

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 3, 2026
DRAFT**

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

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Scott Aldrich, Nick Bouton, Raj Chawla Diane Clemens, Bart Frisbie, Collin Frisbie, MJ Engel, Gabe Handy, David & Michelle Holton, Dan Maxon, Karen Maxon, Todd (screenname)

Mr. Alden called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. ADDITIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Mr. Yuen 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 June 18th, 2026. All votes that are not unanimous will be done via roll call.

Mr. Alden suggested discussing Items B and C prior to Item A. All agreed.

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by LUKE BROCKMEIER, to change the agenda to go over B and C prior to A. Motion passed 4-0.

2. PUBLIC MEETING

a. Final Site Plan to construct a 4-story building with 39 residential units and parking at 8 Railroad Street in the VC District, by Franklin South, LLC, owner. No changes proposed from previously approved plans (SP# 6.2023.1, approved May 13, 2024).

Mr. Yuen swore in all participants.

Mr. Alden said this approval is being sought due to the developer needing more time before construction can begin. Mr. Handy explained the delay in starting this project, stating that he elected to build another project first and is seeking an extension now to be reviewed under the existing Land Development Code.

Mr. Alden closed the hearing.

LUKE BROCKMEIER made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, that the Development Review Board approve the Final Site Plan at 8 Railroad Street in the VC District, by Franklin South, LLC, with the conditions as proposed. Motion passed 4-0.

b. Major Site Plan amendment to relocate curb cut to avoid an existing utility pole and construct 39 studio apartments with parking at 227-229 Pearl Street and in the MF/MU1 District, by Handy's

ESSEX JUNCTION DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

6/3/26

Hotels & Rental, LLC, owner. No other changes proposed from previous approved plans (SP#2.2024.1, approved June 26, 2024).

Mr. Alden said the only comment from the City Engineer was that a 90-degree turn is preferred. Mr. Handy said the driveway has been shifted due to the location of an existing utility pole. The location of parking spaces needed to be adjusted; however, the same number will still be present. Mr. Yuen said the City Council has endorsed a scoping study for Pearl Street which will allow for a reduced speed of 30 mph. He said the City Engineer believes that the proposed turn angle is workable so long as the speed limit is 30 mph and stated the Fire Department is also amenable. Mr. Handy said moving the utility pole would be very difficult and require collaboration with Green Mountain Power. Mr. Brockmeier expressed concern about moving vans or other large vehicles getting stuck turning in or out. Mr. Alden said he believes the turn radius is large enough to ensure that this would not happen, Mr. Yuen concurred. Mr. Chawla asked if this project would hinder the potential removal of the center median on Pearl Street, Mr. Yuen said he did not believe this would be an impediment.

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by LUKE BROCKMEIER that the Development Review Board approve Major Site Plan Amendment SP4.2026 for the relocation and redesign of the curb cut at 227-229 Pearl Street as discussed and to include the staff recommendations. Motion passed 4-0.

3. MINUTES

a. May 21, 2026

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by CRISTIN GILDEA, to approve the minutes of May 21, 2026. Motion passed 4-0

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

5. PUBLIC MEETING

a. Continued Conceptual review for 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. Yuen swore in all participants.

Mr. Alden noted the addition of a memo from staff and a letter from the Tree Farm Recreational Facility opposing the project's proposed new crosswalk and direct gravel path connection into the tree farm. Mr. Yuen reviewed the staff memo and confirmed that the developer would be responsible for all sewer extension costs, besides sewer stubs. He confirmed that private septic is prohibited and noted that a sewer extension for Old Colchester Road is included in the City's Capital Plan for FY 2033. Mr. Alden raised questions about how the Land Development Code (LDC) should be interpreted regarding unit density calculations and traditional subdivision practices. He suggested reviewing the development by looking at the units per acre criteria, as had been applied in previous decisions. In response, Mr. Yuen discussed density limits for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) in the Residential 1 district, with two proposed methods discussed: proportional density (dividing maximum units per lot by minimum lot size) and direct application of per lot standards. He said, under the proportional density standards, the applicant proposal would fall within the density limits. Mr. Yuen discussed historical examples of PUD approvals using the

ESSEX JUNCTION DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

6/3/26

proportional density method. Under direct application of per lot standards, the applicant's proposal would exceed the four-unit per lot limit.

Mr. Brockmeier suggested calculating density in number of structures, rather than number of dwelling units. Mr. Yuen said two principal structures (which could both be duplexes) are allowed per lot but that PUDs are explicitly exempted from the two principal structure per lot limitation. Mr. Brockmeier said he believes the proportional density method may be more applicable to the Residential 2 zoning district. Regarding the character of the neighborhood, Mr. Alden expressed concerns about the effectiveness of vision statements in guiding density decisions when there are no clear mechanisms in the LDC to enforce them. Mr. Yuen discussed the language in Housing Goal 1 of the Comprehensive Plan regarding neighborhood characteristics, determining it lacks the specificity required to support denial of conditions. Defined standards are required for regulatory force.

Mr. Frisbie, of Sterling Homes, presented on behalf of the applicant. He had no further questions about the staff report and said he welcomed questions from the DRB. Mr. Alden noted that this is the first level of review, and that it is intended to guide the applicant as they move forward. Ms. Gildea noted that the proposed addition of a crosswalk and gravel path into the Tree Farm property was denied by the Tree Farm Management Group. She asked if the City could assist with traffic calming measures. Mr. Yuen noted that an existing crosswalk about 400 ft to the south remains, and that the applicant would like to add a sidewalk connecting to this. Ms. Gildea said she would like to see this project benefit the surrounding area as well by including traffic calming and walkability features. Mr. Yuen will discuss this idea with staff.

In public comment, Mr. Chawla asked for details about the original proposed crosswalk location. Mr. Yuen said this was to be at the entrance of the PUD. Mr. Alden said he believes that the DRB could request connectivity, however the Tree Farm is acting as a private entity. Mr. Yuen said that while it would have been beneficial to residents at the proposed development to have a crosswalk to the tree farm directly in front of their property, if additional development of similar scale occurs along Old Colchester Road in the future, the ideal location for a future additional crosswalk may not necessarily be in front of the subject property. Mr. Holton, of Old Colchester Road expressed concern about safety and increased traffic on Old Colchester Road that would be added with the proposed development. He said there are more proposed homes in this new development than currently exist on Old Colchester Road. He would like to know more about the possibility of current residences connecting to the municipal sewers. Mr. Holton discussed potential impacts on his property, suggesting a stockade fence for privacy and landscaping for screening. He said he would like to see some subjectivity in decision-making to consider neighborhood character.

Mr. Maxon criticized the mathematical density calculations used, arguing they don't accurately reflect real-world conditions and shouldn't be used to justify the project. He discussed the need for subjective considerations. Mr. Maxon questioned the basis for sewer connection requirements and their classification as a water quality issue. He said he was told that there would be a report from the Water Quality Superintendent in the staff report and questioned why this was not the case. Mr. Yuen said a thorough review by staff subsequent to the April DRB meeting confirmed that the current sewer requirements have been in the LDC since 1992 and that an additional report by the Water Quality department was not necessary as the regulatory language is clear. Mr. Maxon discussed PUD requirements, including land use intensity transition. He noted that this is not in the proposal and would like to see it included.

ESSEX JUNCTION DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

6/3/26

Answering a question from Mr. Maxon, Mr. Yuen said he would like to request a condition for public access to walking paths, and open space and recreation areas. Mr. Maxon said he does not believe the current proposal sufficiently meets these public benefits requirements, especially regarding landscaping and recreation. Mr. Alden said today's question is whether the City would allow the density in this parcel that will make this development possible.

Mr. Aldrich raised concerns about the City's continual pattern of promising to extend sewer infrastructure to Old Colchester Road without actually doing such. He believes the City is obligated to bring sewer to the closest right of way or continue to approve septic plans. Mr. Alden asked how the sewer system would be adequately sized for all the development that might occur. Mr. Yuen said the applicant would need to adhere to the public works specifications, and that connections could be made along the full length. Ms. Maxon highlighted quality of life concerns for future residents of the proposed homes, specifically noise concerns for properties near the railroad tracks and Route 2A.

Mr. Alden closed the public hearing.

Mr. Brockmeier cited Section 723 of the LDC, explaining that the requirements for a PUD versus subdivision involve specific amenities like landscaping, private open space, common open space, and land use intensity transitions. Mr. Alden said his main questions are whether PUD requirements are met, and if this considered to be sufficiently met to the DRB. Unit density and how it is determined is a critical issue. Protecting the character of the neighborhood is important, especially considering transitions between different housing types. He said concerns regarding the public space being usable are valid. Ms. Massey discussed competing priorities of expanding the sewer core and expanding connectivity while still protecting the character of the neighborhood. Mr. Alden noted previous approvals had included full frontage sidewalks, though this would need community and neighborhood input. He said the planning strategy must leave open the possibility of additional pedestrian connectivity. Mr. Aldrich raised privacy concerns for homeowners from proposed trail routes. Mr. Alden said Essex Junction hopes to provide diverse housing options.

Mr. Alden said he finds the proposed density to be allowable according to precedent which has been used in previous development applications. He said based the units per acre density method, the allowable density could be much higher than the proposed 14 units. All concurred. Mr. Alden said the buffers to the property are existing, which may or may not extend the length of the property line. Comments from neighbors regarding improving the buffers should be taken seriously in a future application. Mr. Brockmeier discussed the balance between providing access to public amenities and ensuring neighborhood privacy. Curbs will be required on Old Colchester Road but not within the development. Private street designation is acceptable. Additional details on landscaping are required, as will the hiring of a landscape architect. Mr. Alden spoke of the need for transitional areas due to the difference in density between this application and the surrounding neighbors. Mr. Alden said Section 723 of the LDC clearly outlines all PUD conditions very clearly. An HOA would need to be present in this development, and the covenant could include requirements for basic trail maintenance.

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by LUKE BROCKMEIER, that the DRB approve the conceptual plan 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.

ESSEX JUNCTION DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

6/3/26

DRB Discussion: Mr. Alden requested the addition of a provision allowing for current and future properties along the proposed sewer extension to tie-ins if they so choose. Ms. Gildea said she would like to ensure sufficient landscaping between the surrounding property owners, and that the PUD requirements be referenced. Mr. Alden suggested that the applicant work with the neighbors to see how they can best implement screening and prevent unwanted cross-traffic. The sidewalk is required to be the full frontage of the property. Mr. Brockmeier encouraged the City to help the Tree Farm solve its southern access problem through this development.

Public Discussion: Mr. Aldrich expressed concern about current plowing standards on Old Colchester Road.

JOHN ALDEN restated the motion as all those in favor of the original motion as all with additional conditions as amended. The motion passed 4-0.

Key conditions include requiring curbs along Old Colchester Road, ensuring proper sidewalk coverage along the full length of the development, and implementing superior landscaping that meets PUD requirements. The board also requires the applicant to work with neighbors on buffer improvements and ensure proper sewer line connections for existing and future properties along the development.

6. OTHER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD ITEMS

Mr. Yuen said the Planning Commission is working on developing a draft of the proposed form-based code, which is now available for review.

7. ADJOURNMENT

LUKE BROCKMEIER made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 4-0 at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville