



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

Online & 2 Lincoln St.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Wednesday, July 26, 2023
6:30 PM

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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. *Interviews and Consider Appointments to the Community Advisory Board
 - b. Discussion and Consideration of the Housing Commission Charter
 - c. Discussion and Consideration of FY24 Tax Rate
 - d. Discussion and Consideration of 2023 Resurfacing Project Bid Award
 - e. CCRPC Presentation on Sidewalk Inventory Data
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve Check Warrants #17361 (063023)
 - b. Approve Minutes: June 28, 2023
 - c. Approve Stormwater Community Formula Grant Intent to Participate
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Council & Manager member comments
 - b. Wasted* Pilot Program
 - c. Capital Review Committee Minutes: June 6, 2023
 - d. Brownell Library Trustee Minutes: June 20, 2023
 - e. Bike/Walk Advisory Committee Minutes: June 26, 2023
 - f. Planning Commission Minutes: July 6, 2023
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. *An executive session may be needed for the appointment of public officials
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. 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
July 26, 2023**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Chris Dubin, CCRPC; Ron Hoague, Chief of Police; Anthony Jackson-Miller, Community Affairs and Public Information Officer; Rick Jones, Public Works Superintendent; Jess Morris, Financial Director;

OTHERS PRESENT: Heidi Clark, Annie Cooper, Steve Eustis, RSM, Christina's iPhone, Jacob.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

Not needed.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

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

Steve Eustis spoke about Front Porch Forum and how each neighborhood's forum is accessible only to that neighborhood or set of neighborhoods when some of the information being shared on them would be useful for the entire Essex Junction community. He asked the City Council to make a recommendation to the Front Porch Forum administrators that the entire Essex Junction community be considered one neighborhood so that information can be shared across the community on Front Porch Forum.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. *Interviews and Consider Appointments to the Community Advisory Board

Councilor Chawla began by providing an overview of the Community Advisory Board (CAB). He said that the board would be an independent advisory board with the purpose of facilitating communication between the Essex Junction community, Essex community, and the Essex Police Department, especially as it relates to equity.

The Council interviewed Christina Hagestad. She spoke about her experience as a teacher at an alternative therapeutic school and how she has seen how the Police Department can have negative interactions with the youth. She spoke about her interest in equity, restorative practices, and representing marginalized communities. Councilor Brown asked how Ms. Hagestad has supported the voices and needs of the marginalized in the community, and Ms. Hagestad replied that her current work as a teacher has been to work directly with youth who have been marginalized and provide support for them where it is needed. Councilor Haney asked if there is anything that the Applicant would change or improve about the current Essex Police Department, and she replied that she does not have any critiques for the Police Department at this time. Councilor Certa asked for further detail around negative interactions between youth and the police that she cited earlier. Ms. Hagestad replied that some youth have difficulty with authority, and also that there can sometimes be a gender aspect to this tension. She said that she has worked with specific resource officers to try and familiarize youth at her school with them, which has improved relations and interactions.

54
55 b. Discussion and Consideration of the Housing Commission Charter

56 City Manager Mahony said that the Town and Junction had had a joint Housing Commission but that
57 each municipality is now forming its own Commission after separation. She said that the draft charter
58 for the City Housing Commission had not changed much from the joint Housing Commission's charter,
59 as it's based on the housing needs assessment that was conducted a number of years ago, and the
60 mission statement remains the same. She noted that they are proposing that the City Housing
61 Commission meet once per month unless additional meetings are needed. She noted that there will be
62 two current joint Housing Commission members who will stay on but that the other three positions need
63 to be recruited for. She also noted that a joint meeting between the Housing Commission and Planning
64 Commission is recommended to coordinate work and set priorities.

65
66 Councilor Certa suggested that seven members feels like the right number of members for the
67 Commission instead of five, though he noted that there are concerns around recruiting for a full seven-
68 member board instead of a five-member board. He also asked how the Housing Commission and the
69 Development Review Board would interact. City Manager Mahony said that with other municipalities,
70 their Development Review Boards will let the Housing Commission know what projects or developments
71 are coming before the board for application review, and the Housing Commission can play an advocacy
72 role if they believe an application should be supported through the process. She agreed that the Housing
73 Commission could also have a more upstream policy role to help developers increase the amount of
74 housing development. Councilor Chawla asked whether there could be a Planning Commission or
75 Development Review Board member who also serves on the Housing Commission, as perhaps an ad
76 hoc member, to encourage better coordination and communication between the different Commissions.
77 Councilor Certa also asked about residency requirements. Councilor Brown noted that the joint
78 Commission had made accommodations for individuals who worked for Champlain Housing Trust or
79 VHFA who didn't necessarily live in Essex. He also said that he would support a seven-member board.
80 Councilor Chawla said that he doesn't think they need to have a residency requirement since it would
81 benefit the community to have individuals serve on the board who are housing professionals,
82 developers, or individuals with lived experience.

83
84 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by MARCUS CERTA, that the Council adopt the**
85 **proposed Charter and Job Description for the City Housing Commission, as drafted and modified**
86 **at tonight's meeting. The motion passed 5-0.**

87
88 c. Discussion and Consideration of the FY24 Tax Rate

89 Finance Director Morris noted that the tax rate had been calculated based on the 2023 grand list, and
90 there was a 0.79% increase and that there is a 0% increase in the tax rate over the combined previous
91 Town and City tax rate. She noted that the cost to a taxpayer with a \$280,000 assessed property will
92 increase by \$1 from the FY23 amount.

93
94 **ELAINE HANEY made a motion, seconded by MARCUS CERTA, that the City Council adopt the**
95 **FY24 tax rate as presented. The motion passed 5-0.**

96
97 d. Discussion and Consideration of 2023 Resurfacing Project Bid Award

98 City Manager Mahony said that this bid award would be for 2023 resurfacing work for Cascade Street,
99 Poplar Court, Densmore Drive, Sugartree Lane, and the West Street sidewalk. She said that the lowest
100 bid for this collective work came back at \$321,000 from Pike Industries but that the General Fund
101 allocation for this work in the FY24 budget was for \$300,000. She said that if they wish to conduct the
102 entirety of the scope of this resurfacing, she suggests pulling funding from the Local Option Tax to
103 address the funding gap. She said that there had been suggestions to have the sidewalk be repaved as

104 concrete rather than asphalt but that it would be much more expensive to do so. She noted that this item
105 is on the Capital Program Review Committee's agenda for next week. She said that if the City chooses
106 to resurface that sidewalk with asphalt, it will buy the City time to work on the concrete solution in a
107 phased approach. Councilor Certa asked how long the asphalt would last, and Superintendent Jones
108 replied that asphalt would last for at least ten years. Councilor Certa asked whether the bid could be
109 awarded piecemeal for sections of the resurfacing project to the bidder that could do that portion of the
110 work most cost-effectively or whether there is room for negotiating with the bidders. Councilor Chawla
111 said that the bidders' numbers might change if they were asked to bid on individual projects instead of
112 the entirety of the resurfacing project. Councilor Brown suggested implementing this for future projects,
113 but to go forward with the City's current procurement approach for this project, to maintain transparency
114 in the bidding process.

115
116 Councilor Chawla opened the discussion to the public, who had the following comments.

117
118 Steve Eustis noted that the uphill portion of Cascade Street was paved not too long ago and asked
119 whether it is just being repaved or whether there is subsurface work that needs to be addressed in order
120 for pavings to last longer. Superintendent Jones pointed out that there is a significant amount of large
121 vehicle traffic on that road. Mr. Eustis also recommended that if the West Street sidewalk is paved in
122 asphalt that, the contractor use a machine to ensure that the paving is level. He also advocated that the
123 sidewalk be widened to the standard 5 feet for a Class 2 road sidewalk, noting that it is narrower than 5
124 feet in some places.

125
126 Annie Cooper expressed support for the suggested approach of awarding components of a project to
127 different bidders, though she acknowledged it may be difficult to do so with competitive bidders.

128
129 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by ELAINE HANEY, to that the City Council award**
130 **the bid for the 2023 Roadway Resurfacing Project to the lowest qualified bidder, Pike Industries,**
131 **Inc., for \$320,825.18; and use the LOT to make up the difference between the general fund budget**
132 **of \$300,000 and this contract amount. The motion passed 5-0.**

133
134 e. CCRPC Presentation on Sidewalk Inventory Data

135 Chris Dubin, Senior Transportation Planner with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
136 (CCRPC), spoke about the sidewalk inventory data being collected by the RPC. Jacob, an intern with
137 the CCRPC, began the presentation by summarizing the data model and how the data was collected.
138 He said that they collected data on a slab-by-slab basis (for concrete sidewalks) and the use of ArcGIS
139 software. He spoke about the criteria that they used to grade the condition of the sidewalks, including
140 ledging (vertical displacement), slab cracking, edge deterioration, joint deterioration, gaps, vertical slope,
141 pitch, spalling, drainage, beveling, and obstruction. He said that out of the 53.4 miles of sidewalk, they
142 found that around 7% of slabs were distressed at some level. Senior Transportation Planner Dubin noted
143 that they had conducted initial analyses on this data, including segment-based aggregation and
144 categorical aggregation based on the type of distress.

145
146 Councilors expressed appreciation for this tool, which can help inform capital planning in a data-driven
147 way.

148
149 Councilor Chawla opened the discussion to the public, who had the following comments.

150
151 Steve Eustis asked if there is the ability to overlay past analyses of sidewalk condition onto this most
152 current analysis to show how quickly certain areas are deteriorating or are consistently problem areas.

Senior Transportation Planner Dubin replied that they hadn't previously conducted a sidewalk analysis using this methodology, so they don't have past data points to which they can compare this analysis.

6. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Approve Check Warrants #17361 (06/30/2023)
- b. Approve Minutes: June 28, 2023
- c. Approve Stormwater Community Formula Grant Intent to Participate

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

7. **READING FILE**

- a. Council & Manager member comments: Councilor Brown noted that there is no information yet on the website regarding the Housing Commission and asked that the joint Housing Commission information be posted to inform the public of its past work and drum up interest from potential applicants. Councilor Haney asked about the protocol for deciding when and where to install speed bumps. City Manager Mahony replied that the City has a traffic calming policy and that speed bump installation would start with a request for a speed study, and if the 85th percentile is five miles per hour more than the posted speed limit, the residents can then petition to request a speed bump, which would go to the Capital Plan Review Committee for approval and prioritization. Councilors discussed speeding, speed bumps, and alternative such as police patrols when incidences of speeding are higher on specific streets. City Manager Mahony spoke about how residents can request a speed table if 70% of the households submit a petition to the City Manager. She also provided a general update, noting that National Night Out is August 1 in the evening at the high school, that there was an unhoused individual at the library for a week or so, and that he was extremely polite and courteous while he was there (which then led to a conversation about crafting policies to address and support the unhoused), spoke briefly about the flooding that occurred in other parts of Vermont and the need to examine local emergency operations procedures, provided a brief construction update, and provided a recruitment update.
- b. Wasted* Pilot Program
- c. Capital Review Committee Minutes: June 6, 2023
- d. Brownell Library Trust Minutes: June 20, 2023
- e. Bike/Walk Advisory Committee Minutes: June 26, 2023
- f. Planning Commission Minutes: July 6, 2023

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. *An executive session may be needed for the appointment of public officials

MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss appointment of public officials, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), to include the City Manager. The motion passed 5-0.

ELAINE HANEY made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:08 P.M.

RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by MARCUS CERTA, to enter into executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:09 P.M.

MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:12 P.M.

203
204 **RAJ CHAWLA** made a motion, seconded by **ELAINE HANEY**, to appoint **Leandro Duque Garcia**
205 **for a one-year term, Guillaume Teganyi for a two-year term, and Christina Hagestad for a three-**
206 **year term to represent the City on the Police Community Advisory Board; as well as have Ta**
207 **Tanisha Redditta take on an advisory role for the PCAB for the first year.**
208

209 **9. ADJOURN**
210

211 **MARCUS CERTA** made a motion, seconded by **ANDREW BROWN**, to adjourn the meeting. The
212 **motion passed 5-0 at 9:14 P.M.**
213

214 Respectfully Submitted,
215 Amy Coonradt