

2025 City Council Orientation

Amber Thibeault, Council President

Regina Mahony, City Manager

May 14, 2025



Agenda



- Demographics & Comprehensive Plan
- Vision & Strategic Action Plan - Priorities
- Council-Manager Form of Government
 - Council Authority
 - Manager Authority
- Council Rules of Procedure
- Open Meeting Law, Transparency & Code of Ethics
- Organization
 - Committees
 - Departments
 - Facilities
- Budget and Fiduciary Responsibility
- Priority Projects, Hiring & Events
- Resources, questions, and discussion!



Essex Junction Demographics

Total Population	10,590
Median Age	40
Over 65	16.5%
Housing Units	4,789
Median Gross Rent	\$1,439
Median Household Income	\$94,423
BA or Higher	50.3%
Born Outside the US	12.9%
Language spoken at home	14.9% other than English

Thoughtful Growth



Reclaim space for people to create a high-quality pedestrian experience.



2019 Comprehensive Plan

- 8-yr plan
- Done prior to separation
- Most content still relevant

Next steps:

1. Community Development Department & Planning Commission will begin update in FY26.
2. Will incorporate the City's Strategic Plan, Connect the Junction, Housing Targets.
3. Just secured Municipal Planning Grant!



Create a governance structure and shared vision for the Village and the Town that enhances the unique characteristics of each.



Continue to leverage the Village Center and Neighborhood Development designations to add diverse housing types and attract local businesses in these areas.

Safety



Calm traffic in the Village Center.



Proceed with Crescent Connector construction.



Improve access to and safety of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.



The **Connector Road** opens up six acres of underutilized land to development, while creating a way for traffic to avoid Five Corners. This road would improve traffic efficiency at Five Corners by 12%.

2019 Comprehensive Plan



The **Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan** defines a comprehensive long-range vision for the community. It contains general goals and policies that guide decisions about the physical development or redevelopment of the community, and community issues more broadly.

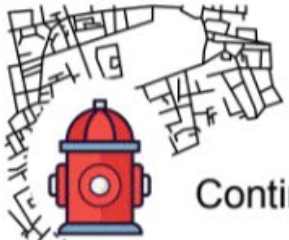
The following are highlights from the Plan, organized by **Heart and Soul** values to explain the breadth of issues this Plan addresses.



Local Economy



Engage in policies to make progress on the transit-specific strategies in the Economic Development and Vision Plan including:



Continue to invest in public infrastructure and manage public assets in collaboration with the Town.



Regional multimodal improvements



Freight and commuter rail service expansion



Transit-oriented development



Work with the Town to implement the **Enhanced Energy Plan** to reduce energy consumption, generate more renewable energy, and reduce fossil fuel use in the heating, transportation and electricity sectors.

2019 Comprehensive Plan



Education



Students are educated by a rigorous, well-balanced, proficiency-based curriculum to achieve reading and math fluency by the end of grade 3 and to graduate with the skills to be successful.

$3+1=4$

Strengthen early childhood education so children are ready to thrive in school and businesses have a robust workforce to support the local economy.



Health & Recreation



Integrate substance use prevention into our culture by working with Essex CHIPS and the school district to ensure youth are receiving healthy messages where they live, learn, and play.



Offer programs and facilities to ensure residents of all ages and abilities have access to physical activity and healthy food choices.

2019 Comprehensive Plan



Community Connections



Maintain and enhance a culture that values diversity and offers a welcoming spirit.



Participate in local government and volunteer to stay connected and ensure all voices are heard.



Vision & Strategic Action Plan

The City of Essex Junction becomes known for its inclusive and welcoming ethos. As a result, the population is both economically and ethnically diverse. **The economic approach is community-led while having a strong focus on adapting and growing as a community.** Community connectivity is significant in relation to amenities, activities, and engagement, as well as practicality via cycle lanes, trails, and public transportation. Walkability and cycling are encouraged, and there are passive and active greenspaces within the city. Inclusivity and equity are demonstrated via affordable housing, vertical development and incentives and new businesses. **There is investment in the public good and shared amenities and resources that create desirable living conditions. There is a focus on community vitality across the city with vibrant amenities and activities.** The enviable location is attractive to people wishing to move to the city due to its amenities, character, sense of community and proximity to the airport, Burlington, and the landscape of Vermont.

Strategic Plan Pillars & Action Items

Pillar 1: Housing and Urban Design

KEY ACTIONS

- Action 1: Enhance the 'Neighborhood Village Feel'
- Action 2: Include Contemporary Design Principles into the City of Essex Junction
- Action 3: Improve the City's Landscaping and Design Standards

Pillar 2: Public Services and Facilities

KEY ACTIONS

- Action 4: Promote and Enhance Safety
- Action 5: Address and Focus on Community Wellness
- Action 6: Provide Responsible, Open and Transparent Government

Pillar 3: Economic and Business Development

KEY ACTIONS

- Action 7: Enhance Downtown and Corridors
- Action 8: Provide and Promote Partnership Driven Institutional Support and Advocacy
- Action 9: Bring Businesses Together to Work Collaboratively

Pillar 4: Transportation and Connectivity

KEY ACTIONS

- Action 10: Improve Community Education
- Action 11: Enhance Transportation Safety
- Action 12: Develop a Citywide Multimodal Transportation Plan

