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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING  
March 25, 2026**

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

**ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager; Mark Brislin, EJRP Director; Wendy Hysko, Library Director; Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent; Jess Morris, Finance Director;

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Bethany Clark, Karen Hergesheimer, Reed Nye, Jemima Talbot, Dennis Thibeault, Marlon Verasamy, Michael, 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

None.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Discussion on Essex Westford School District Request to Voters Regarding Annual Meeting Date Change

Marlon Verasamy, Vice Chair of the School Board, and Jemima Talbot, Clerk of the School Board, presented on this item. Mr. Verasamy noted that the School Board approved an article to be on the April 14<sup>th</sup> ballot to ask the voters if they would like to move the voting date to Town Meeting Day starting in 2027. He and Ms. Talbot emphasized that this change would streamline processes around voting, make voting easier for the community, and save money. Councilor Miller expressed support for this move, given that it would cut down on the number of dates that residents would need to vote. Councilor Haney agreed, saying that this change is anticipated and welcomed. Mr. Verasamy thanked the Council for their support, noting that 109 school districts in the state already have their votes on Town Meeting Day, and aligning with that will be helpful in the long term. Councilor Shelden asked if moving the vote to Town Meeting Day will impact work on finalizing the school budget, and Mr. Verasamy replied that the school district is prepared for any impacts and is ready to make this change. City Manager Mahony noted that the City Council has the authority to change the annual meeting date for the City's budget, and that if the school district budget voting date changes, the Council is prepared to change its voting date in order to align with that change.

b. Brownell Library Trustees Brief to Council

Karen Hergesheimer, Chair of the Brownell Library Trustees, presented on this item. She began by speaking about challenges the Trustees have been working through over the past year, including strengthening governance and community outreach, streamlining reporting for meetings, aligning the Library Foundation with the Supporting Non-Profits of Brownell Library Policy, addressing and balancing aging building needs against collections costs, making funding choices in the budgeting process, and addressing the limited understanding of library funding models. She then spoke about the Trustees' achievements over the last year, which include working with staff on the library's strategic plan goals, the onboarding of three new Trustees who have brought new energy and perspectives onto the Board, focusing on building a more diverse and skilled Board, the adoption of the new Supporting Non-Profits of Brownell Library Policy (which clarifies

57 criteria for organizations supporting the library), creating and planning for events to celebrate the 100-year  
58 anniversary of the Brownell Library in 2026, improved communication between library staff, Trustees, and  
59 City leadership, participation in community events, more in-depth training and education of the Trustees by  
60 library staff, and the relaunch of the Friends of the Brownell Library to support fundraising and community  
61 engagement. Councilor Haney asked about the distinction between the new Supporting Non-Profits policy  
62 and the Friends of the Brownell Library and Foundation. Trustee Chair Hergesheimer replied that the new  
63 policy sets the guardrails for non-profits to be in existence on behalf of Brownell Library and to protect the  
64 Library from organizations that purport to be altruistic but that have ulterior motives. She said that part of the  
65 policy requires the Trustees to recognize the organizations that come forward with support, and requires  
66 certain criteria and documentation to be met. She said that the policy also requires a Memorandum of  
67 Understanding (MOU) between the Library, Trustees, and the supporting non-profit. She said that the Friends  
68 and the Foundation are the two nonprofits that are currently supporting Brownell Library. Councilor Certa  
69 asked how this interacts with City administration. Trustee Chair Hergesheimer replied that the City's legal  
70 counsel advised the Trustees on the policy and reviewed the draft prior to approval by the Trustees, to ensure  
71 that City leadership was involved and aware. Trustee Chair Hergesheimer described the respective roles of  
72 the Friends and the Foundation in terms of library support. Councilor Certa asked for more details on  
73 community engagement by the library and whether the City has a role in that. City Manager Mahony replied  
74 that the City administration has been fairly hands off and that the library has largely been handling their own  
75 outreach and engagement activities. Trustee Chair Hergesheimer added that the Trustees have been  
76 stepping in where they can to provide more community engagement to take burden off library staff.  
77

78 c. Library Department Head Brief to Council

79 Library Director Hysko began by reflecting on library activities over the past six months. She noted that the  
80 level of library traffic has returned to pre-pandemic levels, and that it is a more diverse group of users and in  
81 some ways a more challenging group. She noted that library staff help guests out with accessing a number  
82 of governmental and social services online, and that staff also make a number of referrals to the outreach  
83 team. She spoke about the strategic planning process and the positive experience staff and the Trustees  
84 had in developing the plan. She said that one of the main areas of focus in that process has been improving  
85 communication and raising public awareness of library services and programming. She spoke about the  
86 difficulty in maintaining safe walkways and entrances during the winter and said she hopes that the roof  
87 repair project in June will help alleviate some of that difficulty. She also spoke about work staff have done to  
88 strengthen inter-library sharing services. She then spoke about planned and anticipated activities over the  
89 next six months, which include the roof replacement noted above, carpet replacement, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
90 celebration on July 17<sup>th</sup>, the retirement of the longtime assistant youth librarian, and work on the Sustainable  
91 Libraries Initiative certification goals.  
92

93 Councilor Certa noted that demand for digital materials is high and asked how the library envisions its future  
94 as this demand continues to grow. Director Hysko replied that many patrons still prefer hard-copy books over  
95 digital ones, and said that she does not believe that physical copies of books will be phased out anytime  
96 soon. Trustee Chair Hergesheimer also noted that there has been a push across the country to democratize  
97 the price of electronic books, so she hopes the price of digital resources will come down.  
98

99 d. Discussion and Consideration of Fiscal Year 2027 Enterprise Fund Operating and Capital Budgets for  
100 Water, Wastewater, Sanitation, and EJRP Program Fund; and Warn Public Hearing for Utility Rates for  
101 April 29<sup>th</sup>

102 Finance Director Morris began by speaking about the EJRP Program Fund, noting that the only change from  
103 February in this third round of reviewing these budgets is that they have updated the allocations for some of  
104 the citywide shared expenses. She noted that the EJRP Program Fund is in a \$33,000 deficit (brought down  
105 from a \$68,000 deficit in the first round of budget review). She noted that this deficit can be covered with a  
106 portion of the \$1 million program fund balance. She spoke about the Senior Center Fund, which the City  
107 plans to use to furnish the new Senior Center.  
108

109 Director Morris then spoke about the water, wastewater, and sanitation budgets. She said that they stand at  
110 a combined 7.6% increase for FY27, or roughly \$62 per year for the average household. She noted that  
111 changes from the last round of review in the Water Fund were to reduce the capital transfer and reduce  
112 postage expenses related to billing, to reduce the overall budget by \$51,000. She also noted a reduction in  
113 the Wastewater Budget of \$5,000 since the last round of review, through a reduction in the capital transfer.  
114 She said that they have been able to reduce the estimated stormwater fee for the wastewater fund based on  
115 the updated and finalized stormwater budget and rates. She noted that they have reduced the Sanitation  
116 Budget by around \$53,000 since the last round of review, by increasing the revenue assumptions for the two-  
117 party agreement with the Town, reducing the postage amount for utility billing, and reducing the capital  
118 transfer. She then spoke about operating budgets, noting that the Stormwater operating budget has seen the  
119 biggest change—an increase of \$77,00—for the vacuum truck camera and an increase in capital transfer, as  
120 well as decreases for professional services, repair and maintenance, and other maintenance categories. She  
121 said that in working with a third-party vendor on accounting for the stormwater utility, they have recalculated  
122 the stormwater utility rate for FY27, which will be \$88.91 per ERU. She then spoke about the Enterprise  
123 Capital Funds for each of these budgets, noting that the Water Fund and Wastewater Fund’s capital transfers  
124 were level-funded from FY26, that there is a \$20,000 increase in the capital transfer for the Sanitation Fund  
125 over FY26, and that the Stormwater Fund has added a significant amount to capital. She noted a previous  
126 question from City Council President Thibeault about whether an increased capital transfer in Stormwater  
127 would have an impact on the bond vote, particularly for the Hiawatha project. She said that in order to conduct  
128 the Hiawatha project on the required timeline (by 2028) and if the City chose not to bond for the expense of  
129 the project, the City could absorb the full amount in FY27 or spread the cost over two fiscal years (FY27 and  
130 FY28). She said that if the City pursues the first option, the ERU rate would be \$286, and if they spread it  
131 over two years, the ERU rate would be \$215.  
132

133 **Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, that the City Council approve the**  
134 **FY27 Enterprise Fund operating and capital budgets for Water, Wastewater, Sanitation, Stormwater,**  
135 **and EJRP Program Fund as presented. The motion passed 5-0.**  
136

137 **Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, that the City Council warn a public**  
138 **hearing on April 29, 2026 for FY27 rate setting for the Water, Wastewater, Sanitation, and Stormwater**  
139 **funds. The motion passed 5-0.**  
140

141 **6. CONSENT ITEMS**

- 142 a. Approve Meeting Minutes – March 11, 2026  
143 b. Approve July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks Display Permit – EJRP  
144 c. Approve Memorial Day Banner Request  
145 d. Approve Memorial Day Street Closure  
146 e. Approve Main Street Sidewalk Bid Award  
147 f. Approve Certification of Compliance for Town Road and Bridge Standards and Network Inventory  
148

149 **Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to approve the consent agenda. The**  
150 **motion passed 5-0.**  
151

152 **7. COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:** City Manager Mahony noted that the City’s  
153 Annual Meeting and voting day is April 14, 2026. She also spoke briefly about the Streets As Places  
154 Grant opportunity from Local Motion, which is a small grant opportunity for community members to do  
155 block parties and revitalize streets for people. City Council President Thibeault noted that the City’s food  
156 drive is still going on through March 30 at 2 Lincoln Street.  
157

158 **8. READING FILE**

- 159 a. Check Warrant #24112 – March 20, 2026  
160 b. Brad Luck Resolution of Appreciation – Signed  
161 c. Streets as Places Grant Program Guide

- d. SFY27 TA 60 Annual Financial Plan Essex Junction
- e. Manager Evaluation Report
- f. Comprehensive Plan Progress Report and Public Engagement Plan
- g. EPD Preparedness Concerning Immigration Enforcement
- h. Planning Commission Minutes – March 5, 2026
- i. Board of Civil Authority Minutes – March 9, 2026
- j. Tree Farm Management Group Minutes – March 10, 2026
- k. Bike Walk Advisory Committee Minutes – March 12, 2026

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. None anticipated

10. **ADJOURN**

**Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 7:08 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Coonradt