

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
May 28, 2025**

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Amber Thibeault, President; Marcus Certa, Vice President; Tim Miller, Clerk; Elaine Haney, Brian Shelden.

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Chris Gaboriault, Fire Chief.

OTHERS PRESENT: Alise Certa, Bethany Clark, Jeff Kerschner, Sarah Reeves, Ella Ruehsen, Mike Sullivan, Dennis Thibeault, Resa.

1. CALL TO ORDER

City Council President Thibeault called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Councilor Haney requested moving Consent Item #6b to be Business Item #5g.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public
None.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. *Interview and Consideration of Governance Committee Applicant

The City Council interviewed Bethany Clark for a seat on the Governance Committee. She spoke briefly about her interest in serving on the Committee. Councilors asked questions of the candidate, and she was given the opportunity to ask questions of the Council.

b. Discussion and Consideration of FY26 Chittenden Solid Waste District Budget

Councilor Certa recused himself from the discussion due to a potential perceived conflict of interest.

Sarah Reeves, Executive Director of the Chittenden Solid Waste District spoke on this agenda item. She provided an overview of the FY26 budget for the City Council's review and consideration. She spoke about CSWD's projected FY26 revenues of \$16.2 million and projected FY26 expenses of \$15.9 million. She compared the FY26 and FY25 budgets, noting very slight changes in both revenues and expenses. She noted fee changes for small bags at drop-off centers, a change to mattress recycling fees pending negotiations with their vendor, and an increase in the solid waste management fee from \$30 to \$40 per ton. She provided an update on the Materials Recycling Facility capital project, noting that there is currently a funding gap of \$4 million. She said the SWMF increase is intended to help close this funding gap.

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to approve the Chittenden Solid Waste District's FY26 budget as presented by District Staff. The motion passed 4-0 (Councilor Certa recused).

c. Department Head Brief with Fire Chief Chris Gaboriault

Councilor Miller recused himself from the discussion due to a professional conflict of interest.

The City Council held a department head brief with Fire Chief Chris Gaboriault. He spoke about activities during the last six months and anticipated activities for the next six months. He noted that over the last six months, the Fire Department received its ladder truck back from repairs, worked with CVE to establish a

training site for the department, are in early discussions to replace Engine #5 in FY29, and he shared statistics about call volume and current roster. He noted increased calls for assistance to Essex Rescue for EMS in the City as well as higher response to Williston either for assistance or station coverage. Councilor Haney asked if the current roster of 30-32 individuals is sufficient and Fire Chief Gaboriault replied that it is, and that they are at full capacity. He said that in the next six months, the Fire Department hopes to be working on its new training site, increase its efforts to thoroughly populate data entry into its ESO database, and prepare to transition from the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) to National Emergency Response Information System. Councilor Certa asked if the additional funding for trainings allocated to the Fire Department has made a difference and whether the Council could help with other strategies. Chief Gaboriault replied that the additional funding has not led to a noticeable increase in training attendance, but that it has not led to a decrease. He said that the new training site could help offer more opportunities for a wider variety of trainings and more realistic trainings.

d. Discussion and Consideration of Essex Junction Fire Department Training Facility at CVE
Councilor Miller recused himself from the discussion due to a professional conflict of interest.

Fire Chief Gaboriault spoke to this agenda item, relating to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Chaplain Valley Expo (CVE) for use of space for a remote firefighting training site. He noted that the Fire Department is looking for a training site that is away from residences so as not to impact neighborhoods. He said that in summary, the Fire Department will stack shipping containers to simulate a two-story structure and create training scenarios. Councilor Shelden asked whether the City would be paying CVE for use of the space, and Chief Gaboriault replied that the costs associated with the MOU are related to the shipping containers (Conex boxes) that would be needed for the trainings. Councilor Haney asked if the training space would be lower or higher in elevation than surrounding areas, and Chief Gaboriault replied that it may be higher but that he would need to follow up on this. He said that if they conduct trainings with smoke, they would be contacting dispatch to alert them to this. Councilor Haney suggested also alerting the public to these trainings if there is smoke. Chief Gaboriault agreed that this is a feasible suggestion. He noted that the site would likely be utilized from April to November. Councilor Certa asked how this enhanced training fits into the overall trainings offered to firefighters. Chief Gaboriault replied that this training would offer the convenience of being local and easy to conduct on workdays. Councilor Certa asked if this could be shared with other municipalities, and Chief Gaboriault replied that they could open this up to other municipalities, though other municipalities also have similar training sites and resources.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney. That the City the Council authorize the City Manager to approve the MOU pending legal review. The motion passed 4-0 (Councilor Miller recused).