Pillar 5: Environmental Stewardship

KEY ACTIONS

- Action 13: Support Green Spaces and Tree Planting
- Action 14: Encourage Clean Energy and Efficiency Options
- Action 15: Create a City-wide Comprehensive Sustainability Plan

Pillar 6: Community Engagement and Decision Making

KEY ACTIONS

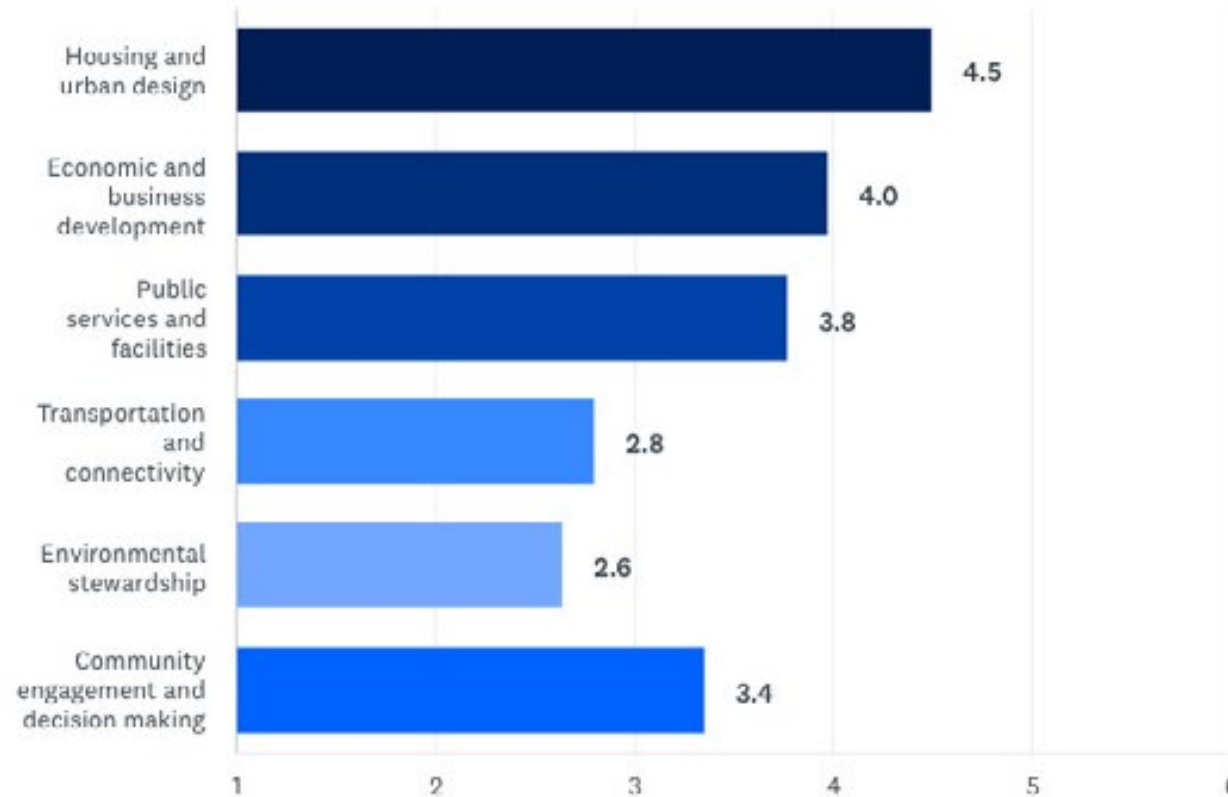
- Action 16: Promote Community Vitality
- Action 17: Enhance Community Connectivity
- Action 18: Create a Comprehensive Community Engagement Plan



Strategic Pillar Prioritization



PILLARS RANKED IN TERMS OF IMPORTANCE FOR ACTION, OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



Strategic Action Item Prioritization

View the full Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan report and the Department Work Plans [HERE](#).



ORDER OF IMPLEMENTATION

As we think about implementation, please rank the order of implementation over the next 5 years.

