

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING
August 26, 2026**

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Amber Thibeault, President; Tim Miller, Vice President; Bethany Clark, Clerk; Raj Chawla, Brian Shelden.

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Colleen Dwyer, Director of Human Resources; Ashley Snellenberger, Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives.

OTHERS PRESENT: Nate Arnas, Marcus Certa, Joe Cornacchia, Michael Miller, Reed Nye, John O'Brien, John Saari, Jason Senecal, Dennis Thibeault, Elena J., 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

None needed.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public

Jason Senecal thanked the City for hosting Navy Week for various divisions of the navy, which is in support of introducing the Navy to the community and making connections with businesses to explore business opportunities with the Navy. He spoke about the various events they have attended, and noted that they will be hosting a number of events at the Burlington waterfront. He noted that they will attend the Champlain Valley Fair's ribbon-cutting event on Friday, August 28, 2026 at noon.

Joe Carnacchio spoke about the traffic on West Street and noted that he has had a number of close calls in terms of traffic accidents over the years. He said he would not recommend any changes to the current traffic pattern because the community and drivers are used to the current traffic pattern and that a change could cause more accidents.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion and Consideration of Recommendation of a New Deputy Health Officer, Brittany McGregor
City Manager Mahony began by noting that the City and Town of Essex have had a mutual relationship with their health officers, whereby the Town's Health Officer serves as the City's Deputy Health Officer and vice versa. She noted that Sharon Kelly has been the Health Officer for the Town of Essex for a long time, and is retiring at the end of August. She noted that this recommendation is to appoint the new Town Health Officer as the Deputy Health Officer for the City of Essex Junction, which the State Department of Health will consider in September.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Clark, that the City Council recommend to the Department of Health the appointment of Brittany McGregor as the Deputy Health Officer for the City, effective September 1, 2026. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Discussion and Consideration of City Logo Rollout Update

Communications & Strategic Initiatives Director Snellenberger spoke on this agenda item. She gave a brief overview and update on activities pertaining to rolling out the new City logo. She noted that internal rollout included using the new logo on email signatures, memos, and incorporating into PowerPoint presentations, as well as distributing t-shirts, hats, and tote bags to staff as a token of appreciation. She noted that external

rollout included incorporating the logo into the community newsletter and on City social media accounts. She noted that she has been working with the City's website designer to incorporate the new logo and style into the City's website. She further noted that the City submitted an application to have a .gov website address (as well as .gov email addresses), which was accepted, and that the website vendor is working on implementing that change. She said that the City has seen quote requests out to area sign companies asking for estimates on replacement entrance signs, banners, truck decals, and the Railroad and Main sign. She then spoke about other engagement activities, including working on a t-shirt design for Councilors, as well as stickers and a tablecloth for the Meet Me On Main events. She finally noted that the City will work to implement the new logo and design into its ordinances and policies, as well as ensuring that those documents are ADA compliant. Councilor Miller asked about the anticipated completion date for the website changes, and Director Snellenberger replied that they hope to have the changes implemented by the end of September. Councilor Miller asked if they are working to obtain quotes from signage companies and vinyl decal companies, and Director Snellenberger replied that they are obtaining quotes from a number of different types of companies. Councilor Clark asked if they have cost estimates yet, and Director Snellenberger replied that they do not yet have pricing estimates.

c. Discussion and Consideration of New Mission, Value, Goal Statement Update

Human Resources Director Dwyer spoke about this agenda item, noting that the City undertook this update to create greater clarity and consistency across all departments, and noted the importance of working with the VLCT Welcoming and Engaging Community Initiative and using employee survey results and staff feedback. She noted that the City participated in a collaborative review process with each department to solicit feedback and input on a new mission, value, and goals. City Manager Mahony said that the process has been helpful, and the new proposed mission, value, and goals language seems to capture both the staff perspective of how the City works together internally as well as how it serves the City of Essex Junction. She noted that the proposed values include stewardship, collaboration, and service with humanity. Councilors noted the collaborative and inclusive process the City went through to make these updates. Councilor Chawla asked about the process for socializing the new mission, value, and goal statement. Director Dwyer replied that they will begin to incorporate this revision into staff trainings and evaluations. Councilor Clark asked if the new mission and values will be publicized, and whether there is a communication plan for doing so. City Manager Mahony replied that this new mission, value, and goals statement ultimately lives in the City's personnel regulations, and this document will come before the Council for approval when those changes are incorporated into it. She noted that it differs from the vision articulated in the City's strategic plan, which is more community-based and outward-facing. Councilor Clark said it could warrant a press release or inclusion in a City newsletter in the near future, and Councilor Chawla concurred.

