

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA OPEN FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
August 13, 2025**

**COUNCILORS PRESENT:** Amber Thibeault, President; Tim Miller, Clerk; Elaine Haney, Brian Shelden.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager; Michael Giguere, City Planner; Stephen Gragg, Corporal, Essex Police Department; Ron Hoague, Chief of Police, Essex Police Department; Ricky Jones, Public Works Superintendent; Jeffrey Kerschner, City Engineer; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Rev. J. Baker, Eve Benen, Gwendolyn Evans, Alia Liebowitz, John O'Brien, Resa.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

City Council President Thibeault called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

City Council President Thibeault proposed removing Business Item #6e from the agenda and discussing that agenda item at the Council's August 26, 2025 meeting.

**3. APPROVE AGENDA**

**City Council President Thibeault made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miler, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 4-0.**

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

**a. Comments from Public**

Resa expressed concern about the proposed closure of Main Street for four Saturdays later in the summer and fall, given the difficulties it will present for traffic flow. City Manager Mahony said that because the Crescent Connector is open there is now a pathway around Main Street and noted that the proposed Saturday closures are a pilot pertaining to the overarching discussion over the last several years about closing down that portion of Main Street altogether. Resa reiterated that having the pilot be scheduled for four Saturdays in a row and the timing of those Saturdays. She also expressed thanks to Public Works for fixing a pothole on Countryside Drive.

**5. PUBLIC HEARING**

**a. Proposed Crescent Connector Corrective Action Plan Ordinance**

City Council President Thibeault opened the public hearing.

City Manager Mahony provided an overview of the new ordinance, saying that its purpose is to ensure that any future work under the roadway of the Crescent Connector meets the requirements in the Corrective Action Plan in place, due to the existence of contaminated soils under the roadway and the need for special remediation requirements.

**Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to close the public hearing. The motion passed 4-0.**

**6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Police Community Advisory Board Brief to Council**

Gwendolyn Evans, a representative from the Police Community Advisory Board, and Essex Police Chief Hoague spoke on this item. Ms. Evans began by noting that the PCAB has been focused on creating and fielding a community survey and commended the entire group for their feedback, as well as feedback from Chief Hoague. She noted that the survey will be open until it garners a sufficient number of responses. She spoke about what will come out of the survey, including ideas for projects and initiatives that the PCAB can

use to support making more of a connection between the Police Department and the community. She spoke briefly about turnover on the PCAB, saying that they will be looking for more volunteers to fill out the committee. Chief Hoague spoke about the process of developing the survey and the immense amount of work that went into developing it. He said that they are hoping to compare this survey to the one that was completed in 2021, to determine what progress has been made and whether there are areas for improvement. Ms. Evans asked that the City Council encourage the public to take the survey. She also noted that the PCAB struggles with public attendance and noted that any additional efforts to encourage attendance and engagement would be welcome. City Manager Mahony noted that the survey link is on the City website as one of the news items on the main page.

b. Department Head Brief to Council with Essex Police Department's Chief Hoague

Chief Hoague began by noting that the Police Department is not fully staffed and currently has four vacancies. He noted that one of the vacancies will be filled with a lieutenant, and that there are additional temporary vacancies coming up this fall due to parental leave. He said the Department's intent is to fully staff in the future, with two lieutenants under the Chief to provide support. He shared statistics comparing 2024 to 2025 (through mid-August) regarding crime incidents in the City and Town for larceny from vehicles/buildings, unlawful mischief, burglary, operating a vehicle without consent, grand larceny, simple, aggravated, and domestic assault, and retail theft. He noted that property crime is trending downward, indicating that they have made strides when it comes to overall property crime levels. He noted that retail theft is trending upward over 2024 levels, some of which could be attributed to more businesses reporting retail thefts when they occur. He noted that operating vehicles without consent is still occurring at similar levels to 2024, and noted that surrounding municipalities in Chittenden County are seeing similar trends. He noted that assault-type crime tends to be at lower levels in Essex than property-related crime. Councilor Sheldon asked about what could be driving the grand larceny and operating vehicles without consent incidents, and Chief Hoague replied that some of them are related to certain late-model Kias that are relatively easy to steal, but the majority are the result of keys being left in cars or cars idling. Chief Hoague then spoke about the creation of a Crime Reduction Team unit in the Police Department to work more in-depth on the retail theft incidents and be points of contact for businesses experiencing retail theft. He said they are also focusing their efforts on nighttime activity to try and intervene in these crimes. Chief Hoague then spoke about participating in the Memorial Day parade and using the Crescent Connector, which worked well for the force. He noted that the Department signed an MOU this spring with Williston for dispatching and will continue this shared service. He spoke about the Community Justice Center and the importance of restorative justice efforts in the community, speaking about the collaborative efforts between the CJC and the Essex Police Department. He noted that as of next July, all CJC work will be transitioning to the Burlington CJC, saying that he will be participating on the committee to guide that transition process. Councilor Miller asked for more detail about the police academy and training process, and Chief Hoague noted that it is a lengthy training process (between 11 and 18 months) between application and working in the field as an officer.

c. Discussion and Consideration of Traffic Studies and Proposed Traffic Calming Policy

City Council President Thibeault began by noting that there is a current policy in place for traffic calming and that the intention of this discussion is to talk about the future and a proposed policy (not current state). City Manager Mahony noted that this discussion involves a number of different departments and is an introductory discussion for the Council. She said that the goal once a policy is developed is determine how to move from current state to desired future state with road improvements.

Community Development Director Yuen noted that he worked with a UVM student to engage with peer municipalities to determine their best practices related to traffic calming policies, and that they used the recommendations from that engagement as a starting point for a new draft policy. He provided an overview of the high-level questions that staff would like the City Council to weigh in on to further refine the proposed policy. He began by providing a high-level overview of the current tragic calming process, which includes an option to place speed limit cones on Class 3 roads to remind drivers of the speed limit (25 MPH), and speed tables. He summarized the process for implementing speed tables, including a speed study and petition from residents to support the speed table. He then spoke about how the proposed policy could expand the options

available to municipalities, including vertical deflections, horizontal deflections, and perceptual or passive measures. He spoke about ways to prioritize various interventions for various street typologies, showing an example from the City of Burlington. He spoke about potential changes to public engagement and local support approaches, including the replacement of the neighborhood petition system to reduce potential barriers to implementation of calming measures, scoring criteria to focus on high-impact locations, holding public meetings to discuss existing conditions (potentially within an existing committee), and public meetings to discuss recommended traffic calming installations.

Director Yuen then spoke further about the proposed policy. He noted that the existing policy is the responsibility of the City Manager and Police Department, and noted that the proposed policy would be the responsibility of the Community Development Department in collaboration with the City Engineer, Police Department, and Department of Public Works. He spoke about the goals of the proposed policy, which include a focus on speed reduction for safety with ancillary quality of life benefits (and that this is largely unchanged from the current policy). He noted that the speed threshold in the proposed policy (85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed > 5mph above the limit) would remain the same but they are proposing that the scoring would increase with the severity of speeding. He noted that the proposed policy would allow for pilot projects, which come at a lower initial cost but a higher operational cost, and noted that pilot traffic calming projects can generally be completed with under \$10,000. He outlined how much permanent installations of a number of interventions tend to cost, but cautioned that many of these interventions are context-specific and actual costs could differ for each intervention. He noted that temporary installations are less costly than permanent installations. He asked whether the City Council would like to pursue this proposed policy. He asked if the neighborhood petition system should be replaced, if Committee-level review is valuable to this process, and if the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee (BWAC) is an appropriate committee to host the public process. He additionally asked if pilot projects are a preferred approach. He further asked whether the City should dedicate additional funds for traffic calming.

Councilor Haney asked if the petition process were removed and the discussion were taken to the BWAC, would any individual resident be able to request a speed study or traffic calming intervention, or would some sort of majority decision need to be made among residents of that street. Director Yuen replied that the 70% threshold on petitions was implemented in order to obtain resident buy-in for interventions, but noted that other municipalities haven't implemented a petition process. He said that the City could issue public notice about a contemplated change, or could rely on the pilot project process to obtain public participation and feedback. City Council President Thibeault added that public participation and engagement could be incorporated into the scoring rubric. Councilor Miller asked about how data is collected for speed studies and also asked about emergency service considerations for speed tables. He also apologized to Pleasant Street residents that their speed table was taken out when the road was redesigned. Corporal Gragg provided more information about the technology used for speed studies and speed data collection and spoke about the pros and cons of blanket speed limits. Councilor Miller noted that one suggestion from several years ago that was not adopted was painting the speed limit directly on the road in certain areas. Councilor Sheldon asked for more information on the technology used to collect speed data, which Corporal Gragg provided, noting that the devices cost approximately \$2,500 each. Councilor Sheldon asked whether it would be burdensome to test the speeds before and after implementing an intervention, to collect data on the impact of the intervention, and Corporal Gragg replied that it would take time and capacity to do so and that one of the biggest limitations is lack of equipment. He noted that DPW staff could be trained to operate the equipment to take some burden off the Police Department. Councilor Haney asked how the location for placing speed data collection devices is chosen, and Corporal Gragg replied that they cannot be placed in areas where there are regularly parked cars, snowbanks, and need to be located on straight pieces of roadway.

Councilors confirmed that the proposed direction makes sense and they agree with it. Councilor Haney said she would like the BWAC to have the opportunity to weigh in on the proposal that review take place at their Committee, and said she would like the Council to further discuss additional funding for traffic calming. City Planner Giguere spoke about BWAC's input, noting that they are extremely supportive of the proposal that they become more involved in traffic calming measures.

d. Discussion and Consideration of Crescent Connector Corrective Action Plan Ordinance  
**Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council adopt the new proposed Essex Junction Municipal Ordinance Chapter 22 Ordinance Regulating Earth Work within the Crescent Connector Right-of-Way as presented. The motion passed 4-0.**

e. Discussion of Future Committees \*\*item removed from the agenda\*\*  
No discussion.

f. \*Executive Session to Discuss Negotiating Lease Options for the Teen Center/CHIPS at 2 Lincoln  
g. \*\*Executive Session to Discuss Town Contracts

7. **CONSENT ITEMS**

- a. Approve Meeting Minutes: July 23, 2025
- b. Acting as the Local Cannabis Control Commission – Approve VT S-000012863 License Renewal for Sweetspot Vermont LLC
- c. Acting as the Liquor Control Commission – Approve Liquor/Tobacco Licenses
- d. Approve Essex High School Burn Permit Request
- e. Approve Use of Pyrotechnics at a Concert at CVE
- f. Approve Main Street Road Closure for Four Saturdays
- g. Approve Easement to Green Mountain Power on Park Street
- h. Approve Temporary Sound Waiver

**Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed 4-0.**

8. **COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:** City Manager Mahony noted that paving is wrapping up this week, but that striping will occur on Pearl Street over the next week but will definitely be completed by August 21. She noted that they are planning to move back into the 2 Lincoln Street team back into office spaces next week, and that they plan to hold an open house at the end of September. Councilor Haney thanked the police and other City staff for their handling of the large concert at CVE and that it was a great event.

9. **READING FILE**

- a. Check Warrant #24081, July 25, 2025; #24082, August 8, 2025
- b. July Financials
- c. Regional Boards and Committees Memo
- d. Reappraisals Update
- e. Police Community Advisory Board Survey 2025
- f. Connect the Junction Online Forum is Open
- g. BOCA & BOA Minutes – August 4, 2025

10. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. \*An Executive Session may be needed to discuss the negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options

**Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss a contract, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2) to include the City Council and City Manager. The motion passed 4-0 at 8:36 P.M.**

- b. \*\*An Executive Session may be needed to discuss a contract

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council make the specific finding that premature disclosure of the contractual matters would place the city at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 4-0.

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss a contract, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A) to include the City Council and City Manager. The motion passed 4-0 at 8:36 P.M.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to exit executive session. The motion passed 4-0 at 9:07 P.M.

11. **ADJOURN**

Councilor Sheldon made a motion, seconded by City Council President Thibeault, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0 at 9:08 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Coonradt