

City of Essex Junction Governance Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 27, 2025 @ 6:30 PM

Members present: Marcus Certa, Thomas Coen, Steve Eustis, Elaine Haney, Deb McAdoo, Candace Morgan, Brian Shelden, Gabrielle Smith, Marlon Verasamy

Staff present: Brad Luck, Regina Mahony

Members of the public present: Raj Chawla

After a round of introductions, Brad Luck reviewed the purpose of the committee.

The following officers were elected unanimously: Steve Eustis, chair; Marlon Verasamy, vice chair; Elaine Haney, secretary.

Governance Considerations to Explore

Brad Luck reviewed the following governance considerations the committee will explore:

- Forms of government including the current council/manager model, mayor/council, and strong mayor/weak mayor
- Term lengths of various models
- Term limits
- At-large versus ward or district-based representation
- Council member compensation
- Council meeting frequency
- Neighborhood assemblies (as recommended by Essex Governance Group report of 2015)

Other potential topics include:

- Representative Town Meeting was determined to be no longer relevant now that Essex Junction uses Australian ballot for all voting.
- Communications and community engagement
- Moving election day to align with Vermont's Town Meeting Day on the first Tuesday in March along with EWSD

The group agreed to remove the topic of meeting frequency from the list of items to be considered.

Raj Chawla shared his thoughts about the various benefits, barriers, and rules for public participation at council meetings.

The group agreed there would most likely be recommendations for charter changes as well as recommendations for good governance.

Plan & Timeline

Brad Luck provided a list of municipalities similar to Essex Junction that are appropriate for comparison in terms of population, square mileage, and governance model. They are Winooski, St. Albans City, Barre City, Montpelier, Rutland, Barre Town, Williston, Burlington, and Brattleboro. The group agreed that the annual budgets and tax rates of each municipality be added to this list.

He suggested that the committee be divided into groups of three and each group would research three municipalities. Before embarking on the research the committee would generate a common set of questions to answer and possibly develop a survey to gather information from officials in each municipality.

Gabrielle Smith identified a need for more conversation among the group to solidify the scope of the work and to monitor progress.

The group agreed to capture potential research questions and ideas through a shared online document. Brad will provide links to the charters of the municipalities to be researched.

Future Meetings

The group agreed to meet on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM. Brad will send calendar invitations.

Marcus Certa offered to provide the group with details regarding the different forms of governance discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Haney