



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

Online & 2 Lincoln St.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Wednesday, April 3, 2024
6:30 PM

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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
5. **VICIOUS DOG HEARING**
6. **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
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
April 3, 2024**

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Raj Chawla, President; Amber Thibeault; Vice President; Marcus Certa, Clerk;

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Robert Kissinger, Essex Police Lieutenant; Elle Lenzini, Animal Control Officer; Joanne Nichols, Animal Control Officer.

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Adkisson, Kevin Collins, Ethan Forskann, Tim Miller, Scott, Jeremy Herrera (was initially listed as a Zoom participant under a phone number, but later identified themselves).

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

None needed.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda

None.

5. **VICIOUS DOG HEARING**

Councilor Chawla began by noting that this is related to a dog incident on March 28, with a dog and a person attacked and injuries sustained. He said that this occurred at roughly 9:29 PM and that officers at the Essex Police Department responded to an incident in Essex Junction related to an animal bite. He said that they determined that the dog involved in the incident was a pit bull, Dozer, owned by Jamie Blake. He said that Dozer attacked Mei Mei, a dog owned by Jeremy Herrera, and that Mr. Herrera also sustained minor hand lacerations and Mei Mei sustained puncture wounds to her left leg area. He said that both Mr. Herrera and his dog required medical attention. He noted that this is the second incident with Dozer, who was also the subject of a vicious dog hearing in January 2024.

Councilor Chawla noted that the owner of Dozer is not present tonight and that the Essex Police Department made several attempts via phone, text, and in-person to reach the owner of the dog, though they were unsuccessful.

Lieutenant Kissinger and Jeremy Herrera were sworn in by Councilor Chawla prior to giving testimony.

Mr. Herrera described the incident. He said that he was walking his dog around the yard and pool area of the Autumn Pond apartment complex at around 9:30 P.M. on the night in question, and that a dog suddenly ran toward him and his dog. He said that this dog then attacked Mei Mei unprovoked. He said that he jumped on the dog to try and pull it off his own dog, and that he was bitten on his left hand during this attempt. He said that he restrained the attacking dog until it let go of his own dog, at which time other individuals approached to try and assist. He said that the owner of the attacking dog was not present during the attack. He said that one of the bystanders held the attacking dog and called the police while he himself gathered his own dog and made arrangements to have Mei Mei taken back to his

54 apartment while he dealt with Dozer. He said that while he sustained injuries, he did not need to go to
55 the hospital because the police confirmed that the attacking dog was up-to-date on its rabies
56 vaccinations. He said that his hand was bruised and swollen but did not require medical attention. He
57 said that his dog, Mei Mei, required medical attention because she sustained a significant bite wound to
58 her left rear leg, and that she was sedated, cleaned up, and given antibiotics.

59
60 City Manager Mahony asked whether the owner of Dozer arrived on the scene. Mr. Herrera replied that
61 the dog owner was not present and that the police took Dozer into custody. He said that he still has not
62 had contact with the owner.

63
64 Lieutenant Kissinger provided a summary of the police response to the incident. He noted that police
65 responded to a dog bite incident at 341 Autumn Pond at approximately 9:30 P.M. on March 28th. He
66 said that Mr. Herrera was walking his dog, who was attacked by Dozer, and that he physically separated
67 the dogs to prevent further attack. He said that officers recognized that Mr. Herrera had two small
68 lacerations on his right hand and Mei Mei sustained a puncture wound to her left hip area. He said that
69 Mr. Herrera was treated that night and Mei Mei received treatment the following day. He said that Dozer
70 also sustained injuries to his face. He said that Dozer was brought back to the Police Department, where
71 other officers recognized the dog from previous attacks and identified the owner as Jamie Blake. He
72 noted that Ms. Blake arrived at the Police Department at midnight to pick up Dozer and that she placed
73 Dozer in quarantine on March 29th, which will end on April 7th. He noted that the first incident involving
74 Dozer occurred on January 9th at 52 Old Colchester Road, where Dozer attacked Daisy, a dog who was
75 leashed and being walked by her owner. He said that as a result of the January 9th dog bite, the Council
76 held a dog bite hearing and found that Dozer engaged in an unprovoked attack on Daisy and that Daisy
77 and her owner both sustained injuries and that Dozer was found to be a potentially vicious dog. He said
78 that the Council ruled that Dozer's property was required to have fencing sufficient to secure the dog
79 (which it does), and that Dozer must be on a leash and muzzled when outside of the property, must
80 undergo a training to address aggressive behavior within 60 days, and that documentation of such was
81 required to be submitted. He said that because of this incident, the owner has violated the rulings of this
82 Council (the requirements that Dozer be leashed and that Dozer undergo certified training within 60
83 days of the January hearing's ruling). He said that this would be the second violation for Dozer and Ms.
84 Blake.

85
86 Councilor Certa asked whether there is any information about what transpired at Ms. Blake's property
87 that allowed Dozer to get out. Lieutenant Kissinger replied that they don't have a full narrative, but his
88 understanding from the officer that took statements was that Dozer was let out and got free from a
89 fenced-in area on the property. He said that is likely that the dog escaped through a door rather than
90 jumping over a fence. City Manager Mahony asked for a description of how the Police Department
91 attempted to reach out and make contact with Ms. Blake prior to this hearing. Lieutenant Kissinger
92 replied that they contacted the phone number on file for Ms. Blake but that she was unreachable on her
93 cell phone and a message could not be left. He also noted that an officer visited Ms. Blake's property
94 multiple times but was unable to reach her, and that they left the agenda for tonight's meeting at her
95 property and sent her the information regarding tonight's agenda and dog hearing via text message. He
96 said that they have not received a reply from Ms. Blake.

97
98 Councilor Thibeault asked about the disposition of Dozer when he was taken into custody after the
99 incident and brought back to the Police Department. Lieutenant Kissinger replied that Dozer is friendly
100 away from other domestic animals, but displays aggression when he is around other animals.

101
102 **Councilor Thibeault made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa, to close the public hearing.**
103 **The motion passed 4-0.**

104

105 Councilor Certa asked why Dozer was released back into Ms. Blake’s custody for quarantining prior to
106 this hearing, knowing that the dog and its owner had violated previous Council rulings by getting free
107 and not being muzzled or leashed. Lieutenant Kissinger replied that the officer on duty followed
108 procedure for an initial dog bite violation, and that the officer likely did not realize that this was a second
109 offense. He noted that there had been some difficulties boarding Dozer when he had previously been
110 impounded, as the police facilities are not necessarily suited for this type of situation.
111

112 **Councilor Thibeault made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to enter into a deliberative**
113 **session regarding this dog bite hearing. The motion passed 4-0.**
114

115
116 **6. ADJOURN**
117

118 **Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Thibeault, to adjourn the meeting. The**
119 **motion passed 4-0 at 7:30 P.M.**
120

121 Respectfully Submitted,
122 Amy Coonradt