ACTION 6

ACTION 7

ACTION 4

ACTION 17

ACTION 1

ACTION 5

ACTION 18

ACTION 3

ACTION 2

ACTION 11

ACTION 10

ACTION 12

ACTION 8

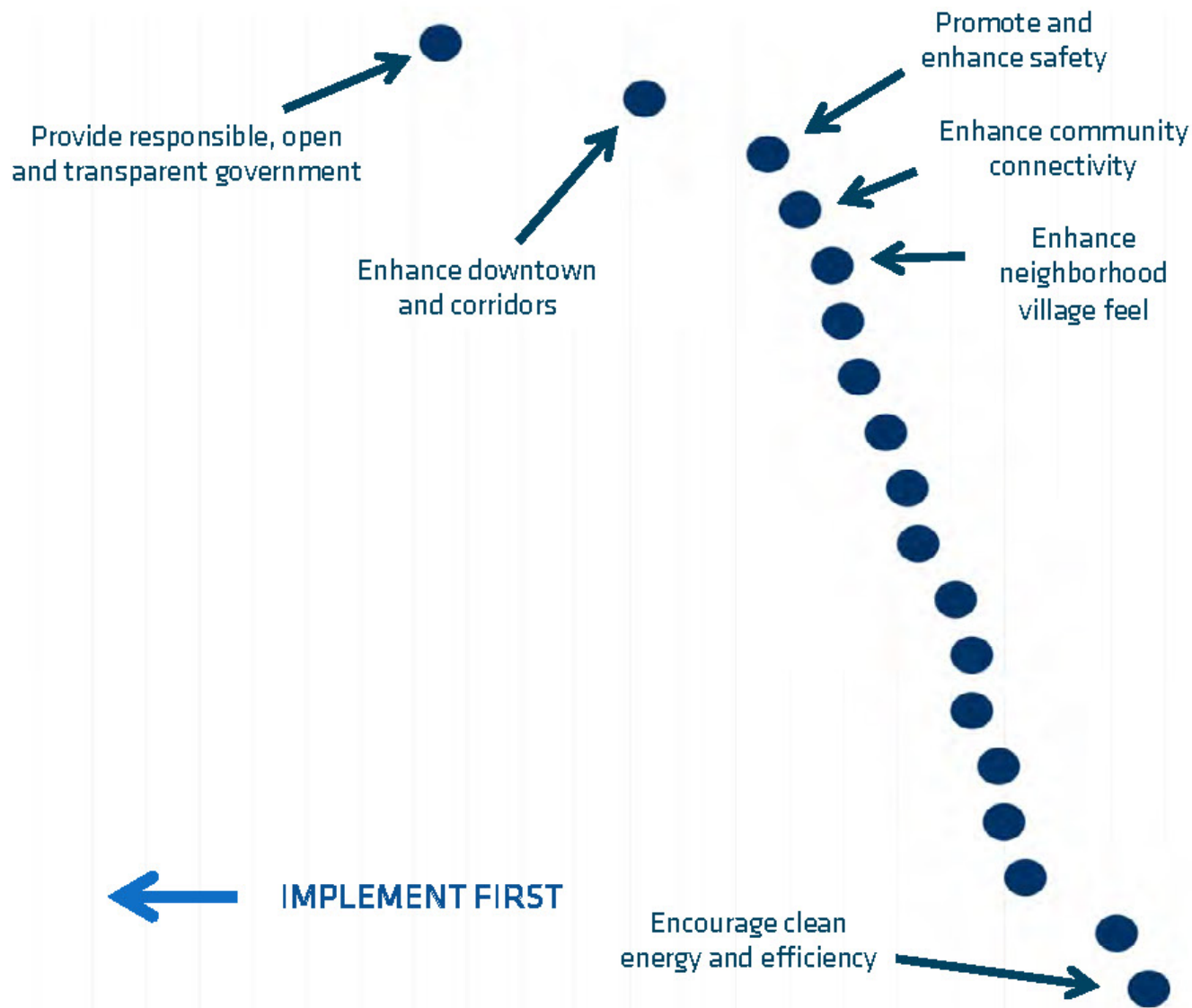
ACTION 16

ACTION 9

ACTION 15

ACTION 13

ACTION 14



Council-Manager Form of Government



Councilors make up the City Council – the policy-setting board

- As a group, set high-level priorities to provide direction to staff
- Make and change policy
- Oversee the big picture – budget, plans, property, and City Manager

The **City Manager** is the Chief Administrative Officer - runs the City Operations

- Run day-to-day operations of the City
- Supervise and direct all staff
- Support Council in developing policy
- Implement and administer policy, budget, plans, and property

Council Authority



- Hire the City Manager
- Appoint City Attorney*, City Clerk*, Zoning Administrator
- Appoint residents to the DRB, Planning Commission and all other policy boards
- Serve as the Liquor Control Board, Local Cannabis Control Commission, Board of Health, and other Statutory requirements
- Make, amend, repeal ordinances
- Acquire, sell, lease property
- Provide for fiduciary oversight and approve budget to bring to the voters
- Provide an independent audit
- Convene public forums

* Manager recommends, Council approves (City Charter 602 (d) and (o))

Manager Authority



- Serves as the Chief Administrative Officer
- Prepare the annual budgets and administer them
- Oversee all ordinance enforcement, collection of funds, and expenditure of funds
- Serve as the Personnel Director and hire, manage, and fire (if needed) staff; including appointment of Treasurer (Charter 602(b))
- Regularly report to the Council on finances and operations
- Attend and participate in all Council meetings
- **Serves as the Councilors' primary support**

