



**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

Online & 2 Lincoln St.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Wednesday, October 12, 2022
6:30 PM

E-mail: admin@essexjunction.org

www.essexjunction.org

Phone: (802) 878-6944

This meeting will be in-person at 2 Lincoln Street and available remotely. Options to watch or join the meeting remotely:

- **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. Town Meeting TV Presentation
 - b. Essex Rescue Presentation
 - c. *Discussion and possible action of 2 Lincoln renovations
 - d. Discussion of FY24 Budget Ideas from City Councilors & Updates on Current Efforts
 - e. **Discussion and Potential Action of Tree Farm Management
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve Check Warrants #17322 (09/30/2022)
 - b. Approve minutes: September 28, 2022
 - c. Approve High School Homecoming Bonfire Burn Permit
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board member comments
 - b. Brownell Library Report - August
 - c. Howard Center Community Outreach - FY22 Annual Report
 - d. CSWD Special Meeting Warning – Bond Vote for Recycling Facility
 - e. Act 250 Permit Amendment for 92-100 Pearl Street
 - f. All Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - g. Joint Housing Committee Minutes: September 7, 2022
 - h. Bike/Walk Advisory Committee Minutes: September 19, 2022
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. *An executive session may be needed to discuss negotiating or securing real estate purchase or lease options
 - b. **An executive session may be needed to discuss negotiating or securing real estate purchase or lease options
9. **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 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 President. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the City Council, like all programs and activities of the City of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the City Manager's office at 802-878-6944 TTY: 7-1-1 or (800) 253-0191.

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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 12, 2022**

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Andrew Brown, President; Raj Chawla, Vice President; Amber Thibeault, George Tyler.

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Jess Morris, Finance Director;

OTHERS PRESENT: John Alden; Colleen Ballard, Essex Rescue; Lori Houghton; Jacob Law; Peter Mutolo, Essex Rescue; Meghan O'Rourke, Town Meeting TV; Ken Signorello; Jason Struthers; Brad Luck; Harlan Smith; Heidi Clark.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Councilor Brown called the meeting to order at 6:40 P.M.

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None at this time.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

No approval needed as no changes were proposed.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda

Jason Struthers said he received a complaint from his neighbor about his ducks and is asking for an exemption from the ordinance. Councilor Brown said that the current ordinance only allows for chicken. Mr. Struthers said he misinterpreted the code. He said that the neighbor has only complained about the smell, but that is due to two 100-gallon compost bins near his property line, not from the ducks. He said that the source of the odor has been taken care of. He noted that he has the ducks not only for food but as a source of fertilizer, which is extremely valuable given the cost of fuel and fertilizer currently. Councilor Brown requested that staff conduct research into the matter and discuss the issue internally prior to rendering a decision.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Town Meeting TV Presentation

Meghan O'Rourke, Channel Director for Town Meeting TV, presented on the organization's current operations, as well as solicit feedback from how best to meet the City's needs, and finally to request an annual municipal contribution. She noted that Town Meeting TV's primary funding is through cable subscriptions, which are decreasing (while the demand for hybrid-style municipal meetings is increasing).

Councilor Brown asked for Essex Junction's utilization statistics out of their total allotment for the last year. Ms. O'Rourke replied that there have been 42 meetings, and that they tend to have 3 meetings per month. She said that they would like to do more coverage for events such as Juneteenth or the dedication of parks, for example. Councilor Brown noted that the City now has a Development Review Board in addition to its Planning Commission, so they may need additional meetings.

Ms. O'Rourke noted that CCTV, in partnership with Town Meeting TV, is working with the legislature, and has been awarded funding for replacement of declining cable revenue in the amount of \$900,000 for FY2023.

b. Essex Rescue Presentation

53 Colleen Ballard and Peter Mutolo presented on Essex Rescue's latest financial report. Ms. Ballard began
54 by reviewing reimbursement and billing terminology for ambulance services. She noted several factors
55 for some of the financial and budgetary pressures that Essex Rescue is facing, including increased call
56 volume that isn't always billable combined with flat reimbursement rates from payers such as Medicare,
57 Medicaid, and commercial insurers.

58
59 Councilor Brown noted that the requested rate increase from the Junction to Essex Rescue is almost
60 double what had originally been projected. He noted that Fiscal Years 2022-2024 are all running deficits
61 and asked how this can be sustained. He suggested that if almost a third of their revenue is coming from
62 municipalities, then perhaps municipal representatives should also sit on their board. Mr. Mutolo said
63 that Essex Rescue is looking for transparency and interaction along those lines and asked how best to
64 obtain representation and inclusion of municipal representation on their board. He asked how they can
65 provide more of a voice from the community to Essex Rescue.

66
67 Mr. Mutolo noted that the workforce model of Essex Rescue has changed markedly in the last ten years.
68 He said that they used to have many more volunteers than employees, but now they have more paid
69 employees than volunteers. He said that this has resulted in the need to restructure the organization to
70 try and be more sustainable.

71
72 Councilor Tyler said that funding and costs seem unpredictable for Essex Rescue and asked if a global
73 restructuring and incorporating more involvement from the municipality would be a solution. He said that
74 an extreme example of that could be that the four municipalities that use the services of Essex Rescue
75 could form a district for use of those services. Ms. Ballard said that this could be an option and should
76 be explored further, in terms of implications for reimbursement from insurers and its subscription service.

77
78 Representative Houghton said that Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement are the biggest issues for
79 rescue services and that the Vermont legislative delegation plans to write a letter to its Congressional
80 delegation to emphasize emergency medical services as an essential service and recommend Medicare
81 rate increases.

82
83 c. *Discussion and possible action of 2 Lincoln renovations

84 City Manager Mahony said that the City is aiming to have more staff working at 2 Lincoln Street by next
85 July. She said that they are currently assessing what this building can accommodate in terms of
86 workstations. She said that they have had discussions with architects and staff to think through options
87 but said that it would be helpful to receive general direction from City Council in terms of areas of
88 flexibility and short-and-long-term plans.

89
90 Councilor Brown said that one goal is having a meeting space to accommodate a large municipal
91 meeting, and that the current meeting room does not have that capacity. He said that it would be good
92 to avoid having staff workstations in the basement.

93
94 Councilor Tyler noted that early on, they had discussed not making renovations on the current senior
95 and teen center, but he wondered whether it would be feasible and a good idea to renovate a portion of
96 those spaces to optimize them. John Alden, an architect working on designs, noted that there is a
97 significant amount of square footage in the 2 Lincoln Street building that is not used for municipal activity.
98 He said that they have not to date asked the Senior Center or Teen Center programs about using some
99 of their space for more municipal activities. He noted that if arrangements could be made with current
100 users of the upstairs space, they could move municipal staff upstairs easily. Councilor Tyler noted that
101 they would need to install an elevator to make the building more accessible, and Mr. Alden estimated
102 that it would cost around \$100,000 to put in a small elevator. Councilor Brown said that it would be good

103 to have discussions with Teen Center staff about some of these suggestions. Mr. Alden noted that until
104 they have a solid plan on what programming is moving where, further planning and design is difficult.
105

106 Councilor Tyler asked about the timeline for construction, once a design plan is developed. Mr. Alden
107 said that the City should give the design side and construction side extra time, as there is a shortage of
108 resources and contractors or subcontractors. He said that if they want to have something in place by
109 July 1, they will need to be efficient. City Manager Mahony asked if it would be easier to obtain more
110 construction bids and would shorten the construction timeline if the 2 Lincoln Street space is vacant
111 while renovations are occurring. Mr. Alden replied that it would mean a shorter timeline if construction
112 can occur without others in the space but noted that municipal staff would need to find somewhere else
113 to conduct activity if the space can't be used during that time.
114

115 Councilor Chawla said that it sounds like this may be a two-phase project. He expressed support for
116 installing an elevator. He said that because teen and senior programming both use the space, they need
117 to be deliberate about how they allocate and dedicate space for them. He also suggested approaching
118 the School Board to gauge whether they have space for programming. He also emphasized the
119 importance of having a large enough space to serve as a good community space. He said it is important
120 to have employees come back to 2 Lincoln Street as soon as possible.
121

122 Councilor Thibeault said that she would prefer keeping staff out of the basement and to instead utilize
123 that space as storage. She additionally said that it would be good to focus on the end goal when planning
124 for this project.
125

126 Councilor Tyler said that it seems that the two phases would be a minor phase at first to accommodate
127 staff coming back for July and then a larger phase after that. City Manager Mahony said that the entire
128 project will likely not be completed by July 1, so a phasing approach sounds the most feasible. She
129 acknowledged that one renovation will be cheaper than two renovations, but they need to think about
130 how best to accommodate the July 1 deadline for moving staff back in. Councilor Brown said that the
131 only way to do that is to have a smaller renovation prior to July and that the longer-term ideals of a large
132 municipal space and elevator would need to wait for a larger second phase.
133

134 Councilors reached a general consensus to move forward with a phase 1 to ensure that by July 1, the
135 2 Lincoln Street space can be a functioning municipal hub and an inviting space to the public, as well
136 as accommodating the staff that will need to use the space. Next steps include conversations with the
137 Senior Center and Teen Center to assess needs.
138

139 d. Discussion of FY24 Budget Ideas from City Councilors & Updates on Current Efforts
140 City Manager Mahony said that staff hope to obtain Councilor feedback on ideas and thoughts for the
141 Fiscal Year 2024 budget, and then she provided an update on some of the current and planned activities
142 for the City. She noted said that an ARPA funds balance report is available, so that Councilors can see
143 how much remains in the fund and what has been spent. She provided an update on the activity around
144 Amtrak station renovations, saying that staff are currently trying to determine how to come up with the
145 \$600,000 match for the project. She said that they will need to hire a third FTE to fully separate the City's
146 finance department from that of the Town, and that the separation process could move along more
147 quickly once that FTE is hired. She then said that future projects also include the public works facility
148 upgrade.
149

150 Councilor Tyler confirmed that there is a traffic reconfiguration plan in addition to the renovation plan for
151 the Amtrak station. He noted that there are several big-ticket items on the horizon, such as the public

works facility upgrade, and said that he is wary of introducing any new expenditures and would like to limit those as much as possible.

Councilor Brown brought up proactive ordinance and code enforcement as one of his priorities for the City. He also said that he would like to think about implementing a rental registry. He said that they also need to think about separating their Housing Commission from that of the Town and need to establish their own Housing Trust Fund. He additionally suggested funding related to training for committee members to improve their public service skills. He brought up the need for a new Fire Department facility, though it is not as urgent as that of the public works facility. Councilor Tyler expressed support for more proactive ordinance and code enforcement and suggested that that be part of an expanded community development office.

Councilor Chawla agreed with other Councilors' points. He said that in terms of the rental registry, he has been hearing from constituents who are renters about some of their experiences around lack of code enforcement and follow-up. He said that the City needs to also think about how it will participate in the diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations that had been occurring jointly with the Town. He said that the City shouldn't lose sight of that activity, as good work was being done around a number of important topics. He expressed support for more training opportunities for committee members as well as Councilors. He said that when they review the Land Development Code updates they should seriously consider the fee amounts and whether those could be increased, to offset heightened activity around code enforcement.

Councilor Thibeault agreed with other Councilors as well. She emphasized the importance of examining fees and focusing on revenue.

e. **Discussion and Potential Action of Tree Farm Management

6. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Check warrants: #17322 (9/30/2022)
- b. Approve minutes: September 28, 2022
- c. Approve High School Homecoming Bonfire Burn Permit

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed 4-0.

7. **READING FILE**

- a. Board Member Comments: Councilor Brown suggested that Councilors review the All Hazard Mitigation Plan, as it will be on the agenda for updates at the next City Council meeting. He also called attention to the bond vote for the CSWD recycling facility, noting that ballots for this will not be mailed and residents will need to separately request a ballot from the Secretary of State or vote in person. He expressed appreciation for staff and volunteers for their work on Junction Day. Councilor Thibeault said that she would like an update on the trash ordinance at one of the next two meetings.
- b. Brownell Library Report – August
- c. Howard Center Community Outreach – FY22 Annual Report
- d. CSWD Special Meeting Warning – Bond Vote for Recycling Facility
- e. Act 250 Permit Amendment for 92-100 Pearl Street
- f. All Hazard Mitigation Plan
- g. Joint Housing Committee Minutes: September 7, 2022
- h. Bike/Walk Advisory Committee Minutes: September 19, 2022

202 8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

203 a. *An executive session may be necessary to discuss negotiating or securing real estate purchase or
204 lease options

205 See below.

206
207 b. **An executive session may be needed to discuss negotiation or securing real estate purchase or
208 lease options

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210 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER to find that premature general**
211 **public knowledge regarding contracts associated with the Tree Farm Recreation Facility would**
212 **clearly place the City at a substantial disadvantage because the Council risks disclosing its**
213 **negotiating strategy if it discusses the contract terms in public, and that the City Council go into**
214 **executive session to discuss contracts under the provision of Section 1(313)(a)(1) of the Vermont**
215 **Statutes and to negotiate or secure real estate purchase or lease options under Section**
216 **1(313)(a)(2) of the Vermont Statutes and to include Regina Mahony, Brad Luck, and Harlan Smith.**
217 **The motion passed 4-0 at 8:36 P.M.**

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219 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, to exit executive session.**
220 **The motion passed 4-0 at 9:50 P.M.**

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222 9. **ADJOURN**

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224 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, to adjourn the meeting. The**
225 **motion passed 4-0 at 9:51 P.M.**

226
227 Respectfully Submitted,
228 Amy Coonradt