

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
AUGUST 21, 2025
FINAL – APPROVED SEPTEMBER 18, 2025**

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

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF: Michael Giguere, City Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Blondin, Dan Marta

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ADDITIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Mr. Giguere said that he has staff project updates for the end of the meeting.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

4. MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting – July 17, 2025

CRISTIN GILDEA made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, to approve the minutes of July 17, 2025, as drafted. Motion passed 5-0.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

a. CONTINUED FROM JULY 17, 2025 - Design review for the construction of a new single-family home at 40 Maple Street in the Residential 2 (R2) district by Ron Bushey, owner

Mr. Giguere noted that all interested members of the public must be sworn in, and that all meetings that are continued must have a date specified to be continued too. He said that this is a hybrid meeting, and that staff are present at 6 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 September 18th, 2025. All votes that are not unanimous will be done via roll call.

Mr. Giguere swore in all those speaking on behalf of an application.

Mr. Blondin, of Blondin Builders, presented on behalf of the applicant. He said that the drawing and lot line details have been improved and is now to scale. Colors and siding have been included as well. Mr. Alden said that, due to the location of the property in the design overlay district, the project must meet higher standards than other locations in the City. Staff noted discrepancies in the design. Mr. Alden said that he is interested in seeing what the property would look like once constructed and said that he would like to know if the pressure treated wood would be painted or not. Mr. Giguere said that most measurements in the drawing are in the 1-15% error range and encouraged the DRB to be as specific as possible with what improvements would be necessary if the application is continued. Ms. Gildea said that this property should be professionally designed. Mr. Giguere said that the only detail the applicant did

not provide is drainage and snow removal, however the question is if the DRB finds the materials to be of a high enough quality to interpret. Mr. Alden recommended hiring a draftsman for this project. Mr. Blondin expressed concern about the cost and time involved with hiring a professional. Mr. Alden suggested that the applicant coordinate with the City regarding the location of the maple tree, Mr. Blondin was amenable. Mr. Alden said that the applicant has addressed all the questions that the DRB has had at the previous meeting. Ms. Gildea suggested that the City add something to the checklist to require professional drawings to the design review district in the future. Ms. Massey also suggested that the DRB not accept plans with greater than 10% error in scale in the future. Mr. Brockmeier suggested requiring continued collaboration with the applicant.

CRISTIN GILDEA made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, that the DRB approve the site plan application for a single-family home at 40 Maple Street by Ron Bushey, owner, with conditions as proposed, including a change to Staff Condition #1 to include a 2% dimensional tolerance. Motion passed 5-0.

Conditions:

- 1. The structure shall be built according to submitted plans, within a dimensional tolerance of +/- 2% for all design features apart from building height and footprint.**
- 2. The building height and footprint shall precisely match the approved plans.**
- 3. Any modification deemed by staff to substantially change the building's appearance, character, or compliance with the requirements of the LDC shall be referred to the Development Review Board for reconsideration.**
- 4. All exterior light fixtures shall be down shielded and Dark Sky compliant as required by Section 714 of the LDC.**
- 5. The applicant shall contact the City to pursue an Excavation Permit prior to performing any work in the public right of way.**
- 6. The applicant shall contact the City for authorization prior to performing any new utility connections or changes to existing connections.**
- 7. Tree location with assistance from City staff.**

b. Conditional use review for the addition of an exterior propane gas pump for Tractor Supply Company at 70 Pearl Street in the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) district by Cathy West, Parkway C&A, LP and Brandon Kubik c/o Pulley Studios, Inc. on behalf of Shawn Handy c/o Handy's Hotel & Rentals LLC, owner

Mr. Marta, of Parkway Construction and Architecture, presented on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Giguere said that this project requires DRB approval because they are placing a bulk propane refill station behind the store. There are also exterior changes which include parking lot reconfiguration, the addition of a shade tree and exterior merchandise placement. Mr. Marta said that this location was previously Big Lots, and that Tractor Supply would like to take over the space. No expansion is proposed. A trailer display area and seasonal outdoor items are also proposed. The outdoor items can include seasonal items and will not block pedestrian access. The sidewalk area will be increased and the parking area will be pushed out to be consistent with the rest of the building. The parking will be slightly angled and restriping will occur. Mr. Marta discussed the trailer display area and said that the larger items will be in front of the outdoor area. The propane fill station will be self-serve and have a canopy. RVs and other vehicles can drive-up to this space. Bollards are present to prevent collision. The store must be open to utilize the fill station, and it will have an emergency shut-off. Mr. Marta said that the location will have a portable loading dock.