See International City Management Association's (ICMA) *Code of Ethics*



Staff Authority Directed by State Statute

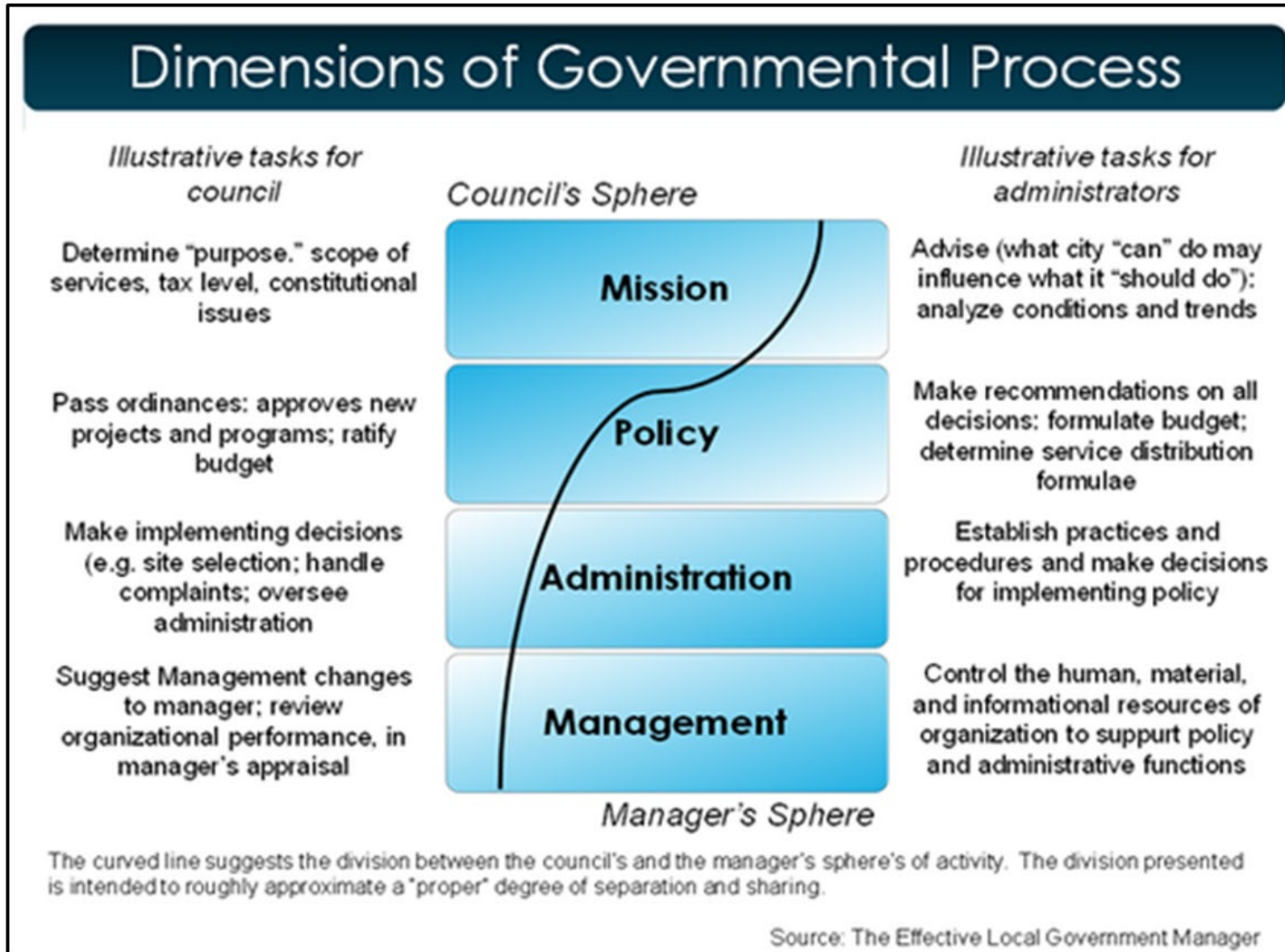
Zoning Administrator: Must adhere to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 17 and enforce the Land Development Regulations.

Police Chief: Must adhere to 24 V.S.A Chapter 55 and enforce all local and state laws.

Fire Department: Must adhere to V.S.A. relevant to a variety of building trades and fire safety protocols.

City Clerk: Must adhere to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 35 and administer all elections and recording as prescribed.

Roles and Authority



Council Roles

Source: Defining the Roles of Elected Officials and City/County Manager: Understanding the various roles of elected officials and how the CAO and staff can best support them. By Julia Novak, ICMA-CM, Tanisha Briley, ICMA-CM, Dr. John Nalbandian, and Jan Perkins, ICMA-CM | Dec 01, 2024 | PM Magazine - Article

Roles	Associated Activities
Strategic Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Planning• Determining what is important in the short term• Identifying community wants and needs• Seeing interconnections
Representative–Constituent Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answering calls and emails from residents• Connecting residents with the local government to help resolve issues
Trustee–Steward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looking at the long-term implications of decisions• Fiduciary role
Decision-maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading briefing materials• Participating in study sessions• Listening to residents• Voting
Community Builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being present and listening to individuals and community groups• Convening important community conversations• Celebrating accomplishments• Participating in events
Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducting the manager’s performance evaluation• Reviewing the audit

Manager Role to Help Council Achieve Best for Community

Source: Defining the Roles of Elected Officials and City/County Manager: Understanding the various roles of elected officials and how the CAO and staff can best support them. By Julia Novak, ICMA-CM, Tanisha Briley, ICMA-CM, Dr. John Nalbandian, and Jan Perkins, ICMA-CM | Dec 01, 2024 | PM Magazine - Article

1. Intentionally plan for opportunities for the governing body to fulfill each role, and create a time at council meetings where councilors can share their recent activities in the community. This publicly encourages councilors to reach out.
2. Create systems for efficiently addressing constituent concerns so elected officials can turn these issues over to the staff and not feel like they must be the ombudsman for the public, while at the same time, receiving credit for staff responses.
3. Refer to strategic plans and long-range goals when executing programs and projects to create connections between the daily work of the organization and the priorities of the elected officials. This could mean connecting agenda items directly to governing body priorities.
4. Discuss both short- and long-term consequences of action (or inaction).
5. Support the governing body in establishing ground rules for civility and mutual accountability.
6. Demonstrate accountability to the governing body by updating them on the status of agreed-upon priorities and ensuring a meaningful process exists for performance evaluations.

Communicating with Staff



- Questions and requests should be directed to the Manager
- To the extent that general questions or history is requested, it will be shared with the full Council
- Councilors are encouraged to:
 - Attend facility tours with Department Heads and the Manager
 - Reach out to staff before meetings with questions and to understand more about an issue or item on the agenda.
- The Manager must be cc'ed on all correspondence between staff and Councilors
- Direct constituents to the City Manager when asked about an operational issue
- Emergency Situations
 - The City Manager or Acting City Manager will attempt to keep the council informed
 - During emerging events, the focus must be on the event and public safety. In these instances, it's best to speak with one voice (Manager, Chief, Council President)

Council Rules of Procedure



- Annually Council elects a president, vice president, and clerk
- The president runs the meetings
- A quorum of the Council is 3
- All action/direction of the Council is done by affirmative vote
- Follow the 2023 Communication Policy: “Formal positions of the City Council, or calls or questions seeking the official opinion of the City Council, should be referred to the City Council President unless another Councilor has been designated by the body or to the City Manager. If a resident communicates with the entire City Council, the Council President should respond on behalf of the Council.”
- President and Manager set the agenda. Councilors can request items by the Wednesday prior.
- Agenda Outline
 - Public to Be Heard
 - Business Items
 - Consent Agenda
 - Councilor Comments & Concerns/City Manager’s Report
 - Reading File
 - Executive Session (if needed)

Meetings are held on the 2nd
and 4th Wednesdays at 6:30 PM

Transparency & Open Meeting Law



Goals are that the public trust in its officers is preserved and ensure that all decisions made by public officers are based on the best interests of the municipality.

- All (but executive session) communication by a Council member discussing City business is considered public
- Use your @essexjunction.org email to conduct City business
- Meetings must be warned with minutes produced
- Avoid instances where 3 or more Council members are present **and** discussing current or future items before the Council
- Information can be shared via email, but debate must take place in public setting. Careful of “reply all.”
- Executive session content and items marked confidential must be kept private.
 - Do not forward confidential emails
 - Do not talk about Executive session outside of Executive Session

Open Meeting Law Changes - 2024



- Act 133 of 2024 included some significant changes to Open Meeting Law. The Secretary of State has a useful: [FAQ](#).
- Non-advisory bodies (aka “decision making bodies” = City Council, DRB, Library Trustees, BCA) must provide a dedicated, staffed, physical meeting location (unless in emergencies) and may conduct hybrid meetings. We do conduct hybrid meetings for increased involvement. The law authorizes remote-only meetings for advisory public bodies.
- Requires each municipality to post on its website, if it maintains or designates one, the procedures for filing an Open Meeting Law complaint and the text of the relevant statute. This information is located on the City’s website here: <https://www.essexjunction.org/boards/open-meeting-law>.
- Beginning January 1, 2025, requires annual Open Meeting Law training for chairs of legislative bodies, municipal managers, and mayors. The training is located [here](#).

Municipal Code of Ethics



- [Act 171 \(H.875\)](#), an Act establishing a municipal ethics framework in Vermont, went into effect on June 10, 2024. The Act establishes a statewide Municipal Code of Ethics in Sec. 22. 24 V.S.A. Chapter 60.
- The City Council adopted this code on December 18, 2024; and it was later incorporated in the City's General Rules and Personnel Regulations.
- We've asked all staff and committee members to read and sign the new Code and take the required training.
- The code and the process for investigating potential violations is located on the City's website here: <https://www.essexjunction.org/codes/municipal-code-of-ethics>
- The State's Ethics Commission produced this helpful guide to help explain when a perceived or real conflict of interest may exist as well as the recusal process: https://www.essexjunction.org/fileadmin/files/Administration/Conflict_of_Interest_Quick_Chart____FAQ.pdf

Boards and Committees



Specified in Charter

- Planning Commission
- Development Review Board
- Board of Abatement
- Board of Civil Authority
- Library Board of Trustees

Regional Organizations with City Representation

- Chittenden County Communications Union District
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Chittenden Solid Waste District
- Green Mountain Transit
- Town Meeting TV
- Winooski Valley Parks District
- Champlain Water District
- Tree Farm Management Group

Policy Committees of Council

- Bike/Walk Advisory Committee
- Tree Advisory Committee
- Capital Program Review Committee
- Police Community Advisory Board
- Tri-Town Sewer Committee
- Governance Committee
- Recreation Advisory Committee

Possible Future Policy Committees of the Council – *prioritize through annual Strategic Plan process*

- Housing Commission
- Energy Committee
- Downtown Committee
- Economic Development Committee
- Project-Based Committees (similar to 1 Main St. Park Design)
- Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee
- Community Engagement Committee

City of Essex Junction

Organization chart

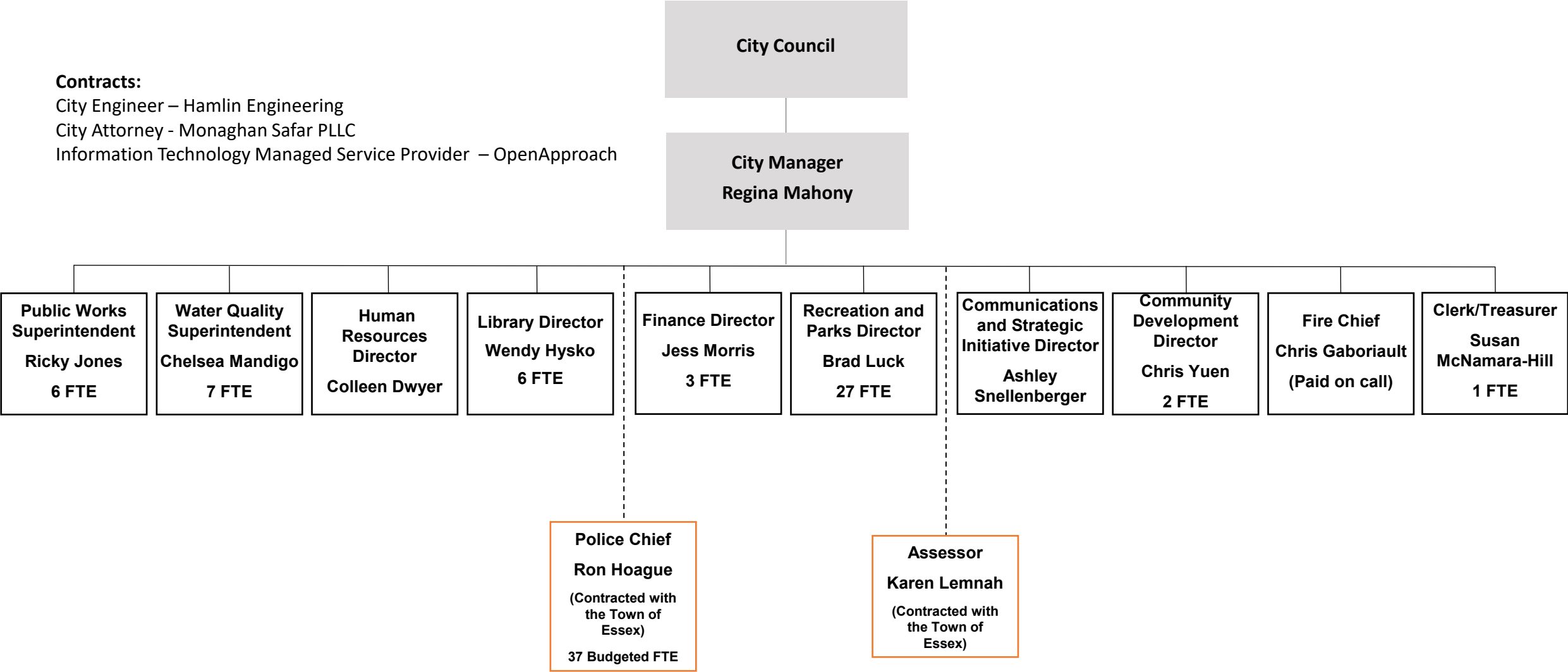


Contracts:

City Engineer – Hamlin Engineering

City Attorney - Monaghan Safar PLLC

Information Technology Managed Service Provider – OpenApproach



Facilities



- 2 Lincoln
 - Brownell Library
 - Fire Department
 - Maple Street Park and Facilities
 - Park Street School
 - Department of Public Works Garage
 - Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Fire Station
- Parks
 - Cascade Park
 - Maple Street Park
 - Meadow Terrace Community Garden
 - Stevens Park
 - Tree Farm Recreational Facility*
 - West Street Community Gardens**
 - West Street Dog Park**
 - 1 Main Street



FY 26 Budget: Summary General Fund

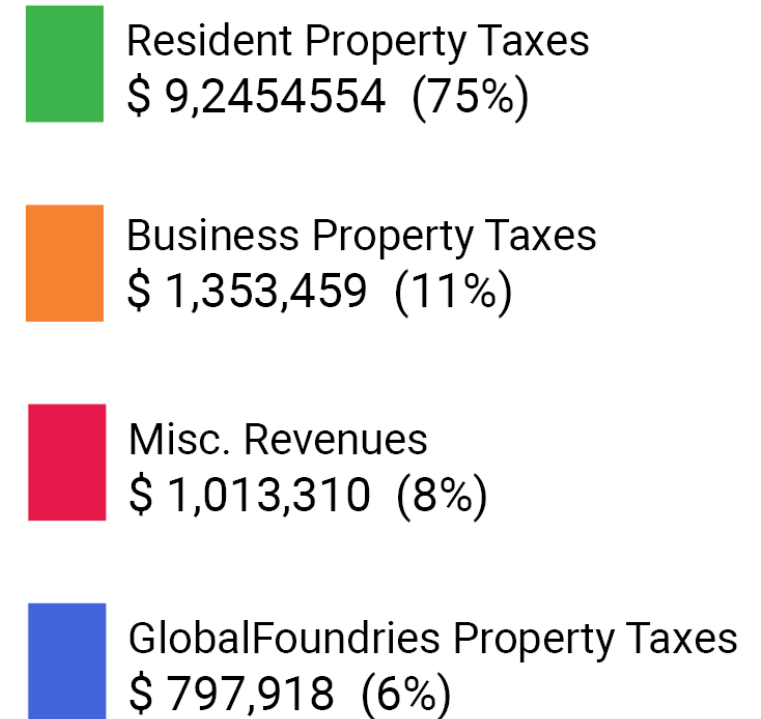
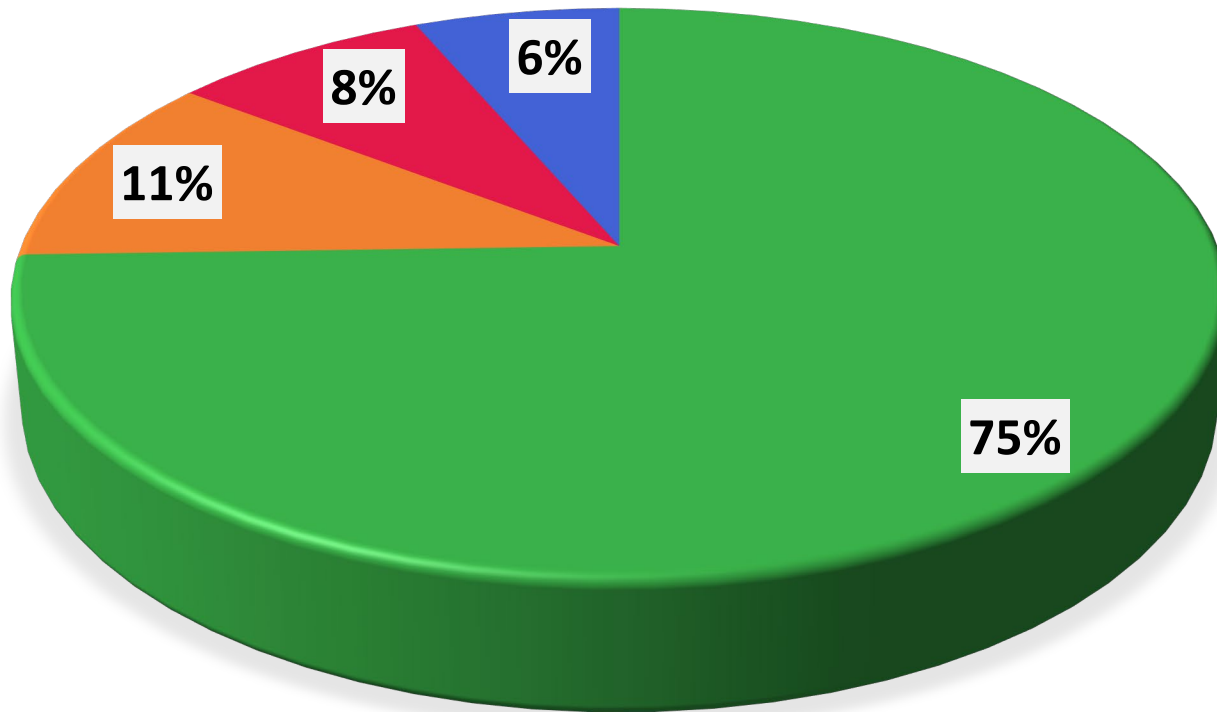
FY25 Budget	FY26 Budget	\$ Change from FY25	% Change from FY24
\$12,004,124	12,419,241	\$415,117	3%

Estimated Tax impact

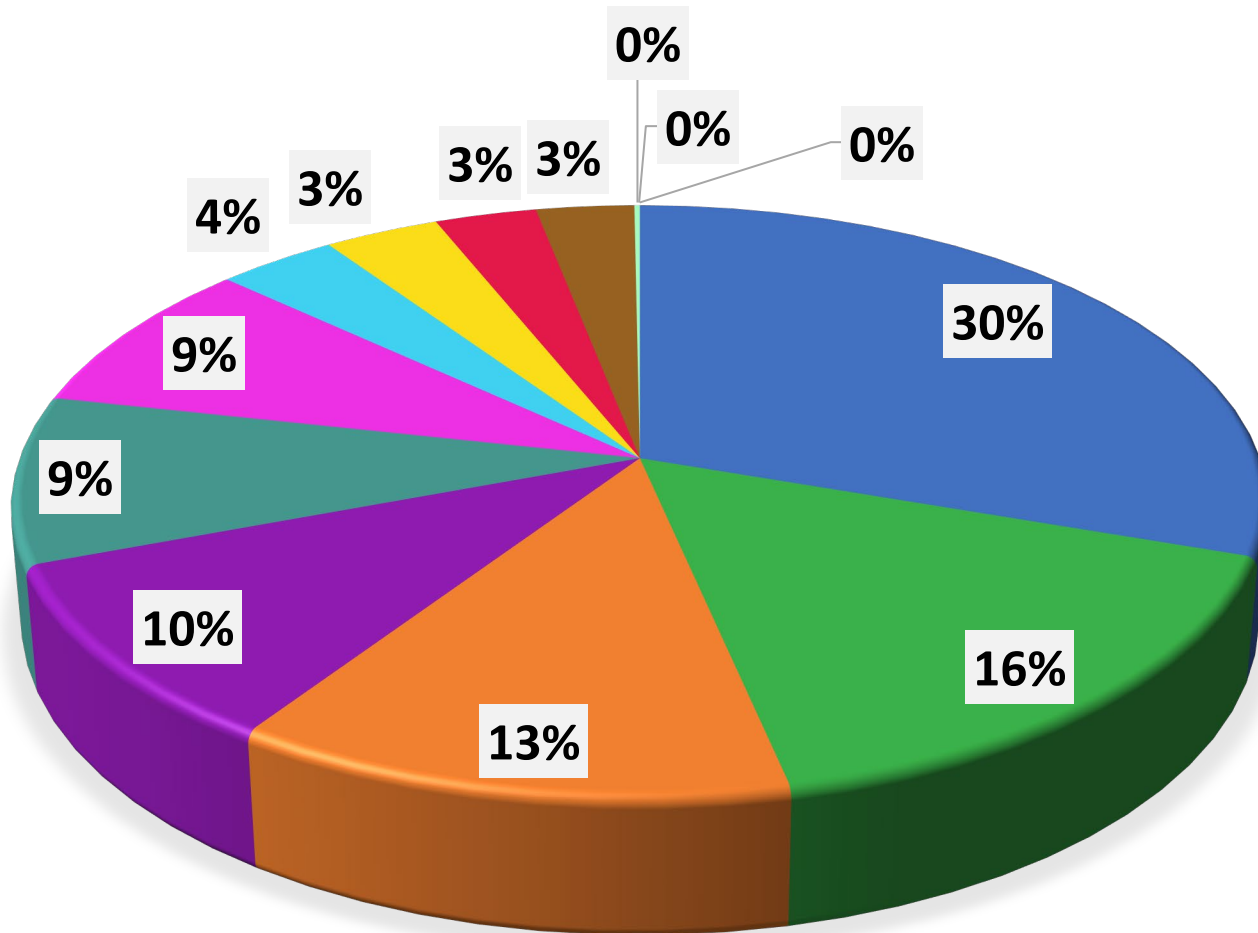
FY25 Rate	FY25 Rate	\$ Change	% Change
\$0.9861	\$1.0120	\$73.00	2.6%

Estimated tax increase to a \$280,000 City property is \$73

FY26 Budget Revenue



FY26 Budget Expenses



Public Safety	\$ 3,758,530 (30%)	Includes Fire, Police, & Rescue
General Government	\$ 2,032,785 (16%)	Includes Administration, Legislative, Clerk, Finance, IT, & Assessing
Public Works	\$ 1,583,502 (13%)	
Transfers and Misc.	\$ 1,230,770 (10%)	Includes Transfers to Capital & General Reserves
Recreation	\$ 1,135,776 (9%)	
Brownell Library	\$ 1,047,704 (9%)	
County/Regional Functions	\$ 445,901 (4%)	
Community Development	\$ 425,610 (3%)	
Debt	\$ 375,943 (3%)	
Buildings	\$ 362,720 (3%)	
Health and Human Services	\$ 20,000 (0%)	
Economic Development	\$ 0 (0%)	
Stormwater	\$ 0 (0%)	

Purchasing



Purchases	Type	Purchasing Agent
<\$500	incidental	all staff
\$501 - \$2,000	Routine	Designated purchasing agents by Dept Head
\$2,001 - \$5,000	Minor	Designated purchasing agents by Dept Head - 3 Quotes required
\$5,001-\$10,000	Moderate	Designated purchasing agents by Dept Head - 3 Quotes required
\$10,001-\$40,000	Large	City Manager or delegation to Dept Head - 3 Quotes required
>\$40,000	Major	City Council

Competitive Bidding	
	Standardized competitive bid format required; or use of prequalified vendor or exceptions: competitive proposals, sole source purchase, recurring purchases, maintenance, repair, or emergency purchase
>\$40,000	
>\$250,000	Optional prequalification for single project
Sole Source	
<\$40,000	Awarded by City Manager
>\$40,000	Awarded by City Council
>\$150,000	Funded in accordance with Grant Terms

Grants need Council approval if there is a financial obligation; approved by City Manager if no financial obligation.

Resource: Purchasing Policy – Effective Date 10/11/2018

Priority Projects (a selection)



- Strategic Planning Process – next up the Council Retreat!
- Construction Projects
 - 2 Lincoln Renovation
 - Library Roof Replacement
 - Iroquois Waterline
 - Annual Repaving – some of Main & Pearl
 - Pump Station Retrofits
- Amtrak Multi-modal Station
- Stormwater Utility
- WWTF – 10-year assessment
- Governance Committee
- Salary Study and negotiation of Association Contract
- Future facility needs: Public Works, Fire and Recreation
- Connect the Junction
- Comprehensive Plan Update in FY26
- Equity Work with CCRPC and Partner Communities

The Capital Plan also includes a list of prioritized municipal capital needs (roads, bridges, culverts, sidewalks, and waterlines). The list of projects is included in the budget, and a summary of the projects is included on the Capital Program Review Committee and can be found [HERE](#).

Also for a more thorough review of City projects view the full Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan report and the Department Work Plans [HERE](#).

Hiring:



Full Time Positions

- Licensed Childcare Site Coordinator
 - To apply visit: <https://cityofessexjunction.applytojob.com/apply>

EJRP is hiring for seasonal summer staff

- Day Camp Counselors
- Day Camp Activity Coordinators
- Lifeguards
- Swim Instructors
- Park Patrol

To apply for Summer positions above please visit:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfD_QXKShtN3nnnOqTb78ESu8tpQxEGLhXhznji-KijhMWpAg/viewform

Upcoming Events



- Memorial Day Parade
 - Saturday, May 24
 - 9:30 AM - Pre-parade program at 5 corners
 - 10:00 AM - Parade begins
 - Parade Route: From St. James Church, Route 2A to 5 Corners, up Pearl Street to the main entrance at Champlain Valley Exposition
- Pride Glow Run
 - Friday, May 30, 7:30 PM
 - Race Starts – 9 PM
- Essex Pride Festival
 - Saturday, May 31, Noon



Resources

- [City Charter](#)
- [Municipal Code of Ethics](#)
- [Purchasing Policy](#)
- [Budget](#)
- [Ordinances](#)
- [Declaration of Inclusion](#)
- [City and Town Agreements](#)

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