City of Essex Junction
City Council Regular Meeting Agenda

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2026 • 6:30 PM
Online & 2 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

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This meeting will be in-person 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. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
   a. Discussion on the Rolling Stock Capital Plan [10 Minutes]
   b. Discussion of the FY28 Budget Direction [15 Minutes]
   c. Discussion and Consideration on the West Street Forcemain Project including a Bond Vote, Contract Amendment for Design Services, Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund Application Amendment, and Sanitation Capital Plan Amendment [15 Minutes]
   d. Discussion and Consideration of Setting a Special Meeting Date to Set the FY27 Tax Rate [5 Minutes]
   e. *Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to Discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
   a. Approve Meeting Minutes: 6/24/26
   b. Approve Command Vehicle Bid Award
   c. Approve a FY26 General Fund Transfer to FY27 for a Speed Cushion Purchase
   d. Approve Waste Water Recovery Facility Drying Bed Contract Award and Amend the Waste Water Recovery Facility Capital Plan
   e. Amend the Waste Water Recovery Facility Capital Plan for the Front Gate Replacement
   f. Acting as the Liquor Control Commission – Approve Liquor/Tobacco Licenses
7. **COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT**
8. **READING FILE**
   a. Check Warrant #24121 6/26/26
   b. Brownell Library Trustee Minutes 6/16/26

c. Police Community Advisory Board Minutes 6/16/26

d. Development Review Board Minutes 6/18/26

e. Capital Review Committee Minutes 6/30/26

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. *An Executive Session may be needed to discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation

10. ADJOURN

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Upcoming City Council Meetings
(Meeting Dates are Subject to Change)(* denotes special meeting or date change)

	September 9, 2026	*November 10, 2026
July 22, 2026	September 23, 2026	*December 2, 2026
August 12, 2026	October 14, 2026	*December 16, 2026
August 26, 2026	October 28, 2026	

City Council Rules for Public Participation

Vermont's Open Meeting Law protects the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local public bodies, but the purpose and function of these meetings is for the public body to do the work of the public; they are not meetings of the public (i.e., public forums). Consequently, these rules are necessary to manage the public's participation to ensure an environment in which the public feels safe to express their views on matters considered by the public body while minimizing disruptions so that the public body can get its work done. The full City Council Rules of Procedures for Meetings can be found here: www.essexjunction.org/codes/policies.

1. Please raise your hand to speak, whether in person or attending virtually.
2. You may only speak after you have been recognized by the president.
3. Before speaking, please state your name and address for the record.
4. All remarks must be addressed to the president.
5. Comments must be germane to the agenda item being addressed.
6. Comments under "Public to be Heard" must pertain to the business of the public body.
7. Repetitive and irrelevant comments are not allowed.
8. Please wait your turn; do not interrupt others.
9. Each person will be limited to two minutes of comment. This time may be extended only by permission of the president. The balance of time not used by each person will expire and cannot be reserved or yielded to another.
10. Each person may only speak once on the same agenda item, time permitting, with the consent of the president.
11. Those yet to be heard will be given priority over those who have already spoken.
12. You do not have the right to vote on agenda items.
13. Please obey orders and rulings of the president.
14. Keep your cool. Disruptive people will be asked to leave and removed if necessary.
15. Listen well, pay attention, and participate.

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
July 8, 2026
Approved July 22, 2026

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Amber Thibeault, President; Tim Miller, Vice President; Bethany Clark, Clerk; Raj Chawla, Brian Shelden.
ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent; Jess Morris, Finance Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Marcus Certa, Kevin Collins, Michael Miller, Dennis Thibeault, Reed, Resa,

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

Not needed.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from Public

Resa spoke about delays in the postal service resulting in her not receiving her utility bills from Essex Junction in a timely fashion, and asked if there is a way residents can log in and access their utility bills electronically, to minimize administrative burden on staff. City Manager Mahony replied that she does not know if this functionality is current possible but said that she and staff will look into this suggestion.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Discussion on the Rolling Stock Capital Plan

