

City of Essex Junction  
Governance Committee Meeting Minutes  
May 8, 2025

**Members present:** Thomas Coen, Marlon Verasamy, Brian Shelden, Gabrielle Smith, Steve Eustis, Candace Morgan, Deb McAdoo

**Members absent:** Elaine Haney

**Staff Present:** Brad Luck

Welcome and introductions

- Meeting called to order at 6:48p.m. by Steve Eustis

Additions or amendments to agenda

- No additions or amendments to the agenda
- We thanked Marcus for his service to this committee

Public to be heard

- No public to be heard

Review and approve minutes from last meeting

- Would like to amend minutes to note that councilor compensation should include a consideration for equity and reasonable compensation for responsibility and time
- Gabrielle motioned to approved the minutes as amended; Marlon seconded the motion
- Meeting minutes with amendment were approved unanimously

Discuss governance considerations to explore: Additions based on city councilor/village trustee survey results

- Form of government:
  - Discussion on enumerating duties of city council president, including representing city as a leader. Discussing if there is a particular role here that needs to be defined.
  - Recommendation to talk to Winooski's mayor to learn about their experience as a weak mayor
  - One person disagrees that responsibilities for council president should be enumerated in the charter
- Councilor composition
  - Most surveyed like the current 5-member composition. Would like to better understand positives to increasing to 7. One point was just a challenge with subcommittees given quorum rules and existing workload for councilors.
  - Point around current system is working so doesn't make sense to be changed.
  - Also noted there are capacity constraints with staff member workload
  - Point that it's important to gather additional perspectives on this matter as well (other towns, community input, etc.)
- Councilor term lengths

- Alignment with our prior discussions on 3 years being a reasonable time frame and staggering terms
- Councilor term limits
  - Discussion on what is a best practice is here and trade-off between institutional knowledge and new ideas and where that line is.
- Election of officials (at-large / districts / hybrid)
  - Strong survey opinion to keep with at-large structure.
- Councilor compensation
  - Consideration for stipend for additional subcommittees, and different amounts for president and vice president
  - Point that compensation increases are important for increasing access opportunities
  - Point to ensure compensation reflects appreciation for all the hours that individuals put in and provides opportunities for many types of folks to serve
  - Point about ensuring this is still seen as a volunteer job
- Neighborhood assemblies
  - Point of needing to ensure there is increased community engagement and public involvement. Need to explore neighborhood assemblies further to learn more.
  - Point to create access points where community members are comfortable engaging. Not everyone wants to speak up at a city council meeting.
  - Point on understanding what problems neighborhood committees are trying to solve
  - Point on whether community engagement approach should be incorporated into the charter or just stated as a value and developed outside of the charter
  - Point on necessity of staff role here (potential capacity constraints)
- Voting date
  - Alignment with the group to move with the school board to town meeting day.
  - Can recommend as a non-charter change

Discuss plans and next steps

- Plans for examining other communities — discuss at next meeting

Gabrielle made a motion to adjourn the meeting

Deb seconded the motion

The motion passed unanimously

Meeting closed at 8:23p.m.