e. Discussion of Mural Application for the Fire Station

City Manager Mahony noted that the application deadline for this mural application is due on June 16. She said that this originated with the Community Development Department with assistance from members of the Planning Commission, and that it relates to a design grant for a public mural on the southeastern-facing wall of the Fire Department. She noted that this is a grant through the Vermont Arts Council's Animating Infrastructure Grant program and that there is no local match for this grant.

f. Discussion and Consideration of Regional Committee Appointments

City Manager Mahony said that this pertains to Essex Junction representation on various regional boards and committees. She noted regional boards and organizations where action is needed to appoint or reappoint members, which include the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (and CCRPC subcommittees), Town Meeting TV, and Winooski Valley Park District.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the Council appoint the following positions: move the Council appoint the following positions: CCRPC Board: Appoint Cristin Gildea as Representative and Dan Kerin as Alternate to the Board for CCRPC; CCRPC (TAC): Appoint Chris

Yuen as Representative and Michael Giguere as Alternate to the Transportation Advisory Committee for CCRPC; CCRPC (CWAC): Appoint Chelsea Mandigo as Representative to the Clean Water Advisor Committee for CCRPC; Town Meeting TV: Appoint Amber Thibeault as Representative and Marcus Certa as Alternate; Winooski Valley Parks District: Appoint George Tyler as the Representative to the WVPD; All other appointments remain as is for now. The motion passed 5-0.

g. Annual Memo with Manager Appointments and Approve Council Appointments of the City Clerk and Tree Warden **was Consent Item #6b**

Councilor Haney asked if the City has procedures or policies in place to assess whether it is satisfied with the performance of the City Attorney, City Auditor, and City Engineer, which are included in this set of reappointments. City Manager Mahony replied that the current purchasing policy includes these appointments, also noting that the City will be updating its purchasing policy and bringing it to the Council for its approval at a future meeting. She said that for the City's audit firm, she sees value in putting out a Request For Proposals (RFP) for this scope of work on a regular basis. Councilor Certa asked about the advantages of having a City Attorney on staff versus a contracted position with a firm. City Manager Mahony replied that there is value in thinking through the comparison of cost between outside contractors and retaining services in-house. She said that the City should also thinking about the quality of services and whether it is satisfied with performance.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, that the City Council that the Council reappoint Susan McNamara-Hill as City Clerk for FY26 and reappoint Warren Spinner as Tree Warden. The motion passed 5-0.

h. Discussion and Consideration of ICMA Economic Mobility and Opportunity (EMO) Special Assistants Program

City Manager Mahony spoke to this item, noting that it relates to a program that could potentially help support or dovetail with the Equity Policy Advisory position that's been funded in FY26 with \$25,000. She said this opportunity is for a more public/outward-facing position related to addressing economic mobility challenges. She said that there is interest from Winooski, South Burlington, and Shelburne for this work, given that they have funding set aside for economic development and this program ties in closely to similar areas of focus. Councilor Certa expressed support for this, given that it would lead to more staff and support for these important areas.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council authorize the City Manager to apply for the ICMA Economic Mobility & Opportunity (EMO) Special Assistants Program with interested municipal partners. The motion passed 5-0.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

- a. Approve Meeting Minutes: May 14, 2025
- b. Annual Memo with Manager Appointments and Approve Council Appointments of the City Clerk and Tree Warden **now Business Item #5g**
- c. Approve Donation to Essex Rotary for the Heavenly Food Pantry
- d. Approve Updates to the General Rules and Personnel Regulations

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

7. **COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT**: City Manager Mahony thanked the Houghtons for providing access to the 2 Lincoln building while the driveway is being worked on. She and other Councilors thanked staff and the public for a great Memorial Day event. Councilor Certa noted that the Essex Historical Society is holding an open house on June 1, 2025. City Manager Mahony noted that the City's Pride Festival will take place on Saturday at Maple Street Park, and that the City will be holding a Glow Run at 9:00 P.M. on Friday evening.

8. **READING FILE**

- a. Check Warrant #24075 5/16/2025
- b. Police Community Advisory Board Minutes 5/14/2025
- c. Bike Walk Advisory Committee Minutes 5/8/2025
- d. CVE Neighbor Meeting Letter
- e. Reappraisal Guidance

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. *An Executive Session may be needed to discuss the appointment of public officials

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss appointment of public officials, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) to include the City Manager. The motion passed 5-0.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:00 PM.

Councilor Thibeault made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to appoint Bethany Clark to the Governance Committee. The motion passed 5-0.

10. **ADJOURN**

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:02 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt