



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

Online & 2 Lincoln St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Wednesday, June 14, 2023  
**6:30 PM**

E-mail: [admin@essexjunction.org](mailto:admin@essexjunction.org)

[www.essexjunction.org](http://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. **PUBLIC HEARING**
  - a. Public Hearing on Land Development Code Amendments
6. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - a. \*Interviews and Consider Appointments to the Community Advisory Board
  - b. Conversation with CHIPS Executive Director Christina Corodimas
  - c. Discussion and Consideration of Land Development Code Amendments
  - d. Discussion and Consideration of Park Ordinance Amendments
  - e. Discussion and Consideration of Local Option Tax Policy
  - f. \*\*Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to discuss pending or probable civil litigation
7. **CONSENT ITEMS**
  - a. Approve Check Warrants #17355 (051923); #17356 (052623); #17357 (060223); #17358 (060923)
  - b. Approve Minutes: May 24, 2023
8. **READING FILE**
  - a. Council & Manager member comments
  - b. Reappraisal Update
  - c. Governor's Executive Order on Housing
  - d. Low Income Household Water Assistance Program
  - e. Champlain Water District Water Quality 2023 Report
  - f. Development Review Board: May 18, 2023
  - g. Brownell Library Trustee: May 24, 2023
9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
  - a. \*An executive session may be needed for the appointment of public officials
  - b. \*\*An executive session may be needed to discuss pending or probable civil litigation
10. **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. Regarding zoom participants, if individuals interrupt, they will be muted; and if they interrupt a second time they will be removed. 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  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
June 14, 2023**

**COUNCILORS PRESENT:** Raj Chawla, President; Amber Thibeault, Vice President; Marcus Certa, Clerk; Andrew Brown, Elaine Haney.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager; Ron Hoague, Chief of Police; Brad Luck, EJRP Director; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Luke Brockmeier, Diane Clemens, Mary Jo Engel, Celeste Marie Girrell, Victoria Gragg, Anthony Jackson-Miller, Michelle Krasny, Mark Mendes, Jonathan Peach- Kenworthy, James Pfeiffer, Roseanne Prestipino, Guillaume Teganyi, Stephen Wille Padros, Robert Paroline, Allison Wermer, Bob, RSM, 94464297825.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Councilor Chawla called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

No approval needed.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda

None.

5. **PUBLIC HEARING**

a. Public Hearing on Land Development Code Amendments

Councilor Chawla opened the public hearing.

Community Development Director Yuen began by providing an overview of the Land Development Code (LDC) and amendments. He noted that there were proposed LDC amendments put forth by the Planning Commission last year that had stalled for about six months while the Junction became a City but that there is a statutory deadline to either accept or reject these proposed amendments no later than one year after they are submitted for the City Council's consideration and that that deadline (in August) is fast approaching. He noted that the LDC amendments are zoning bylaws that regulate what can be built in each part of the City and guides development and growth in the City. He said that the purpose of the LDC amendments is to align with the latest Comprehensive Plan and Design Five Corners updates, be responsive to the current housing crisis, and align with State statute. He spoke about the amendments in more detail, including changes to triplex and four-plex requirements in the R1 and R2 districts, changes to design review and historic preservation requirements, updates to the minimum parking requirements, updates to stormwater and green infrastructure regulations, and better standards for bicycle parking facilities.

Community Development Director Yuen then spoke about the survey fielded by the City between mid-May and early June about the LDC amendments, noting that there were 217 responses. He noted that the majority of the respondents lived in Essex Junction, owned their homes, and were older than 35. He spoke about themes in the survey, noting that many respondents did not think that the amendments related to housing would benefit themselves or their families, but at the same time, the majority thought

54 that the amendments would benefit the City as a whole. He noted that renters appeared to be more  
55 supportive of the amendments related to housing, but there were only 14 respondents who were renters,  
56 and younger residents appeared to be more supportive of the amendments. He noted strong support  
57 for bicycle parking and amenities and green infrastructure requirements across the board.

58  
59 RSM asked whether these regulations would remove the winter parking ban, and Councilor Chawla  
60 replied that he does not anticipate the proposed amendments changing the winter parking ban.

61  
62 Mary Jo Engel expressed appreciation for the efforts to revise the LDC. She expressed support for  
63 maintaining maximum building heights at 4 stories, as 5 stories should be the limit (when taking height  
64 bonuses into account). She said that housing should put quality over quantity and that Essex Junction  
65 is not responsible for solving the housing shortage in the county or the state. She expressed support for  
66 the outreach and survey.

67  
68 Robert Caroline spoke in support of the minimum parking requirements being reduced. He also  
69 expressed support for a City parking garage.

70  
71 Councilor Chawla closed the public hearing.

72  
73 **6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

74 a. \*Interviews and Consider Appointments to the Community Advisory Board  
75 Councilor Chawla began by providing an overview of the Community Advisory Board (CAB). He said  
76 that the board would be an independent advisory board with the purpose of facilitating communication  
77 between the Essex Junction community, the Essex community, and the Essex Police Department,  
78 especially as it relates to equity. City Manager Mahony noted that there are a number of applicants who  
79 have applied to be on this board.

80  
81 The Council interviewed Mark Mendes. He spoke about his involvement in the community and his  
82 interest in serving on the CAB. Councilor Haney asked Mr. Mendes how he felt that the Police  
83 Department was doing in the community and what, if anything, he would change. Mr. Mendes replied  
84 that the police have a difficult job and that being intentional about including all voices in the community  
85 when seeking input is crucial. Councilor Brown asked how the Applicant has supported the voices of  
86 marginalized individuals in the community, and Mr. Mendes spoke about how his organization helped  
87 the first Nepali community members move into Essex. Councilor Chawla noted that this would not be an  
88 oversight board and asked if that would pose challenges to the relationship between the Board and the  
89 Police Department. Mr. Mendes replied that there would need to be open communication and trust  
90 between the Board and the Police Department in order to have an effective partnership and that he  
91 would strive to achieve consensus.

92  
93 The Council interviewed Victoria Gragg. She spoke about her involvement in the community and her  
94 interest in serving on the CAB. Councilor Haney asked Ms. Gragg about her perception of the  
95 relationship between the community and the Police Department and whether there are particular items  
96 for improvement. Ms. Gragg replied that the relationship between the community and Police Department  
97 is good and the quality of policing is good as well, but that there is always room for improvement.  
98 Councilor Brown asked how Ms. Gragg has supported the voices and needs of the marginalized in the  
99 community, and Ms. Gragg replied that she would be open to feedback and the experiences of everyone  
100 in the community and ensuring that everyone's voices are heard. Councilor Chawla asked how she  
101 would help resolve any conflicts or tension between the CAB and the Police Department. Ms. Gragg  
102 replied that honesty and truthfulness are important and that working to understand how decisions are  
103 made and arrived at will be important to resolving tension.

104  
105 The Council interviewed Michelle Krasny. She spoke about her involvement in the community and her  
106 interest in and qualifications for serving on the CAB. She asked what the role would be for the CAB  
107 between the community and the police. Councilor Chawla replied that the intention is to address any  
108 issues that may arise as well as foster a strong connection between the Police Department and the  
109 community it serves. Councilor Haney asked if the Applicant has concerns about the quality of policing  
110 in Essex. Ms. Krasny replied that she has no issues with the Essex Police Department but thinks there  
111 are issues to be solved with policing in general and has been interested in the topic on a national level  
112 and that the creation of this board is timely. Councilor Brown asked how Ms. Krasny has supported the  
113 voices and needs of the most marginalized in the community, and Ms. Krasny replied that she is  
114 privileged in not having experienced trauma due to her relationships with the police but that it could be  
115 her role to support the voices of those who have had those experiences. She spoke about her  
116 community-building work in Toronto, Canada. Councilor Chawla asked how Ms. Krasny would navigate  
117 tensions or conflicts between the CAB and the Police Department, and she replied that the role of the  
118 CAB sounds more like a communication facilitator and trust-building entity and that there shouldn't be  
119 conflicts to resolve. Councilor Certa asked how the Applicant's experience with research could help her  
120 in this role, and Ms. Krasny replied that her research experience could help inform what is working and  
121 what isn't working.  
122

123 The Council interviewed Leandro Duque Garcia. He spoke about a potential concern that those  
124 community members who do have issues with the police may not feel empowered to come forward and  
125 speak out. Councilor Chawla replied that this is one of his concerns as well and that leadership at EPD,  
126 the Council, and staff all have a genuine desire to make this a functioning board that can help bring  
127 issues to light. He asked if it is important to the Applicant that the CAB is independent, and Mr. Duque  
128 Garcia replied that it is important to make sure that the perception of the CAB remains that it is  
129 independent. He said that he would strive to reach the members of the community who would be least  
130 comfortable with the police to try and bring them into the conversation to represent their concerns.  
131 Councilor Haney asked about the Applicant's concerns with the current EPD and any changes he would  
132 like to make. Mr. Duque Garcia replied that he does not have specific concerns but would like to get  
133 involved and find out how the spectrum of residents in the community feels about the issues. Councilor  
134 Brown asked how Mr. Duque Garcia has helped support the voices and needs of the marginalized in  
135 the community, and Mr. Duque Garcia replied that he would work to ensure that he is immersed in the  
136 range of opinions and perspectives about the EPD from the start. Councilor Certa asked whether the  
137 CAB is the right direction for the City to move in, and Mr. Duque Garcia replied that though it is not an  
138 oversight board, it is the right direction and a good place to start.  
139

140 The Council interviewed James Pfeiffer. He spoke about his involvement in the community and  
141 expressed a desire to become more involved in it and spoke about his family's careers in policing. He  
142 said that though it is not an oversight board, the public will treat it as such to an extent and that it depends  
143 on the amount of access given to the CAB by the municipalities. He said that the CAB's role should be  
144 to support marginalized voices, not necessarily to facilitate and improve all communication between the  
145 municipalities and the EPD. He asked why the entirety of the EPD's policies and procedures are not  
146 posted publicly. He said that he does not see any concerns with the EPD so far but said that it depends  
147 on the perceptions of those who interact with the EPD. He spoke about using his privilege to support  
148 the marginalized. Councilor Certa asked about conflict resolution and how he might pursue that between  
149 the CAB and the EPD. Mr. Pfeiffer replied that the first step would be to build a strong foundation with  
150 the EPD and then to ensure that the CAB's perspective is being heard.  
151

152 The Council interviewed Celeste Marie Girrell. She spoke about her involvement in the community and  
153 said that community involvement is the only way to keep Vermont the way it is. She spoke about her

154 interest in and qualifications for serving on the CAB. Councilor Haney asked about the quality of policing  
155 in this community and whether changes need to be made. Ms. Girrell replied that she would need to  
156 know more about the status quo from the inside in order to make that determination, though she said  
157 that her experience as a member of the public has been positive. Councilor Brown asked how Ms. Girrell  
158 has supported marginalized members of the community, and Ms. Girrell spoke about her experience as  
159 a Department of Corrections caseworker and superintendent and her direct work with inmates. Councilor  
160 Chawla asked how she would handle conflict between the CAB and the EPD. She replied that she would  
161 be a liaison between two different groups and that ensuring that the two sides are listening,  
162 understanding, and respecting each other is paramount to resolving conflict.

163  
164 The Council interviewed Jonathan Peach-Kenworthy. He spoke about his first interaction with the police  
165 at a traffic stop and said that he had a positive interaction with the Police Chief when he expressed  
166 concerns about that first interaction. He spoke about the importance of outreach to the community to  
167 increase trust. Councilor Brown asked how Mr. Peach-Kenworthy has supported marginalized members  
168 of the community, and he spoke about his work at the Department for Children and Families in the State.  
169 Councilor Chawla asked how he would handle conflict between the CAB and EPD. Mr. Peach-Kenworthy  
170 replied that open lines of communication are extremely important when dealing with conflict.

171  
172 The Council interviewed Guillaume Teganyi. He spoke about his involvement in the community and his  
173 previous qualifications and interest in serving on the CAB. He spoke about his positive experiences with  
174 the EPD. Councilor Haney asked about the state of policing in Essex Junction and whether he would  
175 change anything about the EPD. Mr. Teganyi replied that his experiences with the EPD have been  
176 positive, but he does not have all of the information to inform a better opinion. Councilor Certa asked  
177 how Mr. Teganyi would advise the City and the EPD to work better with the New American community,  
178 and Mr. Teganyi replied that he would work to provide more information to the community on how they  
179 could better interact with the EPD and that the role of the CAB would be to foster and facilitate that  
180 relationship and communication.

181  
182 b. Conversation with CHIPS Executive Director Christina Corodimas  
183 Executive Director Corodimas began by speaking about the CHIPS program, noting that it is a small  
184 community-based nonprofit that serves Essex, Essex Junction, and Westford to strengthen the  
185 community through social infrastructure. She spoke about the value of having a place in the community  
186 to bring the youth together. She said that CHIPS is a no-cost program for the community and serves  
187 around 140 youth per week. She said that CHIPS provides games, healthy snacks, STEM activities, arts  
188 and crafts, and a place to find belonging. She spoke about the educational activities and programming  
189 that CHIPS provides. She also spoke about adult programming, the program's Little Food Pantry, the  
190 distribution of back-to-school supplies, and the financing of the program. She noted that the after-school  
191 program alone saves the community over \$106,000 per year.

192  
193 Councilor Chawla asked whether there have been efforts to find intergenerational opportunities between  
194 CHIPS and the senior center. Executive Director Corodimas replied that there have been opportunities  
195 for group projects in the past (such as a photo project) and said that there have been some accessibility  
196 issues for moving up and down the floors of the building, but that the installation of an elevator will help  
197 greatly.

198  
199 c. Discussion and Consideration of Land Development Code Amendments  
200 City Manager Mahony outlined the options for tonight, which include adoption, adoption with minor  
201 amendments, advising staff that the Council would like to make additional edits (in which case they will  
202 need to warn a second public hearing for the end of July), or taking no action at all.

204 Councilor Thibeault spoke about some of the major themes in the survey. She said that one question  
205 that arose is whether the City will have increased utility costs if there is an increase in housing.  
206 Community Development Director Yuen replied that in terms of renewal of existing infrastructure, the  
207 bigger the tax base becomes, the more efficient it becomes to maintain utilities. He said that there are  
208 some components of growth that would trigger additional infrastructure needs, such as pump stations  
209 and sewer upgrades (in the very long run), and that the intention of the capacity allocation fees would  
210 be to build up the capital reserves for future upgrades. Councilor Thibeault noted numerous comments  
211 in the survey about enforcement and asked for an update on recruitment for code enforcement in the  
212 City. City Manager Mahony replied that there are two positions that were added to the FY24 budget,  
213 including a Town Planner, which will be recruited soon, and a Code Enforcement/Rental Registry  
214 position, which will be recruited for later in the next fiscal year. Council Thibeault noted concerns about  
215 parking in the City and the lack of it. Community Development Director Yuen replied that as the City  
216 grows, there will continue to be a perception of a lack of parking, though it may not necessarily impact  
217 businesses, and that the City will continue to focus on shared parking. Councilor Brown noted a parking  
218 study in 2019 that determined that the City has adequate parking. Councilor Thibeault also noted a  
219 concern that an increase in housing units will increase crime, and Community Development Director  
220 Yuen said that there is no evidence that an increase in housing would lead to an increase in crime,  
221 though it may lead to an increase in emergency response incidents (due to an increased population).  
222 He noted that insufficient housing, however, does lead to increased social costs.  
223

224 Councilor Haney asked whether residential neighborhoods with covenants would still be subject to the  
225 fourplex and triplex requirements, and Community Development Director Yuen replied that  
226 grandfathered covenants are not something that the City enforces but that new covenants cannot  
227 prohibit triplexes and fourplexes in the districts in which they will now be permitted by LDC amendments.  
228

229 Councilor Certa spoke about the aspects he's been thinking about, including increasing the tax base,  
230 increasing the diversity of housing for a diverse population, and attracting people and businesses to  
231 come to the community. He said that some of the amenities that the City wants (such as a centralized  
232 grocery store) cannot be attracted until the density is there to support them. He spoke about increasing  
233 building height maximums as one way to do this but acknowledged the tension between maintaining the  
234 feeling of the Village and increasing density.  
235

236 Councilor Brown said that in terms of levers the City has to be able to alleviate the housing crisis, the  
237 most prominent one is setting the rules for development. He said that he will only support the current  
238 LDC amendments if they include an increase in building height, to allow for additional housing units to  
239 come online, which would give residents more flexibility to move into different types of residential  
240 arrangements.  
241

242 Councilor Chawla said that he would be supportive of moving this conversation forward but would be  
243 reluctant to make further amendments around building height before engaging in more robust discussion  
244 around it in the TOD conversations and further engagement with the Planning Commission that will kick  
245 off later this summer.  
246

247 Steven Wille Padros asked whether the 2019 parking study took winter versus summer parking into  
248 account. Councilor Brown replied that he will need to look into the study again. Mr. Wille Padros replied  
249 that daytime parking is good for business and nighttime parking is good for residents and noted general  
250 constraints around winter parking.  
251

252 RSM asked if there is a deadline or timeline for building and construction permits. Community  
253 Development Director Yuen replied that building permits typically last for one year, but that extensions  
254 are possible.  
255

256 Councilor Certa said that he would like to hear more input from the community on topics like building  
257 height prior to making decisions around changing those requirements but that he would like this round  
258 of amendments to include increased building height maximums. Councilor Chawla said that community  
259 engagement will occur this summer and fall regarding building height and that approving these  
260 amendments now does not preclude that conversation. The Council discussed whether to pass these  
261 amendments now or wait several weeks.  
262

263 **ELAINE HANEY made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the City Council approve**  
264 **the full package of Land Development Code amendments, including the additional minor**  
265 **changes described in this memo and as discussed. VOTING: Councilor Brown – nay, Councilor**  
266 **Certa – nay, Councilor Haney – aye, Councilor Thibeault – aye, Councilor Chawla – aye. The**  
267 **motion passed 3-2.**  
268

269 d. Discussion and Consideration of Park Ordinance Amendments

270 EJRP Director Luck spoke about how the current public park ordinances are outdated and that staff is  
271 working to update them. He noted that the proposed updates have been shared with the Town of Essex  
272 and the Essex Police Department and are being reviewed by legal counsel and that these updates better  
273 reflect current and future uses of the parks. He spoke in more detail about some of the proposed  
274 ordinance changes. Councilors asked several clarifying questions over which public parks, trails, and  
275 bodies are owned/leased and, therefore, governable by these ordinances. Councilors proposed minor  
276 edits.  
277

278 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN, that that the City Council warn a**  
279 **public hearing on June 28, 2023, at 6:30 pm to receive comment on the following changes to the**  
280 **Essex Junction Municipal Ordinances: to update Chapter 3: Regulation of Public Parks in its**  
281 **entirety with the proposed Chapter 3: Regulation of Public Parks, with amendments from this**  
282 **evening and pending legal review. The motion passed 5-0.**  
283

284 e. Discussion and Consideration of Local Option Tax Policy

285 City Manager Mahony said that this discussion would center around whether the City Council would like  
286 the Capital Review Committee to work on developing a Local Option Tax policy to guide how LOT  
287 revenue is spent. She noted that this policy would be used to inform the FY2025 budget build. Councilor  
288 Haney said that it would be good to review the goals of the LOT when it was approved by the Village  
289 Trustees. Councilor Brown asked that this policy include some kind of sidewalk replacement fund.  
290

291 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by ELAINE HANEY, that the City Council ask the Capital**  
292 **Program Review Committee to recommend a LOT policy for Council consideration as time**  
293 **allows. The motion passed 5-0.**  
294

295 f. **\*\*Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to discuss pending or probable civil**  
296 **litigation**

297 See below (#9b).  
298

299 **7. CONSENT AGENDA**

300 a. Approve Check Warrants #17355 (05/19/2023); #17356 (05/26/2023); #17357 (06/02/2023); #17538  
301 (06/09/2023);

b. Approve Minutes: May 24, 2023

**ELAINE HANEY made a motion, seconded by MARCUS CERTA, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.**

8. **READING FILE**

a. Council & Manager member comments: City Manager Mahony noted an event at the library this Saturday from 10-4, that a Juneteenth event is occurring on Sunday from 1-3, an update on representation on the Champlain Water District, a replacement Super Sucker 7000, an update on the cost share for soil contamination/remediation related to the Crescent Connector project (the local cost share will be \$0), spoke about the end of the State's motel voucher program and spoke about EJRP activities for the summer.

b. Reappraisal Update

c. Governor's Executive Order on Housing

d. Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program

e. Champlain Water District Water Quality 2023 Report

f. Development Review Board: May 18, 2023

g. Brownell Library Trustee: May 24, 2023

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

a. \*An executive session may be needed for the appointment of public officials  
See below (#9b).

b. \*\* An executive session may be needed to discuss pending or probable civil litigation

**MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN, that the City Council make the specific finding that general public knowledge of pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party would place the City at a substantial disadvantage, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(E) to include the City Council, City Manager, and Parks and Recreation Director, and that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss the appointment of public officials, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) to include the City Manager. The motion passed 5-0.**

**ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to exit the executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:57 PM.**

10. **ADJOURN**

**ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:58 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Coonradt