

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 16, 2026
APPROVED MAY 21, 2026**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Alden, Chair; Maggie Massey, Vice-Chair; Luke Brockmeier; Cristin Gildea

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF: Michael Giguere, City Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: Marilyn Abbot Aldrich, Scott Aldrich, Nick Bouton, Bethany Clark, Heidi Clark, Michael Clark, David Holton, Finn Hamilton, Mark Logan, Dan Maxon, Karen Maxon

Mr. Alden called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

1. ADDITIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

None.

Mr. Giguere said that this is a hybrid meeting, and that staff are present at 2 Lincoln Street to ensure public participation. While efforts will be made to accommodate remote public participants, in-person participation is the only legally mandated form of public participation. If there are technical difficulties the meeting may be paused and resumed on May 21st, 2026. All votes that are not unanimous will be done via roll call.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Ms. Aldrich thanked Essex Junction Parks and Recreation for their continued hard work.

3. MINUTES

a. March 26, 2026

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by LUKE BROCKMEIER, to approve the minutes of March 26, 2026, as amended. Motion passed 4-0.

Amendments:

-On page two, paragraph three, the following sentence, "He said that the window well could be in the back of the building so that it is not protruding in the front," will read "He said that the window well could be in the back of the building so that it is not protruding in the side."

4. PUBLIC MEETING

a. Conceptual review for a Planned Residential Development with three (3) duplexes and eight (8) single family homes at 60 Old Colchester Road in the R1 District by Sterling Homes Properties, LLC, agent for Louis C. Kalanges, owner

Mr. Giguere swore in all participants.

Mr. Bouton, of Cross Consulting Engineers, presented on behalf of the applicant. This application is for a fourteen-unit PUD off of Old Colchester Road. All the units except for one will have driveway access off of a new proposed private road. The development is a mix of single-family homes and duplexes. This is being proposed as a PUD to allow for more open recreation space for future homeowners and to bring down the total project cost, offsetting the cost of the sewer line extension required to serve the new homes.

The applicant attests that the dead-end, single-access road is preferable over a future parallel north-south road due to the proximity of the municipal border with the Town of Essex to the north and to minimize environmental impacts. A natural surface pedestrian path is also proposed, with the applicant attesting that they would prefer not to have the path surfaced with gravel. There is a crosswalk proposed to connect to the Tree Farm across the street, and the municipal sidewalk will be extended north on Old Colchester Road. A sidewalk will be installed on the private road, which will be maintained by the HOA. No curbing is proposed in the development, except for along the sidewalk. Context was provided as to how the proposed stormwater infrastructure would operate during frozen ground conditions. All sewers will be gravity, and all other utilities will be underground. A singular streetlight is proposed at the intersection of Old Colchester Road and the private road. The developer would prefer not to install additional streetlights in the development. All homes will be custom.

The applicant is requesting the following waivers:

- More than 10 units are being requested on a single access.
- A dead-end road with no second access or future connection is being requested.
- Approval for the proposed road to be a private road, owned and maintained by the future homeowners association.
- Approval of a singular sidewalk within the development is being requested to maximize greenspace within the development.
- Approval of curbing only along the singular sidewalk to promote sheet flow of stormwater runoff and limit erosive conditions and standing water in the roadway.

Mr. Giguere said, due to the number of homes proposed as a part of the PUD, conceptual review is required. A second hearing, at minimum, will be required for final approval. He encouraged the DRB to first make a determination as to whether the proposed dead-end private road and associated waivers is acceptable as proposed, or if the roadway should be reconfigured to a “T” shape to accommodate potential future development on neighboring parcels. The Development Review Board (DRB) is able to require the applicant to dedicate 15% of the project to open space, which would be required to be open to the public rather than being strictly reserved for private resident use. Pedestrian easements along neighboring parcels are also encouraged by staff to create a comprehensive network of paths. City staff is amenable to the lack of curbing as proposed, however this would be required if the roadway was to be reconfigured to Public Street standards. He mentioned that a photometric lighting plan is not required for conceptual approval, but will be required for final development approval. The applicant would be paying to extend the City sewer service to their new development, which currently terminates at Autumn Pond Way.

Ms. Gildea noted that wetlands just south of the project area would factor into the board’s decision on planning for future development on neighboring parcels, making it less likely. Mr. Alden said an acceptable connection with the Tree Farm is important. As written, LDC encourages the future connection between surrounding neighborhoods and parcels. Mr. Alden noted that despite minor connectivity benefits, future residents and the developer would likely prefer a cul-de-sac and suggested that additional connections not be pursued. Mr. Alden noted concern about driveway length for the duplex accessed off of 2A. He encouraged sidewalk connectivity. Regarding mailbox location, he requested that sufficient space be available for parked cars in this area. He asked the applicant to clarify if the stormwater detention pond would be accessible; the developer clarified that it will not be fenced in. Mr. Bouton said this area will be entirely usable and is not a retention pond.

Mr. Giguere said comments from Jane Davis, sent via e-mail, were distributed to all DRB members. Mr. Alden encouraged planning for pedestrian connections between surrounding neighborhoods. The “primitive” pedestrian path will be maintained by the HOA and Mr. Alden did not see a need for requiring gravel surfacing. Mr. Alden encouraged garage lights to be in accordance with dark sky standards per LDC requirements. He suggested a two-tier lighting system for streetlights. In consideration of staff’s density calculation, Mr. Alden said that up to 36 units would be permitted by code, below the 14 units being proposed. Ms. Gildea encouraged additional sidewalk continuing in front of the duplex currently proposed to have frontage on Old Colchester Road, all board members agreed. She encouraged this home to be reoriented so that a driveway is not necessary on Old Colchester Road. Mr. Giguere said, as the applicant is proposing a private road, it does not need to meet all specifications of a Public Road, including sidewalks. The City does prefer a private road to minimize impacts to road maintenance. Mr. Brockmeier asked for confirmation that no north/south connection would be able to be built. Mr. Alden said that this is highly unlikely to occur due to railroad tracks, town line and wetlands. Answering a question from Ms. Gildea, Mr. Bouton and Mr. Alden clarified that the total number of homes would be specified by the HOA agreement.

In public comment, Mr. Maxon said that he lives on Old Colchester Road. He said traffic calming devices have recently been removed by the City. He expressed concern about the safety of crosswalks on Old Colchester Road, due to unloading for the Tree Farm. Mr. Maxon discussed Essex Junction’s Conceptual Plan, reading aloud the housing goals. He believes that this proposed development is not in line with the existing neighborhood character. The neighborhood has a more rural feel with most homes on one acre lots. He described the neighborhood as low-density single-family, which is very different than the proposed development. The Town of Essex plows Old Colchester Road, not the City. In response, Mr. Alden discussed the definition of the Residential-1 (R1) zoning district and said he was surprised that this application could be presented to the DRB. He encouraged the DRB to consider how this application will enhance the current conditions of the neighborhood. Answering a question from Ms. Gildea, Mr. Maxon said the elevated crosswalk connecting to the Tree Farm was removed due to plowing concerns. Ms. Gildea suggested that this be investigated by the City.

Mr. Holton lives in the neighborhood and believes that this development is out of character. He believes that the number of units will change the character of the area and spoke of existing traffic concerns. He would like a proposed development to be more in line with the existing homes. Mr. Hamilton expressed support for this project. He feels that this project will assist with the housing crisis and suggested installing rapid reflective flashing beacons to assist with pedestrian safety. Mr. Logan said the rural feel of the neighborhood was one of the reasons he purchased his property and said this project will eliminate his privacy. He discussed the changing traffic pattern and expressed concerns about traffic volume from the proposed development. He has previously been denied a permit to subdivide his lot and questioned how this was possible considering this development application.

Mr. Aldrich expressed concern about the traffic volume that the Tree Farm creates, calling it “oppressive.” He said this proposed development does not fit the characteristics of the neighborhood. Previously, the City decided not to bring sewer service to Old Colchester Road due to the lower density, however will allow it for this project if the developer will pay for such to occur. Mr. Aldrich said he wanted to purchase this property however construction of a home was not allowed by the City due to the lack of sewer service. Mr. Giguere said Essex Junction is not permitted to accept new septic systems. Extensions of sewer lines are the responsibility of the developer. Mr. Logan said that development in this area meets state

requirements, however the City is preventing this because of the opinion of one person. He believes that the landowner is being denied the opportunity to improve their property. Mr. Alden said this issue will not be resolved tonight and requested further clarification from staff. He discussed precedent where the Planning Commission (PC) has chosen not to change the zoning on Old Colchester Road which would allow for additional development in the area. It is important to ensure that the neighborhood is not overwhelmed, and this is a standard that the PC has upheld over the years. Mr. Alden said that this part of the City has a special character, but that additional housing is also needed. The current character of the neighborhood is one unit per acre. The question presented should be can the existing character of the neighborhood be maintained with a specific number of units, which Mr. Alden suggested is three per acre. Ms. Massey said that she believes that the number of units proposed by the developer would be allowable in the district. Mr. Logan stated that development was denied unless sewer lines were installed. If state approved septic were allowed to be installed, homes more in tune with the existing neighborhood character could be built. Mr. Alden described a variety of factors, such as historic character, density and lot sizes which go into determining the character of a neighborhood.

Mr. Bouton said the character of the neighborhood must be weighed against what is required to successfully develop a parcel, and the need for housing. Mr. Alden countered by stating that there is no drive to develop this parcel, besides the need for housing. His opinion was that if this project aligns with the City's goals, then the infrastructure should be partially funded by the City. Mr. Alden said that the PC had previously seen this development as a spot zoning issue. Mr. Giguere cited the density calculation in R1, stating that this is the density calculation that has been approved by the PC. Mr. Giguere said that adding sewer service to Old Colchester Road is in the Capital Budget for several years from now. Mr. Logan encouraged the City to allow new septic to be added to allow the development to better fit the area, and wait for the City to do the sewer line extension themselves. Surrounding homeowners would not be required to pay to connect, and Mr. Bouton noted that connecting to municipal sewer is much cheaper than installing a new septic system. Ms. Massey cited Section 723, stating that this encouraged compact, pedestrian-oriented developments and additional housing. She believes that the DRB needs to review applications based on the current code. Mr. Brockmeier concurred. Mr. Alden said that units per lot, rather than units per acre, should be analyzed. He believes that some of the density bonus targets need to be hit if additional units are requested. Mr. Giguere said these properties will be sold as footprint lots. There is precedent in Essex Junction to grant a developer additional flexibility in terms of density if they meet specific criteria.

As this is a conceptual application, Mr. Alden said that the DRB needs to provide guidance to the applicant. He is questioning the overall fit of the development in this neighborhood. He does not feel comfortable with this application in this location given the existing neighborhood character. Answering a question from Mr. Brockmeier, Mr. Alden said that there is nothing that prevents lot subdivision. Mr. Brockmeier questioned why smaller lots are allowed in this neighborhood if this is not what is desired. Mr. Giguere said the Comprehensive Plan and LDC state that a variety of housing types are encouraged in Essex Junction. No density bonuses have been requested by the applicant.

Mr. Giguere encouraged the DRB to outline specific questions for staff to answer to help the DRB come to a decision. Mr. Alden said he would like to know if the City would contribute to the cost of sewer infrastructure, should the new development be built. He would like to know what the PC thinks of this application and the number of units, and how neighborhood character fits in. He would like clarification on the governing density rule as permitted by a PUD application. The purpose statement for R1 no longer

matches what is required for state development requirements and will be changed with the next LDC rewrite. Mr. Alden said that he believes that it is fairer to continue this application and come back when the DRB has answers to these questions. All board members agreed.

LUKE BROCKMEIER made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, to continue the public hearing to Thursday, May 21, 2026.

Discussion: Mr. Giguere asked for clarification on outstanding DRB guidance on the proposal. The DRB is amenable to the T shaped road, the PUD and proposed open space. It is important that the public be able to access and use the open space and paths. Additional sidewalks are desirable. Curbs may not be required if the sidewalk is not right on the road. The DRB is amenable to the landscaping plan as proposed, however additional amenities for families are desirable. The DRB expressed concern about garage lights being non-conforming and would like to ensure that these are not too bright. Mr. Alden said the development should express the desired character of the neighborhood.

Voting: Motion passed 4-0.

Answering a question from Mr. Maxon, the applicant specified that no Act 250 review will be required due to state exemptions, but the applicant will pursue a Jurisdictional Opinion as a part of their standard practice. Staff will further research why new septic systems cannot be installed in this area.

6. OTHER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD ITEMS

Mr. Giguere encouraged all DRB members to go to the City’s website and review projects in progress.

7. ADJOURNMENT

LUKE BROCKMEIER made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 4-0 at 8:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville