, 20% for  
60 participatory budgeting, and 15% for pedestrian transportation.

61  
62 Mr. Chawla asked if projects would include redoing sections of sidewalk, or whether they would just  
63 entail grading and repaving. He said that the Junction has major needs for sidewalks and that he would  
64 like to see an analysis and inventory of sidewalk conditions, to gauge repair needs, prior to allocating  
65 the LOT revenues.

66  
67 Ms. Thibeault said that the Capital Committee has sidewalk projects included in its work plans. She said  
68 that portions of the Junction are on the priority list for sidewalk repairs. She said that these  
69 recommendations seem to redefine what the Capital Committee is doing, and wants to ensure that there  
70 is one clear set of capital priorities for the Junction. Mr. Kerin agreed that sidewalks are a major concern.

71  
72 Mr. Tyler expressed support for waiting a year for revenues to accrue prior to allocating and spending  
73 them. He noted that revenues may also vary from year to year, so that needs to be taken into  
74 consideration. He said it would be helpful to know what the Junction's most pressing capital needs are,  
75 prior to deciding how to allocate revenue.

76  
77 Mr. Brown said that several years back, the Junction had discussed having a standalone sidewalk fund,  
78 which would be a revolving budget based on priorities in a sidewalk work plan, and would prevent the  
79 need for those projects coming into the Capital Committee. He also noted the intersection of waterlines  
80 with the sidewalks and said that work needs to be coordinated to avoid replacing sidewalk multiple times  
81 in a short period (since sidewalks need to be replaced when there is work on water lines).

82  
83 Mr. Chawla said that if they ask the Bike/Walk Committee to help implement some of the projects related  
84 to pedestrian transportation, it may be helpful to mirror some of the Capital Committee's processes  
85 around prioritizing projects.

86  
87 Mr. Luck noted that there would likely not be enough revenue to conduct many meaningful repairs on  
88 sidewalks.

89  
90 In public comment, Annie Cooper said that there is a great deal of flexibility with this approach to revenue  
91 allocation. She said that it would be helpful to have period report-backs on this and receive status  
92 updates. Bridget Meyer expressed support for participatory budgeting, saying that it has many benefits  
93 for the community (such as increased engagement).

94  
95 c. Discuss 1 Main Street pocket part short-and long-term plans

96 Mr. Pierce and Mr. Waite updated the Trustees on conversations with the Chittenden County Regional  
97 Planning Commission (CCRPC) on the 1 Main Street pocket park. He noted that there is grant money  
98 available to cover remediation planning, soil testing and state reporting, but that the cost of the disposal  
99 of disturbed soil would fall to the Junction. If 6" of soil are cut, the costs to the Junction would be  
100 approximately \$40,000-\$50,000; if the top two feet of soil are removed, the costs increase to around  
101 \$200,000.

102

103 Mr. Brown pointed out that the grant can only be used for remediation planning and related activities,  
104 where previously he had thought that the grant could be applied more flexibly to cover costs for the  
105 pocket park. Mr. Waite noted that there could possibly be other grant opportunities at the state level,  
106 and will look into this further.

107  
108 Mr. Tyler asked whether the Junction would like to consider implementing a plan to remediate the soil  
109 long-term, such as using the tree roots to help remove hydrocarbons from the soil. He said that this is a  
110 longer-term option, but would make it unnecessary to have a cap on the contaminated soil long-term.  
111 Mr. Waite replied that trees such as birch and poplar are used to treat contaminated groundwater, but it  
112 is less realistic to rely on a half-dozen trees to remediate soil that has been exposed to contamination  
113 for several decades. He said that because the park is in an urban area not near playgrounds or  
114 groundwater, a very reasonable solution would be to just cap the soil.

115  
116 Mr. Chawla said that it's important for the community to have a sense of the limitations around  
117 remediation and cost in order to develop a better design for the park. Mr. Tyler suggested determining  
118 how much soil can be removed before forming a park design committee, so that the committee has  
119 parameters in terms of a budget and timeline.

120  
121 Harlan Smith said that he would like clarification on whether there is a real barrier between the  
122 contaminated soils and the replacement soils. He also asked what kind of materials would be used for  
123 the sub-base. He said that he does not see an issue putting in shade poles, as any soils removed would  
124 be disposed of properly and the holes filled with cement. Mr. Waite replied that the State requires 24  
125 inches of clean soil and that the geo-textile cap would serve as a marker for excavators not to work in  
126 that area. He said that there is no plan to prevent water from moving from the clean soil to the  
127 contaminated soil.

128  
129 Bridget Meyer said that a number of community members got together and discussed short-term plans  
130 for the pocket park. She said that one was to take planters and line them along the Main Street side of  
131 the pocket park, as a form of screening from the traffic. She said that in terms of seating, EJRP has  
132 offered some tables and benches that are not currently being used. She also suggested shade sails  
133 over the tables. She said that they could keep it watered and maintained by volunteers for the short  
134 term.

135  
136 Mr. Brown asked if the sail posts could be anchored into the ground without much excavation. Mr. Hamlin  
137 replied that he would need to see detail or the proposed posts in order to make that determination, but  
138 that typical design would be to set the posts into the ground. He pointed out that sails or another form  
139 of shade might be needed while any trees that are planted are growing to a height where they provide  
140 enough shade and screening.

141  
142 Mr. Pierce said that they could use light poles to hold up the sails while they wait for the trees to grow  
143 enough to provide screening and shade.

144  
145 Mr. Brown said that he could support the plantings and picnic tables as a short-term solution, since they  
146 already exist. Mr. Tyler agreed, suggesting designating a small amount of funding if there are financial  
147 needs for the short-term solution. Mr. Brown said that this could be put on the next meeting's agenda.

148  
149 Mr. Tyler suggested that staff meet to calculate the specific parameters for soil removal in the park. Mr.  
150 Hamlin suggested that the Trustees give a rough sense of the amount of funding that could be used.

151

152 Mr. Luck said that they could look into other State grant funding. He also suggested filling in the curb  
153 cuts around the park now, since they know that that will need to occur.

154  
155 d. Consider warning public hearing for FY23 proposed utility rates

156 Ms. Morris said that she has completed calculating the tri-town utility rates. She said that overall there  
157 are slight increases. She said that water rates are seeing the largest increase (the fixed charge  
158 increased by 4.8% and the usage rate increased by 5%). She said that the enterprise budgets have not  
159 changed since they had previously been presented.

160  
161 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees warn the two public**  
162 **hearings for June 8 and June 22 regarding the proposed FY23 utility rates. The motion passed**  
163 **5-0.**

164  
165 e. Consider changing the number of Planning Commission members from 7 to 5

166 Mr. Luck said that this item came from a request from the Chair of the Planning Commission (John  
167 Alden). He said that there are 4 current members and 3 vacancies, meaning that full attendance at each  
168 meeting is needed in order to ensure a quorum. Mr. Luck said that this is a timely request, since after  
169 July 1 the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) would transition into a Development Review Board (DRB)  
170 and the Planning Commission would also transition into become more of a rulemaking body than a rule-  
171 enforcing body.

172  
173 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees change the**  
174 **membership of the Planning Commission from 7 appointed members to 5, effective May 25, 2022.**  
175 **The motion passed 5-0.**

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177 6. **CONSENT ITEMS**

- 178 a. Approve check warrants: #17301 (5/9/22); #17302 (5/13/22)  
179 b. Approve minutes: May 11, 2022  
180 c. Approve 2022 Roadway Resurfacing Project Bid to SD Ireland  
181 d. Approve Combination Sewer Cleaning Truck Bid to Chadwick Baross

182  
183 **AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA to approve the consent agenda**  
184 **as amended. The motion passed 5-0.**

185  
186 7. **READING FILE**

- 187 a. 20-22 Equalization Study for Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction  
188 b. Conflict of Interest & Ethics Policy – final document  
189 c. “Municipal regulation of cannabis and public health in Canada” article

190  
191 8. **ADJOURN**

192  
193 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA to adjourn the meeting. The motion**  
194 **passed 5-0 at 8:49 PM.**

195  
196 Respectfully Submitted,  
197 Amy Coonradt