City Manager Mahony noted that this arose as a discussion item because the Fire Department has a $1.1 million fire truck that is slated in the FY30 rolling stock plan, but that they are unable to move forward with bids for that purchase because the rolling stock is showing a negative balance at that future date. She noted that the rolling stock is fine for the FY27 budget, but that they would like to discuss potential solutions for the next round of the budgeting process in terms of ensuring that the rolling stock is not in the negative for future years. She noted that the amount that is needed to increase the rolling stock balance is an additional $218,000 on top of what is already committed for FY28 (which is $345,000), with a 7% increase to that addition every year. She noted other options, including buying down the tax rate with any funds in excess of the 15% unassigned fund balance (should an excess exist for FY26), or a specific tax to help fund the rolling stock (such as a public safety tax). She noted that they could also pursue expense cuts, such as delaying purchasing new vehicles for several years, but that this would increase expenses for repair and maintenance and that there are several vehicles in the fleet that are already at the end of their useful life. She said that they could also remove vehicles from the fleet, or decide not to purchase new vehicles. She noted that no action is needed tonight, given that this is an issue for the FY28 budget. Councilor Chawla asked if there are other vehicles that are being purchased other than the fire truck, and City Manager Mahony replied that yes, there are. Councilor Chawla expressed concern about the sustainability of substantial increases to the rolling stock transfer year-over-year. Councilor Miller noted that the Town of Essex leased fire trucks for a number of years, which could be an option. Councilor Shelden also suggested that they could look into purchasing a slightly used fire truck. City Manager Mahony noted that they could investigate what lease terms could look like in preparation for the FY28 budget conversation, and noted that the City has been trying to purchase new vehicles and maintain them while they are less costly to do so. Councilor Chawla acknowledged that the City has been working on the terms of approval for the new fire department vehicle purchase for several years, but said he is uncomfortable adding more vehicles to the fleet at this juncture. Councilors Miller and

Clark concurred, saying that the City needs to be realistic about its current financial position and figure some issues out before making major purchases, when it knows there are so many vehicles that already need to be replaced.

The following public comments were received:

- Marcus Certa brought up the intersection of the capital plan and Local Option Tax (LOT) fund revenue, noting that LOT funds have increased over the last few years. He asked whether there would be an option of earmarking a certain percentage of LOT fund revenue to the rolling stock, similarly to how the City approached funding for sidewalk maintenance and repair. He further noted that the rolling stock trends into the negative for several years but then starts to trend positively after that point, and asked what costs are being dropped. He recommended that the Council remove the command vehicle from the consent agenda and pause on approving the solicitation of bids, saying that the approach to funding the rolling stock warrants further discussion in general. Finance Director Morris noted that the LOT fund revenue was just added to the Capital Review Committee's ranking file, and that they are in the process of figuring out which capital projects that have already been ranked and added to the capital plan might be suitable for some of the sidewalk funds. She noted that other than that, the LOT fund is its own separate fund and budget within the master budget, which shows the annual transfer to the capital reserve fund and the percentage that is earmarked for sidewalk maintenance and repair. City Manager Mahony noted that while the rolling stock trends upward in several years, it goes back into the negative again in FY33, because the rolling stock reflects anticipated planned replacement of vehicles in future years.

Councilor Miller said he would be comfortable pausing on purchasing vehicles and impacting the rolling stock until after further budget discussions when the City's financial picture for FY28 is clearer. Councilor Clark agreed. Councilor Shelden agreed with pausing on further purchases. Councilor Chawla said he would be comfortable pausing on the command vehicle purchase for several months until reappraisal results are known, but stressed that he does not want the Council to deny the Fire Department this requested purchase when they have come forward with this anticipated need and planned approach. City Manager Mahony noted that the City's financial picture will not look different in a month or two than how it looks today, and that there won't be anything different until the FY28 budget next July, and that they will have more solid projections by November. City Council President Thibeault said that she would support the approval of the purchase of the command vehicle, given that the Council has had this conversation for several years. She acknowledged the situation the City and its taxpayers are in, but said that it is a balance, given that the Essex Junction is a new City and has vehicles that it needs to be operational. She said that removing the purchase of the command vehicle does not solve a future problem. Councilor Clark said she isn't opposed to the command vehicle purchase, but she would like a better understanding of the FY28 budget as a whole prior to making that decision.

Councilor Shelden made a motion, seconded by Councilor Clark, to remove the command vehicle purchase out of the consent agenda and make it Business Item #5e. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Discussion of the FY28 Budget Direction

City Manager Mahony noted that this is to prepare the Council and staff for discussion of the FY28 budget She said that one step in this preparation was to hold the Council Retreat at the beginning of June to help set priorities. She said that tonight's discussion is for the Council to set more quantitative direction to department heads to inform their budget builds for the proposed FY28 budget. She provided summaries of the three prior fiscal year budgets, and noted that the City will be entering into association contracts within the next month for FY28, but said that those negotiations may not be completed by the time the initial FY28 budget is presented to the Council in November. She said that if the City chooses to hold its annual meeting on Town Meeting Day, she is anticipating holding the City's budget day discussions the week of November 16, 2026. Finance Director Morris also noted that the inflation rate might be a helpful reference point for tonight's discussion, and that the average rate of inflation through May of 2026 is currently 3.2%. Councilor Miller noted that the tax rate is currently unknown, given that the City is going through a reappraisal effort that has not yet concluded. City Manager Mahony further added that what is unknown is if there is going to be a shift from commercial and industrial properties onto residential properties, but said that any increase as a result of the reappraisal will not be due to City-controlled factors. Councilor Miller said he is leaning to a target of a 4% increase, because it seems realistic and can accomplish what needs to be done while also respecting the taxpayers. Councilor Clark asked about historical conversations at the Council about cutting services, and multiple Councilors acknowledged that the City's municipal budget is tight and efficient and that the community has said that they would strongly oppose cutting services. City Council President Thibeault also noted that the Council discussed community and economic development as priorities during its retreat and said that at some point, in order to take action on those priorities, the City will need to put additional funding into the budget. She said that to allow staff the flexibility to enact some of these priorities, they need the budget flexibility to do so, and she is proposing a 5% increase in the budget to accommodate that. Councilor Clark also expressed support for a proposed 5% increase. Councilor Shelden said he would target a 4% increase, given where inflation is currently trending and how the Council has approached the budget build for the past several years. Councilor Chawla said he would like to see a budget presented with a targeted 4% increase, noting that the City Manager and staff notes that accompany budget projections and builds are extremely helpful in informing future budget discussions.

The following public comments were received:

- Resa noted that a 4% or 5% increase in the budget would not include debt service on the City's bonds. City Manager Mahony noted that General Fund debt would be included in that 4-5% increase, but that debt service for enterprise funds (for utilities like water and sanitation) would be reflected in utility bills.
- Marcus Certa asked if the City can provide a list of services that are provided by the City, saying that these can help inform budget discussions and help inform the community about the different services that the City provides and that could potentially be reduced. He said that this could also help inform association contract negotiations. He said he would also like to see a review of the fee schedules associated with the land development code to get a better picture from the revenue side.

c. Discussion and Consideration on the West Street Forcemain Project including a Bond Vote, Contract Amendment for Design Services, Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund Application Amendment, and Sanitation Capital Plan Amendment

Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo spoke on this agenda item. She began by noting that the West Street Pump Station, River Street Pump Sation, and Maple Street Pump Station are all currently under design for full replacement, given that they are over 40 years old and the typical useful life for these facilities is around 25 years. She noted that the bond for the costs of these redesigns passed two years ago, but that as the design progressed, it was realized that the West Street Pump Station is operating over capacity and that replacing the equipment would not allow capacity for future growth due to the size of the forcemain. She said that the current forcemain pipe is 8 inches and that it needs to be bigger to allow for future growth of the City. She noted that replacing the forcemain would be a $2 million project, and that it would be most efficient to time the replacement with the West Street Pump Station upgrade, which would require a bond vote either in November 2026 or March 2027. She further noted that the forcemain project would be shared with the Town, according to the proportion of flow from each municipality, so the project would be cost-shared between the Town and the City. She noted that this would come out of the Sanitation Capital Reserve Fund, as well as be part of the City's Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund application. City Council President Thibeault noted that there will be further discussion of this and a vote at the Council's July 22 meeting, given that information about debt load isn't available yet. Councilor Chawla said he would be supportive of this bond vote, but noted that some of this capacity strain is coming from new development. He suggested looking into how the City could increase revenue (potentially through fee schedules) from development, while trying to balance the price of development and affordability, given that grand list growth alone will not cover some of these expenses associated with increased density and strain on infrastructure. He asked if this is an issue elsewhere in the City, and Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo said that she would like to ask for a full capacity study for the rest of the City's collection system, rather than approaching it piecemeal.

The following public comments were received:

- Marcus Certa expressed support for the project, noting that at least one developer on Pearl Street was asked to pause their project until this pump station forcemain project was completed. He noted that the forcemain would be upgraded from an 8-inch pipe to a 10-inch pipe, and asked how much increased development capacity that would support over the next 25 years. Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo said that she worked with the Community Development Department to project what development could look like over the next 10 to 15 years, and determined that a 10-inch forcemain would be sufficient (and leave excess capacity for additional future development).

Councilors agreed that they would like to proceed with this conversation and to target a bond vote for November 2026.

d. Discussion and Consideration of Setting a Special Meeting Date to Set the FY27 Tax Rate
City Manager Mahony said that they are trying to determine whether the City will be able to set the tax rate at the Council's July 22, 2026 meeting, but said that they are anticipating needing a separate, special meeting on August 3, 2026 at 5:30, to set that tax rate.

Councilor Clark made a motion, seconded by Councilor Chawla, that the City Council set a special Council meeting on August 3, 2026, at 5:30 P.M. The motion passed 5-0.

e. Approve Command Vehicle Bid Award **was Consent Item #6b**
Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, to table the approval of the Command Vehicle Bid Award. The motion passed 4-1 (City Council President Thibeault dissenting).

f. *Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to Discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation
See item #9a below.

6. **<u>CONSENT ITEMS</u>**
a. Approve Meeting Minutes – June 24, 2026
b. Approve Command Vehicle Bid Award **now Business Item #5e**
c. Approve an FY26 General Fund Transfer to FY27 for a Speed Cushion Purchase
d. Approve Wastewater Recovery Facility Drying Bed Contract Award and Amend the Wastewater Recovery Facility Capital Plan
e. Amend the Wastewater Recovery Facility Capital Plan for the Front Gate Replacement
f. Acting as the Liquor Control Commission – Approve Liquor/Tobacco Licenses

Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

7. **<u>COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:</u>** City Manager Mahony noted that the City put out a communication today noting that residents can only put campaign signs out in the public right-of-way 2 weeks prior to an election. She noted that the primary is on August 11, so the City is asking people to remove signs from the public right-of-way until that time, or City staff will remove them. City Manager Mahony also noted that Brownell Library will be celebrating its 100th birthday on Friday, July 17 at the Library from 4:00 to 7:00 P.M. Councilor Miller noted that Public Works has been painting crosswalks and stop bars during the day, which is an inconvenience to traffic, and expressed appreciation for everyone's patience due to that inconvenience.

8. **<u>READING FILE</u>**
a. Check Warrant #24121 – June 26, 2026
b. Brownell Library Trustee Minutes – June 16, 2026

c. Police Community Advisory Board Minutes – June 16, 2026
d. Development Review Board Minutes – June 18, 2026
e. Capital Review Committee Minutes – June 30, 2026

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
a. *An Executive Session may be needed to discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation
Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council make the specific finding that premature disclosure of the confidential attorney-client communications regarding a probable litigation would place the city at a substantial disadvantage, and that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss confidential attorney-client communications regarding probable litigation, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(E) and 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(F) to include the City Council and City Manager. The motion passed 5-0.

Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:25 P.M.

City Council President Thibeault made a motion, seconded by Councilor Clark, to ratify the settlement agreement with Rebecca Santillo on behalf of her daughter Alexa Santillo. The motion passed 5-0.

10. **ADJOURN**

Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:26 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt