



**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

Online & 2 Lincoln St.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Wednesday, January 25, 2023
6:30 PM

E-mail: admin@essexjunction.org

www.essexjunction.org

Phone: (802) 878-6944

This meeting will be in-person at 2 Lincoln Street 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 on Items Not on Agenda
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. *Discussion and consideration of Health Officer Applicant, Faith Foley
 - b. Discussion of Green Mountain Transit Service Changes, Paul Bohne
 - c. Discussion and Consideration of a Wastewater Capital Plan Modification, Chelsea Mandigo
 - d. Discussion of the FY24 Enterprise Budgets
 - e. Discussion and Consideration of Moving the 2023 Annual Meeting
 - f. Discussion of Charter Changes
 - g. Discussion of the FY24 General Fund Budget and Consideration of Warning the Public Hearing
 - h. Discussion of Dog Ordinance & Rules of Procedure
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve Check Warrants #17336 (1/13/2023) and #17337 (1/20/2023)
 - b. Approve Minutes: December 6, 2022 and January 11, 2023
 - c. Main Street Waterline Bid Award
 - d. Resolution for 1 Main Street Park Downtown Transit Fund Application
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board member comments
 - b. Champlain Valley Expo Annual Permit Application 2023
 - c. December Library Report
 - d. Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Housing Convening Agenda
 - e. Joint Housing Committee Minutes: January 4, 2023
 - f. Development Review Board Minutes: January 12, 2023
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. * An executive session may be needed to discuss the appointment of a public official
9. **ADJOURN**

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the President, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the President. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the City Council, like all programs and activities of the City of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the City Manager's office at 802-878-6944 TTY: 7-1-1 or (800) 253-0191.

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2023

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Andrew Brown, President; Raj Chawla, Vice-President; Dan Kerin; Amber Thibeault; George Tyler

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Brad Luck, Recreation Director; Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent; Jess Morris, Finance Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Bohne, Green Mountain Transit; Alise Certa; Annie Cooper; Pat Murray; Frank Puleo; Cody Racine; Janelle Racine; Ken Signorello; Jason Struthers; Kate Vanni; Jenna P.; Bridget; Heidi; Robin; RSM

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brown called the meeting of the City Council to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

Mr. Brown requested that item 5g. Discussion of the FY24 General Fund Budget and Consideration of Warning the Public Hearing and item 5e. Discussion and Consideration of Moving the 2023 Annual Meeting swap places on the agenda. Mr. Chawla requested that an additional memo be added to item 5e. Mr. Tyler noted that he had comments to share in item 7a, Board Member Comments.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion and consideration of Health Officer Applicant, Faith Foley

Ms. Foley said she is interested in this position because she is looking for a fulfilling part-time opportunity. She enjoys working with people to problem-solve and has experience in rental inspections through her previous work at the Burlington Housing Authority. Mr. Tyler asked Ms. Foley what she feels is the most common conflict or concern regarding rental housing. She said disagreements between tenants and landlords over repairs and bedbug infestations. Mr. Chawla and Ms. Mahony spoke of the “in-between” nature of this appointment, saying that this role could be served at some point by a full-time staff position. Ms. Foley said that she works full-time and would be able to address concerns on evenings and weekends. Ms. Mahony said that the Town and City health officers would provide backup services to one another as needed.

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to approve Faith Foley as the City’s Health Officer. Motion passed 5-0.

b. Discussion of Green Mountain Transit Service Changes, Paul Bohne

48 Mr. Bohne said that he has served as the Town of Essex’s representative for the past five years and has
49 held a variety of other positions at Green Mountain Transit (GMT). He said that difficult financial
50 situations forced GMT to cut services, including in Essex Junction. Mr. Bohne said that GMT would be re-
51 instituting fares in June of 2023. There is a strong desire for more bus services from Essex Junction to the
52 UVM Medical Center, and GMT is working to see if this would be possible. He said that GMT is short
53 about six drivers and has had to spend a significant amount on overtime costs to keep existing routes
54 running, becoming both a cost and employee morale issue. Mr. Chawla clarified that the “service
55 additions” Mr. Bohne referenced were really adding back services that had been cut previously. He also
56 asked if a community cost increase could help add services back. Mr. Bohne said that GMT is already
57 asking for a 5% increase this year. Mr. Chawla said Essex Junction’s community plan relies heavily on
58 public transportation. He also raised the possibility of Essex Junction paying more for additional services.
59 Mr. Brown said he would like to have a conversation with the GMT Board to learn more about this.
60

61 **c. Discussion and Consideration of a Wastewater Capital Plan Modification, Chelsea Mandigo**

62 Ms. Mandigo said that the Wastewater Treatment Facility has a co-generation system that produces heat
63 and electricity for the plant. Originally, it was thought that only the generator needed replacement.
64 However, it was found that the engine also needs to be replaced. If it is ordered promptly, the engine will
65 arrive in June. Mr. Brown said that this product should pay for itself in a few years and will significantly
66 reduce monthly power and natural gas bills. Ms. Mandigo said that this equipment would help to capture
67 excess methane rather than release it into the environment.
68

69 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, that the City Council amend the**
70 **Wastewater Capital Plan to allocate funds not to exceed \$150,000 for the emergency replacement of**
71 **the co-generation engine. Motion passed 5-0.**
72

73 **d. Discussion of the FY24 Enterprise Budgets**

74 Water, Wastewater, and Sanitation

75 Ms. Morris said that the most notable change in the Water, Wastewater, and Sanitation Funds for the FY24
76 budget is an increase in the amount each fund is charged for administrative fees. These fees are calculated
77 based on the costs for salaries and wages for administrative and finance staff, as well as a portion of
78 building maintenance for Lincoln Hall. She said that the rate calculations from the last meeting were
79 incorrect and thus have dropped since the last meeting. The proposed utility rates will result in an 8.47%
80 increase which calculates to \$49.62 per year on an average bill.
81

82 Senior Center Fund

83 Ms. Morris said that the Town provides this budget and that membership fees fund this. The Senior Center
84 will maintain the status quo in FY 24.
85

86 EJRP Program Fund

87 Mr. Luck said that this fund is an enterprise fund, and it is fully funded by user fees. Seventeen of the full-
88 time EJRP staff are paid for out of this fund. Mr. Brown said the budget appeared to spend \$16,000 more
89 than it brought in. Ms. Morris said that it is due to estimated Worker’s Compensation insurance increases.
90

91 **e. Discussion of the FY24 General Fund Budget and Consideration of Warning the Public Hearing**

92 Ms. Mahony discussed the Council’s progress thus far in creating the FY24 budget. She said there is a
93 1.6% tax increase from FY23 to FY24 or \$42 for an average home. She detailed five new positions,
94 programmatic increases, and the uses of the Local Option Tax funds. Mr. Brown noted that the public

95 hearing process is the opportunity for members of the public to have input on the budget and that there is
96 no longer the option to make changes at the annual meeting.

97

98 Mr. Chawla discussed a memo regarding raising the City Council stipends to \$6,500 a year. He stated that
99 this change would help to allow more diverse representation on the Council. Paying Councilors more
100 would remove barriers to serving on the Council from traditionally unrepresented groups. Mr. Chawla said
101 that he estimates the average City Councilor works 21 hours in this capacity. Investing in these stipends
102 will show that the community is serious about bringing more voices to the table. Mr. Kerin said that he is
103 opposed to increasing stipends. He said that all City Councilors will need to be elected and that it seems
104 like this could be perceived as an effort of the Council to create a future Council with a certain appearance.
105 He said it is difficult to get public participation and that putting more money towards the issue will not
106 help. He discussed his experience serving on Boards as a single parent working a varied schedule. He
107 expressed concern that taxpayers cannot afford the increase that this would bring. Mr. Kerin said that more
108 people are involved in local government than ever before due to remote participation options. Mr. Brown
109 said that while this stipend will not take away all barriers, it may help some people participate in
110 government who have not done so before. Mr. Tyler said it is important that potential counselors be
111 interested in a genuine care for the community, not a potential financial gain. He also expressed concern
112 that it could be seen that the City needs to pay people interested in serving on the Council. He also said that
113 the City has no idea who would be elected and that the desired result could be very different from what
114 actually happens.

115

116 Mr. Brown requested public comment. Ms. Mahony read the following comment from Bridget, “I support
117 the incremental stipend increase for City Councilors. I think it might entice younger people to run and
118 serve. We need to be proactive about this. I’m appreciative of the conversation you’re having.” Mr.
119 Murray expressed his support for this proposal. He said that he feels that some people in the community are
120 being prevented from participating in leadership positions due to financial constraints.
121 Mr. Struthers suggested using stipend money to help to fund City Council campaigns. Ms. Cooper said that
122 she was put off by Mr. Chawla’s lack of professionalism towards his colleagues, but she does support his
123 idea. Mr. Brown requested that the issue be tabled until the next meeting. Mr. Chawla also offered the
124 proposal that the stipend could be listed as “up to \$6,500” and said it could be an individual’s choice of
125 whether to take the funds.

126

127 Moving on to the rest of the budget, Mr. Brown suggested offering a one-time inflation adjustment to staff
128 rather than a permanent salary percentage increase.

129

130 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, that the City Council warn a public**
131 **hearing for the fiscal year 2024 proposed budgets and capital programs for the City of Essex**
132 **Junction to be held Wednesday, February 8, 2023, and Wednesday, February 22, 2023. Motion**
133 **passed 5-0.**

134

135 **f. Discussion and Consideration of Moving the 2023 Annual Meeting**

136 Ms. Mahony said that Annual Meeting is scheduled for the first night of Passover. Voters decided upon this
137 at the last Annual Meeting. She suggested moving the meeting to April 10, 2023. However, she noted that
138 this evening is also the Essex Westford School District’s meeting night. It may be possible to combine
139 these two meetings. However, there are some associated complications. Mr. Brown said he would like to
140 bring back some of the excitement of the Annual Meeting, such as the community dinner and community
141 organizations tabling. The Council discussed the possibility of having the meeting on the same evening,
142 and Mr. Tyler said that this has happened in the past. Mr. Chawla stated that the Council did not intend to

143 hold a meeting on Passover and intends to make it right. The final decision will be made at a future
144 meeting.

145

146 **g. Discussion of Charter Changes**

147 Mr. Brown said that four charter changes are proposed. The first is to change the charter to allow the Chair
148 to serve as Health Officer, which is technically considered an employment position with the City. The
149 second is to remove the line that would prevent Councilors from holding City employment for a year after
150 their term ends. The third is to remove the role of moderator, as the annual meeting is an informational
151 meeting now. The position could be appointed if need be. The fourth change is to no longer have the
152 community vote on when to hold the annual meeting a year in advance. This would make it a City Council
153 decision and ideally be scheduled to combine the municipal and school votes.

154

155 **h. Discussion of Dog Ordinance & Rules of Procedure**

156 Ms. Mahony said that the City held its first dog bite hearing on January 11, which has brought forth several
157 procedural and policy-level questions. She recommends that Rules of Procedure be established to handle
158 these hearings. She discussed the pros and cons of amending the ordinance and the possibility of aligning
159 with the Town of Essex, so the Police Department has the same rules to follow in both communities.

160 Mr. Chawla and Mr. Tyler expressed support for both procedural and policy changes to prevent dogs from
161 repeatedly biting other animals. Mr. Tyler said that he would like to see some set conditions for specific
162 types of bites. Mr. Brown said that the Council is not animal control nor animal behavior experts and that
163 some expert guidance needs to be provided moving forward. Ms. Thibeault suggested that the Council
164 participate in state trainings on the issue. Mr. Brown requested public input. Ms. Racine encouraged the
165 adoption of the Town ordinance, and Mr. Racine encouraged the Council to take vicious dog attacks
166 seriously. Ms. Certa said she is a dog owner and has fostered thirteen dogs. She encouraged the Council to
167 utilize animal control to determine bite levels. She said that dogs bite other dogs frequently and much more
168 often than they bite humans. Ms. Mahony said that she would have legal counsel review the current Town
169 ordinance and bring it back to a future meeting.

170

171 **6. CONSENT ITEMS**

172 **Motion by RAJ CHAWLA, second by DAN KERIN, to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed**
173 **5-0.**

174 **a. Approve Check Warrants #17336 (1/13/2023) and #17337 (1/20/2023)**

175 **b. Approve Minutes: December 6, 2022, and January 11, 2023**

176 **c. Main Street Waterline Bid Award**

177 **d. Resolution for 1 Main Street Park Downtown Transit Fund Application**

178

179 **7. READING FILE**

180 **a. Board member comments:** Mr. Tyler said that he and Mr. Kerin have always wanted to have an indoor
181 recreation facility and to make better use of Stevens Park. He superimposed a picture of the Miller Building
182 at the Champlain Valley Expo on Stevens Park and said there would be no loss of the wooded area for
183 adjoining property owners. He said that this location would be easily accessible in the center of the City
184 and could be used for after-school and senior programs. He encouraged the Council to consider this idea
185 for the future and said that the use of the park has declined in the last 30 years. Mr. Kerin described issues
186 at the park and said that nefarious activity occurs there. Mr. Brown requested public comment. Ms. Certa
187 said she would like to see this area utilized better and suggested how this space could be used for arts. Ms.
188 Cooper said that the City has not had a Recreation Advisory Committee in seven years and suggested that
189 this be reimplemented as soon as possible. Mr. Tyler discussed the long-term possibilities associated with
190 the current EWSD building adjoining Stevens Park.

191
192 Mr. Brown encouraged members of the public who are interested to review the dates of Champlain Valley
193 Expo events and said that it would also be available on the website.
194

- 195 **b. Champlain Valley Expo Annual Permit Application 2023**
196 **c. December Library Report**
197 **d. Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Housing Convening Agenda**
198 **e. Joint Housing Committee Minutes: January 4, 2023**
199 **f. Development Review Board Minutes: January 12, 2023**
200

201 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 202 **a. An executive session may be needed to discuss the appointment of a public official**
203 An executive session was not held.
204

205 **9. ADJOURN**

206 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0 at 9:14**
207 **PM**
208

209 Respectfully Submitted,
210 Darby Mayville
211 Recording Secretary
212
213