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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
August 10, 2022**

COUNCILORS 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

OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Bohne (Green Mountain Transit), Bob Burrows, Annie Cooper, Jacob Law, Regina Mahoney (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission), Deb McAdoo, Maggie Massey, Jon Moore (Green Mountain Transit), Mike Plageman, Mike Thorne, Nick Warner (Winooski Valley Parks District), Bridget, Heidi

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

No changes, thus no approval required.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

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

Ms. McAdoo expressed concern about the noise at last week's car show. She encouraged the Council to refrain from renewing the event's approval. She also said that trash pick-up has been occurring at 5 AM on Mondays and Thursdays, and that the noise is concerning as well.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. **Consider resolution of appreciation for the City Manager Recruitment and Hiring Planning Committees**

Mr. Luck summarized the work of both committees, and said that all volunteers have worked very hard on this process. Mr. Brown lauded the efforts of the committees, as well as Councilors Mr. Tyler and Ms. Thibeault who also participated in the process.

Motion by RAJ CHAWLA, second by GEORGE TYLER that we approve the following resolution for the members of the City Manager Recruitment and Hiring Committees, which reads as follows:

WHEREAS The City of Essex Junction charter was overwhelmingly approved by voters in November 2021 and it was clear that the City endeavored to be independent and have its own management;

WHEREAS The Village Trustees in January 2022 expressed an interest in involving the citizenry in the planning process to recruit and hire the first every city manager for the City of Essex Junction and;

WHEREAS The Trustees advertised for community volunteers to fill the roles for the recruitment and hiring of our first manager and eleven members of the community applied;

51 **WHEREAS The Trustees decided to include all of the interested community volunteers and thus**
52 **appointed two separate committees – a recruitment planning committee and hiring planning committee**
53 **and;**

54
55 **WHEREAS Both committees began their work in March and concluded by June 2022, they successfully**
56 **designed a plan for the recruitment and hiring of our first manager;**

57
58 **WHEREAS Their efforts lead to 22 applicants from 19 paid advertisements and the outreach to 15**
59 **organizations, whereby 12 applicants were from Vermont and 10 from other states, 8 who most recently**
60 **were municipal administrators, and 14 who were most recently from other related positions;**

61
62 **WHEREAS That led to 6 interviews, 2 finalists, and ultimately the final selection of Regina Mahony by**
63 **the City Council as the first City Manager of the City of Essex Junction, Vermont’s 10th City;**

64
65 **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**

66 **On this day, Wednesday, August 10, 2022, the Essex Junction City Council expresses its appreciation**
67 **to: Bridget Meyer, Gabrielle Stevenson, Maggie Massey, Mary Moyer, Mike Plageman, Mike Thorne,**
68 **Christina Papadopoulos, Jacob Law, Jeetan Khadka, and John Wermer; For your efforts in the City**
69 **Manager Recruitment and Hiring Planning Committees that resulted in the hiring of our first ever City**
70 **Manager. We thank you for your time and service to our community.**

71
72 **The motion passed 5-0.**

73
74 **b. Discuss ballot item to join Green Mountain Transit**

75 Mr. Moore introduced himself as the Executive Director of Green Mountain Transit (GMT), and Paul Bohne
76 as the Essex member of the GMT Board of Commissioners. Mr. Moore provided an overview of GMT,
77 ridership data and revenue sources. He detailed the services GMT provides to Essex, and said that the Essex
78 Junction #2 bus has the second-highest ridership of all routes. GMT provides complimentary ADA transit
79 service, as well as provide funding assistance for the Essex senior van. Mr. Moore brought up concerns
80 regarding cost pressures and the ridership levels. Previously, Essex Junction was included as a part of GMT
81 via the Town of Essex’s membership. The City of Essex Junction could vote to become a member as soon as
82 fiscal year 2024 via a community vote. Essex Junction’s estimated projected assessment would be \$262,500,
83 and final numbers will be available in January of 2022. This figure includes both the fixed route and ADA
84 services. Mr. Tyler said that while this may seem like a tax increase for Essex Junction, it is smaller than it
85 looks due to the fact that Essex Junction was previously paying for some of these funds via the Town of Essex.

86
87 Mr. Moore said that GMT was working on fleet electrification, a transit funding study to maximize federal
88 funds and create more sustainable revenue, and said that micro-transit is being beta tested in Montpelier. Mr.
89 Chawla suggested including the new Community Health Center office on Main Street on the bus route. Mr.
90 Kerin asked if large events, such as the Champlain Valley Fair, changed the bus schedule, Mr. Moore said no.
91 Ms. Thibeault asked what would happen if the City of Essex Junction chose to vote down membership, Mr.
92 Moore said that there were some options including the discontinuing of bus service or a potential service
93 agreement. Mr. Brown asked about the potential of continuing fare-free operations indefinitely, Mr. Moore
94 said that this is being looked into.

95
96 **c. Discuss ballot item to join the Winooski Valley Park District**

97 Mr. Warner introduced himself as the Executive Director as the Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD). He
98 gave an overview of the WVPD, goals, and governance structure. The WVPD works with a variety of

99 volunteer groups in order to maintain the parks, as well as providing fee for service maintenance for
100 municipally-owned property. He explained plans to create a new park and conserved area off of 2A in
101 Williston, as well as describing an existing property in at Woodside Park in Essex. Mr. Warner showed
102 revenue and fundraising information. He hopes to have Essex Junction join the WVPD, and have an additional
103 member to represent the City on the Board of Trustees. Mr. Warner said that he estimates that it will cost the
104 City of Essex Junction around \$25,000 to become a member of the WVPD, and explained the calculation for
105 such.

106
107 Ms. Thibeault asked about the implications should Essex Junction not vote to join the WVPD. Mr. Warner
108 said that the cost would be redistributed among member towns. Mr. Luck said that City residents have been
109 members of the WVPD, and paying for such, through Town taxes, for many years.

110
111 **d. Discuss ballot item to join the Chittenden County Communications Union District**

112 Ms. Mahoney, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) Planning Program Manager,
113 said that the CCRPC has been cordoning efforts to expand high-quality, high-speed internet across the region.
114 Creating a Communications Union District will allow the CCRPC to access funds for this goal. She said that
115 many providers are interested in providing fiber to the Chittenden County area, however they are unlikely to
116 wish to communicate directly with municipalities. Joining the Communications Union District would allow
117 Essex Junction to have a voice at the table with other area communities.

118
119 Mr. Chawla asked for a further definition of “adequate broadband” and asked if the low number of homes
120 without this in Essex Junction would make it less likely to be served. Ms. Mahoney there are very few homes
121 in Essex Junction that are classified as not having “adequate broadband” said that the ultimate goal is to create
122 more competition for providers. Unserved and underserved homes are the only ones who can be served with
123 public dollars, however the only way to get to them is to overbuild the cable areas, which would benefit all
124 and offer a fiber option. Mr. Chawla said that he would be interested to see if wireless connectivity for the
125 community could be a possibility. Ms. Mahoney said that there had been a grant for this in previous years,
126 however the mountainous nature of the state made this difficult. Mr. Tyler said that the Village had previously
127 partnered with the school district to see if internet could be offered as a utility. Ms. Mahoney said that a lack
128 of internet is concerning for educational purposes. Ms. Mahoney said that other communications district can
129 serve as an “anchor tenant” for large fiber companies, which could serve to bring the price point down.

130
131 **e. Discuss ballot item to sell alcohol in the City of Essex Junction**

132 Mr. Luck said that all liquor licenses have been issued by the Town of Essex, and thus will need to vote to
133 formally allow the sale of liquor within City limits.

134
135 **f. Consider approval of November ballot articles**

136 Mr. Luck said that this is the opportunity to vote to include all of the discussed items on the ballot.

137
138 **Motion by RAJ CHAWLA, seconded by DAN KERIN to approve the ballot articles for the November**
139 **2022 election as presented. Motion passed 5-0.**

140
141 **g. Discuss update regarding retail cannabis sales**

142 Mr. Chawla provided an update on the work that the cannabis working group has been doing. He said that
143 they have recommended that cannabis sales be allowed in two districts on Pearl Street. Cultivation can occur
144 in the planned agricultural district. Space is allocated for cultivation, and tier one processing is also allowed
145 with a valid home occupation. The state cannabis licensing board may be issuing licenses starting on October
146 1. Since the Board is considering amendments to the Land Development Code, any application that comes in

147 could be considered under both editions. Mr. Chawla looked at the public hearing chart, and said that he does
148 not believe that a special meeting would be required to consider these issues.
149

150 The Council reviewed proposed changes to the document, as well as discussed possible wastewater and odor
151 impacts. Mr. Chawla noted that Essex Junction already has an existing cultivator, prior to the Board's decision
152 to establish a Cannabis Control Board. Mr. Kerin said that he is interested in hearing what other communities
153 in the area are doing to mitigate the impact of cannabis on wastewater and stormwater.
154

155 **h. Consider approval of Planning Commission updates to the Land Development Code and warning a**
156 **public hearing**

157 Ms. Mahoney said that the Planning Commission has been working on making updates and changes to the
158 Land Development Code (LDC). These are mainly intended to: align with the Comprehensive Plan and
159 Design Five Corners Plan, address the housing shortage, include stormwater management, address state statute
160 changes, and include of cannabis businesses. Other minor changes and reducing redundancies are also
161 included. The Planning Commission is proposing an expansion of development and historical review in the
162 more developed areas of the Junction. Changes have been made to the accessory dwelling unit regulations,
163 as well as some density increases in multi-family residential districts. Duplexes and triplexes will also be
164 allowed in the Residential 1 and Residential 2 districts and reduced parking requirements are included. Ms.
165 Mahoney said that the City Council needs to formally receive the amendments, and then schedule public
166 hearings should they wish to do that.
167

168 Mr. Brown said that this new regulations will allow duplexes and triplexes in most of the City. Ms. Mahoney
169 said that the style of these homes must still match a single-family home. Mr. Brown said that this is something
170 that he would like to receive public input on, and make the community aware of. Mr. Chawla suggested
171 adding in more information on what type of changes would occur with public warnings in order to better
172 inform the community. Ms. Mahoney discussed the Housing Commission's input on this process, namely
173 their interest in inclusionary zoning. This will be further discussed. Mr. Chawla said that he believes that
174 most of the bike/pedestrian amenity regulations are more applicable to larger employers than smaller
175 employers. Ms. Mahoney said that the City Council can make changes prior to or after a public hearing. Ms.
176 Thibeault requested that the cannabis changes be moved through without committing on the rest of the
177 changes, as she would like more time to review the document. All agreed.
178

179 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER that the proposed cannabis related**
180 **Land Development Code updates as presented and approved by the Planning Commission. Motion**
181 **passed 5-0.**
182

183 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, to hold a public hearing on the**
184 **cannabis related Land Development Code updates on August 31, 2022. Motion passed 5-0.**
185

186 **6. CONSENT AGENDA**

187 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to approve the consent agenda.**
188 **Motion passed 5-0.**
189

190 **a. Approve Check Warrants: #17312 (07/22/2022); #17313 (07/29/2022); #17314 (08/05/2022)**

191 **b. Approve Minutes: July 26, 2022; July 27, 2022; August 3, 2022**

192 **c. Approve Street Banner Applications: Champlain Valley Fair, National Street Rod Association**
193 **Northeast, Wag It Forward: A Festival for Pets, and Champlain Valley Craft Fair and Antique Expo**
194

195 7. READING FILE

196 a. Article: “2021 report shows more diversity but persistent inequities in Chittenden County”

197 b. Cannabis Cultivation-High Strength Waste impact on wastewater facility

198 c. Board Member Comments: Mr. Kerin informed the Council of the death of Leo Lalancette, a WWII
199 veteran living in Essex Junction.

200
201 8. ADJOURN

202 DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed
203 5-0 at 8:30 PM.

204
205 Respectfully Submitted,

206 Darby Mayville