The following public comments were received:

- Resa asked if this change satisfies recent federal mandates for receiving grants, and City Manager Mahony replied that it does.

d. Discussion and Consideration of Park Street Complete Street Improvements – Bid Authorization and Ordinance Amendment Introduction

City Manager Mahony said that this pertains to ongoing discussions around the Park Street parking and bike lane project. She noted that the Council voted to move the preferred alternative forward at its April 29, 2026 meeting, and that the City is now moving forward with implementing the project. She said that for the Council's consideration tonight is authorization for a bid to conduct road striping, as well as amendments to Chapter 8 of the City's Municipal Code to the ordinance pertaining to street requirements, in order to align with the changes in the proposed preferred alternative. She noted that ordinance amendments require a public hearing process of at least one public hearing. She noted a recommendation to have a public hearing on these proposed ordinance changes on September 9, 2026. She also noted that there was a request to install a stop sign on Pine Court, and that the City Engineer agrees with this request and that it could be funded and implemented immediately. She noted that this stop sign request is unrelated to the bike lane changes but also lives in the same chapter of the Municipal Code, and could be incorporated into amendments at the same time.

Councilor Sheldon noted that he has been questioning the need for a stop sign at the Pine Court intersection, given that a more immediate problem is at the West Street extension intersection, though this would require a more expensive intervention. He agreed that this intersection is dangerous and there isn't clarity on who has the right-of-way there.

The following public comments were received:

- Marcus Certa noted that there is no difficulty in line-of-sight for the Pine Court intersection, and does not understand the reasoning for the installation of a stop sign, given that the problem intersection is the West Street extension. He asked for further information about the justification for installing an intersection with Pine Court.

City Manager Mahony said that more information on the justification for the Pine Court stop sign could be provided for the next City Council meeting, or they could have more information available during the public hearing. She said the ordinance component is not time sensitive, and that the public hearing could be held at the second Council meeting in September instead of on September 9, 2026. She noted that the Pine Court stop sign request was not viewed as a traffic calming request, but as a safety request, which has a different process and approval pathway, and that it resulted in this recommendation. Councilor Sheldon said he does not have a strong opinion about whether to put a stop sign at Pine Court and would defer to the City Engineer's expertise, but said he would not want to delay the Park Street project. He asked whether it would make sense to pull the stop sign request for tonight, but consider approving the parking ordinance public hearing and the contract for the striping. Councilors discussed this, and decided that it would likely result in a second public hearing either way.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Chawla, that the City Council authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with K5 Marking LLC for \$19,673.50 for the Park Street Complete Improvements Project. The motion passed 5-0.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Chawla, that the City Council warn a public hearing for September 9, 2026, at 6:30 P.M. to consider amendments to Chapter 8 of the Municipal Code related to on-street parking on Park Street, bicycle lane provisions, and a stop sign at Pine Court and West Street. The motion passed 5-0.

e. ****Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to Discuss a Personnel Contract**
See item #9a below.

f. *****Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to Discuss Confidential Attorney-Client Communications and Litigation**
See item #9b below.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

- Approve Meeting Minutes: August 12, 2026
- Acting as the Liquor Control Commission – Approve Liquor/Tobacco Licenses
- Approve Reservation of Parking Spaces for Park Street School
- Approve Appointment of Alternative Authorized Representative for State Water Infrastructure Financing Programs
- West Street Pump Station Force Main Project – Reconsider Bond Vote for Annual Meeting 2027
- Approve Justices of the Peace Candidates on the Back of the General Election Ballot

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

7. **COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:** City Manager Mahony noted that the Fire Department has responded to 3 structure fires in the last month, and expressed appreciation for their service. She took the opportunity to remind the public to check their smoke detectors and fire extinguishers and to practice fire safety. She noted that the Champlain Valley Fair is starting on Friday for the next 10 days, and thanked the community in advance for their patience with increased traffic. She noted that Meet Me On Main will occur on September 19, September 26, and October 3 (all Saturdays). Councilor Miller noted that today was the first day of school, and that patience is appreciated around school areas and that the speed limit is still 25 miles per hour, and that Public Works has restriped roadways and crosswalks in anticipation of this. City Council President Thibeault noted that Tax Day is coming up on September 15, 2026, and that the City Council is conducting a snack and school supply drive to benefit Essex CHIPS, and that donation boxes are located at 2 Lincoln Street.

8. **READING FILE**

- a. Check Warrant #24126 – August 12, 2026
- b. Bike/Walk Advisory Committee Minutes – August 13, 2026
- c. Planning Commission Minutes – August 11, 2026
- d. Police Community Advisory Board Minutes – July 21, 2026
- e. Tree Advisory Committee Minutes – July 28, 2026
- f. Tree Farm Management Group Minutes – August 10, 2026

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sheldon, that the City Council make the specific finding that premature disclosure of the contractual matters would place the City at a substantial disadvantage, and move that the City Council go into executive session to discuss a personnel contract pursuant to 1. V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(A) and 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3) to include the City Council, City Manager and HR Director. The motion passed 5-0.

- b. *****An Executive Session may be needed to discuss confidential attorney-client communications and litigation**

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sheldon, that the City Council make the specific finding that premature disclosure of the confidential attorney-client communications regarding probable litigation would place the City at a substantial disadvantage, and move that the City Council go into executive session to discuss confidential attorney-client communication 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 Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Clark, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:11 P.M.

10. **ADJOURN**

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Clark, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:12 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt