

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES OF MEETING**

**MAY 1, 2025**

**APPROVED BY PLANNING COMMISSION JUNE 5, 2025**

**APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL MAY 14, 2025**

**PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Diane Clemens, Chair; Scott McCormick, Vice-Chair; Elena Juodisius; Elijah Massey, Kristie Paschall

**CITY COUNCILORS PRESENT:** Amber Thibeault, President; Marcus Certa, Vice-President; Elaine Haney; Tim Miller; Brian Shelden

**ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager; Michael Giguere, City Planner; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jeff Arango, Charlie Baker, Raj Chawla, Marshall Distel, Hope Freije, Jake Katz, David Knox, Sarah Lukins, Resa Mehren, Dennis Thibeault

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Clemens called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

In lieu of a Chair, Ms. Mahony called the City Council meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

**2. CITY COUNCIL REORGANIZATION**

**MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by ELAINE HANEY, to nominate Amber Thibeault for City Council President. Motion passed 5-0.**

**TIM MILLER made a motion, seconded by ELAINE HANEY, to nominate Marcus Certa for City Council Vice-President. Motion passed 5-0.**

**MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by BRIAN SHELLEN, to nominate Tim Miller for City Council Clerk. Motion passed 5-0.**

**3. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

**a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda**

None.

**5. MINUTES**

**a. April 3, 2025**

**ELENA JUODISIUS made a motion, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to postpone the approval of the minutes of April 3, 2025. Motion passed 5-0.**

## **6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

### **a. Connect the Junction TOD Master Plan Draft Review**

Ms. Mahony said that consultants from Framework will provide a project overview. The draft will be publicly available after this evening to obtain feedback. The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) will also present draft municipal housing targets. Ms. Mahony noted that the Community Development department was recently awarded a municipal planning grant as well as a downtown transportation grant for the train station redevelopment.

Mr. Arango, Ms. Lukins and Ms. Freije, all of Framework, presented. The Connect the Junction Master Plan is a federally funded transit-orientated development (TOD) project. Ms. Freije presented a project overview and history as well as the plan's connection to the housing targets. Ms. Lukins discussed transiting the private and public spaces so that it is more community-orientated for people, rather than cars. She identified parcels that are considered to be underutilized and likely to be redeveloped in the short to medium term. She detailed the height recommendations by district, with the Village Center at 7 floors, TOD at 6 floors, and Highway Arterial at 5 floors, plus the potential for a one story height bonus for affordable housing developments allowed by state statute. The new height recommendations would create the spatial capacity to allow the City to hit its 2050 housing targets. Mr. Arango requested that the boards consider if this plan allows for sufficiently denser growth, prioritizes quality of life and if the actions proposed can be accomplished with City resources. He reviewed the "big ideas" that structure the plan. He discussed the potential revitalization of Railroad Avenue, capitalizing on the Crescent Connector for pedestrian use and the possibility of closing Memorial Way. Mr. Arango reviewed traffic revisions that were developed as a part of this plan. Ms. Freije discussed how to best fulfill growth targets while offering diverse housing options for residents, blending into the historical fabric of the community and allowing for pedestrian amenities. Connectivity by a variety of methods was discussed.

Ms. Clemens encouraged the consultants to improve the grammar and context in the report. Mr. Arango said that a professional copywriter will review the document prior to its final form. Mr. McCormick questioned the ability of the City to complete all the ideas in the document in five years, as well as the price for such. Mr. Arango said that metrics for success would be included in the document and discussed non-capital improvements. Ms. Mahony said that this plan considers both public and private investment and said that zoning can be used to promote private investment. She said that the boards should consider if there is community buy in and if it makes more sense to extend the implementation timeline to ten years.

Mr. Arango discussed next steps. He said that document feedback is requested by Monday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. All comments and feedback will be addressed. More specific information regarding implementation strategies will be available at a future date. He said that continued monitoring is an important part of the process. An open house with online engagement is planned for this summer, as well as tabling, a focus group and additional board meetings. Mr. Knox, local developer, expressed support for increasing height limits. Mr. McCormick suggested setting up a framework to reach out to different groups of stakeholders. Ms. Juodisius said that it would be helpful to prioritize what type of public input is most needed. Ms. Haney said that she would like to investigate the impact of the construction and lane expansion on Route 2A in Williston on the Connect the Junction proposals. Ms. Mehren said that traffic could increase if the proposed Amazon warehouse is built in Essex.

### **b. Discussion of Act 181 and Regional Housing Targets**

Mr. Yuen said that Vermont has assigned housing targets per region, which have been further divided by municipality. He said that Essex Junction typically adds around 52 units per year. He reviewed the low, medium and high housing targets for Essex Junction, and said that the City can set the regulations to unlock development in appropriate areas. Ms. Clemens expressed concern about the ability to make the mid or high targets, as Essex Junction does not have the wastewater capacity. She questioned who would be responsible for paying for additional upgrades. Ms. Mahony said that some additional capacity could be made available, with some infrastructure modifications or facility expansions. Mr. Yuen said that every municipality is being challenged with these targets, and that it is helpful to look at the county targets as a whole.

**MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by TIM MILLER, that the City Council approve the letter to the CCRPC regarding the draft housing targets as presented.**

**Friendly amendment by TIM MILLER to include minor edits. Friendly amendment accepted. Motion passed 5-0.**

**ELIJAH MASSEY made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUODISIUS, that the Planning Commission approve the letter to the CCRPC regarding the draft housing targets as amended. Motion passed 5-0.**

**7. MEMBERS UPDATES**

Mr. McCormick said that his slot on the Capital Committee is up for reappointment, and that he wanted to see if any other members are interested in this role.

**8. STAFF UPDATES**

None.

**9. ADJOURN**

**SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELANA JUODISIUS, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:28 PM.**

**MARCUS CERTA made a motion, seconded by TIM MILLER, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:28 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Darby Mayville