Mr. Alden discussed the importance of striping, especially around delivery vehicles and to help drivers avoid hitting the propane stations. Mr. Alden said that the circulation path behind the store is difficult to navigate. Ms. Gildea said that an easier to use and attractive area would help the user experience for customers. Mr. Brockmeier said that he has traffic concerns, as there is no stop sign and it is difficult to see if a car is exiting the area near the post office. This is a safety concern for those filling up their propane tanks. Mr. Alden said that it may be outside the purview for this application. The metal canopy in the exterior of the building is the only lighting in the back of the building. Mr. Brockmeier said that he would like to see better lighting in the exterior of the building. He said that the public right of way and traffic pattern in this area is very unclear. Mr. Brockmeier said that he likes the idea of making the back of the building a more public area, but that he would like to see improved vehicle circulation. Mr. Marta said that an American Hornbeam tree is proposed, which is a Vermont native plant. A bench and bike rack will also be installed. The landscaping plan is pro-rated for the type of changes that are being done to the building. Mr. Alden said that the Commercial Energy Standards for Vermont will apply to new equipment only. He said that the doors open in which is a life safety violation. Mr. Marta said that the doors will be installed to open out. The bathrooms will have baby changing stations. The applicant will work with the Tree Advisory Committee to ensure that landscaping meets local standards.

Mr. Giguere said that the intention of this district is to have a maximum of a twenty-foot setback, which would leave the building as an existing noncompliance. There is not an expansion of the building envelope. The lighting plan will be reviewed by the City engineer to ensure that it meets parking lot minimum requirements. Ms. Massey said that large vehicles are being parked in the lot by non-tenants. Mr. Giguere said that the property owner and City have an interest in ensuring that the lot is safe, and that he will gather further information on this issue.

JOHN ALDEN made a motion to close the public hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by CRISTIN GILDEA that the DRB approve the conditional use application for the addition of an exterior propane Gas Pump for Tractor Supply Company at 70 Pearl Street in the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) district by Cathy West, Parkway C&A, LP and Brandon Kubik c/o Pulley Studios, Inc. on behalf of Handy's Hotel & Rentals LLC, owner. Motion passed 5-0.

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by CRISTIN GILDEA, that the DRB approve the site plan application for Tractor Supply Company at 70 Pearl Street in the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) district by Cathy West, Parkway C&A, LP and Brandon Kubik c/o Pulley Studios, Inc. on behalf of Handy's Hotel & Rentals LLC, owner, with conditions as discussed. Motion passed 5-0.

- 1) All staff comments shall be addressed to the satisfaction of City Staff.**
- 2) Applicant shall provide clarification on how vehicular access in the rear of the building will be managed when a truck is parked at the portable loading ramp, the propane tank area is in use and how other drive and travel ways are to be used by the public.**
- 3) Applicant shall revise submitted lighting plans to meet the requirements of Section 704 of the LDC to the satisfaction of City Staff.**
- 4) Applicant shall provide clarification on infrastructure or planting methods used to support the proposed shade tree's well-being and consult with the Tree Advisory Committee.**

5) Applicant shall submit a Sewer Allocation Request form and pay all applicable sewer allocation fees prior to the issuance of a zoning permit.

c. Site plan and design review for Tractor Supply Company at 70 Pearl Street in the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) district by Cathy West, Parkway C&A, LP and Brandon Kubik c/o Pulley Studios, Inc. on behalf of Shawn Handy c/o Handy's Hotel & Rentals LLC, owner. Included in the application is a waiver request of the TOD district standards (LDC Section 608)

This was discussed with the previous item.

6. OTHER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD ITEMS

a. Status update on Spark Hotel at 92-101 Pearl

Mr. Giguere reviewed the project history and the negatives and positives throughout the process of this development. He discussed the changes that have been implemented to City policies because of this project. Mr. Alden said that a hotel has been a long-term goal for the location and said that the project had no design approval process during the time the PC authorized it. He said that he is happy that the City is looking back on the process.

b. Other Business

The comment period on the Connect the Junction project is open. The City is working on a plan for Pearl Street which will be reviewed by the Planning Commission at their September meeting. The City is asking residents to prioritize what site improvements most like to see with the Amtrak station renovations. The City offices are now open to the public. Essex Junction Recreation and Parks will be holding a "Meet Me on Main" series, where a small portion of Main Street will be closed for community events. The City was selected for design funding for the Animating Infrastructure grant. An artist will be selected to design a mural for the fire station wall.

7. ADJOURNMENT

LUKE BROCKMEIER made a motion, seconded by CRISTIN GILDEA, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville