

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA OPEN FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING
September 10, 2025**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Ashley Snellenberger, Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives.

OTHERS PRESENT: Bethany Clark, John O'Brien, Resa.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

None needed.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public

None.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Bike Walk Advisory Committee Brief

John O'Brien, Chair of the Bike Walk Advisory Committee, spoke on this agenda item. He spoke about highlights over the last year, including recruiting new members to the committee that have families and bring that family focus and perspective to the committee. He spoke about several projects the committee worked on over the last year. These include a successful procurement for an RRFB purchase at Athens & Main intersection, fielding a bike parking survey last fall to members of the community to catalogue existing bike parking sites and recommending sites that do not currently have accommodations, using the findings from that survey to install bike parking units in a number of areas in the community, collaborating with the UVM engineering department to assist with capstone projects (which this year considered redesign of the Park Street corridor to reimagine what it could look like with better accommodations), revisiting the 2014 Bike and Pedestrian Plan to assess progress made since then, monitoring CCRPC regional safety data to glean that the City has lower incidents of injuries for bikes and pedestrians, reviewing the existing sidewalk policy, which helped inform work on Main Street Project, conducting traffic counts of the Memorial Lane slip lane and assessing the feasibility of removing that slip lane in the future, collecting feedback on bike and walking routes to inform mapping, participating with the Town of Essex Plan for shared use path design, holding a joint meeting with the Williston Bike/Walk Advocacy Group and conducted Bike/Walk audits around the community in conjunction with Local Motion, keeping up to date on the Connect the Junction draft plans, and reviewing the Pearl Street multimodal improvement scoping study. He noted that the Committee also wrapped up several longer projects, including traffic calming consideration on Lincoln Terrace, completing the re-application for Bike Friendly Community Designation, and publishing the City's first bike map, which is available at the Library or City offices. He spoke about other ongoing projects, including installing wayfinding signage to focus on eastern corridor of City. He advocated for the Bike Walk Advisory Group for taking more of a role in the development of the City's new Traffic Calming Policy.

Councilor Certa spoke about the bike map, noting the low-traffic bike routes, and asked the Committee to think about how people get around the community, such as using the low-traffic routes for more bikes, and asked whether there is a way to steer cyclists toward those. Mr. O'Brien said they could try and increase the traffic on these roads by increasing green striping and making them safer and more likely to become heavily

trafficked by bicycles. He said that making low-traffic routes more visible could help improve the safety of cyclists. Councilor Certa asked if green striping is effective in helping improve bicycle safety and visibility. Mr. O'Brien said the green striping won't immediately change how vehicles drive on routes, but the data shows that murals, street art, and other things like that force people to slow down. Councilor Sheldon asked whether these strategies have helped cycling commuters. City Manager Mahony (a cycling commuter) noted that the green striping gives her comfort as a cyclist and said that a separated bike path is a best practice in terms of connecting the City for cycling commuters but acknowledged that the City does not have the space to accommodate that everywhere. Councilor Miller acknowledged that green striping is pricy and spoke about several low-cost alternatives (such as signage) that could be used in addition to striping.

b. Discussion and Consideration of Annual Meeting and Budget Schedule

Director Snellenberger spoke to this item initially, saying that the City Council needs to discuss and consider when to hold the City's Annual Meeting, as well as discuss when to hold Budget Day and the annual Community Meal/Budget Discussion. She noted that the City's charter requires the City Council to set the date of the next annual meeting prior to January 1, and that it could choose to hold its annual meeting in tandem with the School District's annual meeting (on April 7th) or move its annual meeting day to Town Meeting Day. Councilors discussed the timing of the Annual Meeting. Councilors agreed that the April 7th date works for this year but expressed a desire to hold future annual meetings on Town Meeting Day, and to engage with the School District on having them do the same. Councilors discussed the timing for Budget Day and decided that December 5th works well for Budget Day. Councilors decided to hold the Community Meal/Budget Presentation on a Saturday, like in prior years, and holding it in the middle of the day is helpful. They then discussed the format of the Community Meal/Budget Presentation, saying that one suggested change is to have the presentation in a small-group format for part of the meeting, to try and increase community engagement. They discussed how to accommodate a Zoom component with a small-group format and potentially having a Zoom-specific breakout group.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sheldon, that the City Council set the Essex Junction Annual Meeting for Tuesday, April 7, 2026, from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. The motion passed 5-0.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sheldon, that the City Council move the regularly scheduled January 14th meeting to January 21st to enable the proper warning of potential charter changes. The motion passed 5-0.

c. Discussion on Future Committees

Councilor Certa said that this item is borne out of discussion with the Council, staff, and community, through community engagement opportunities and the Strategic Planning meeting, about creating committees to drive some of the priority area topics (such as housing initiatives and economic development). He said that committees are a great forum for bringing City staff, Councilors, community members, and business-owners/developers together to engage and move these initiatives forward. Councilor Haney spoke about past work to determine what committees are working on what initiatives, what committees could be folded into other committees, and what committees could be created. City Manager Mahony noted that the Planning Commission is working on updates to the Comprehensive Plan, and that because the content of that work covers many of the topics identified in this discussion, there could be a process by which the City creates sub-committees of the Planning Commission to work through content and prioritization of those topic areas for the Comprehensive Plan. She said that this could be a way through which the City engages in these topics in more depth. She said that these subcommittees could be temporary but could also be longer-term if the need is there. Councilor Haney expressed concern about losing momentum in the future, given that the community is energized right now and ready to take action. Councilor Sheldon asked whether a subcommittee could be piloted, given that it will take staff capacity to form these. City Manager Mahony noted the creation of the ICMA Economic Mobility and Opportunity (EMO) Special Assistants Program, which will create some capacity and will be a shared resource with three other communities. Councilor Miller expressed concern about lack of staff capacity and respecting existing staff workloads. City Council President Thibeault

reminded Councilors that the City tried to form a Housing Committee in the past but was unable to solicit enough volunteers to form a full committee, and that the Planning Commission has been focused on many of the housing-related topics. She also spoke about how many of the most successful committees are not City committees but are more grassroots in nature. Councilor Haney pointed out that many committee proposals could eventually involve City resources, so it is important to ensure that there is City involvement. Councilor Certa asked whether the City could have a role in kicking off a committee and letting volunteers take charge and run it. He said that if the community wants the City to take action on initiatives more swiftly, the City will need to find a way to come up with more capacity to do so. City Manager Mahony spoke about the strategic planning process and that the City has a systematic approach in place now to think about how to prioritize these various initiatives, but that there is not capacity to do more than what is in the strategic plan.

The following public comments were received:

- Resa spoke about her engagement with the City Council at its meetings, saying that she has tried to educate her fellow community members to get involved if they have input on the City's strategic initiatives or the budget. She said that she will often tell other residents that they need to be involved early and often, not just when they receive their tax bill for the year. She also noted that residents may not understand the City Council's processes, which could also make engagement difficult and not accessible.

City Council President Thibeault and Councilor Certa both urged residents to reach out to Councilors whenever and however they can, if they have thoughts. Councilor Certa emphasized the Council's work to be as accessible to the community as possible.

d. Discussion and Consideration of Vermont League of Cities and Towns Annual Meeting Voting Delegate
City Manager Mahony noted that the City Council needs to select a delegate to participate in the VLCT Annual Meeting, which will be held virtually on October 7, 2025 from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. Councilor Certa volunteered to be the delegate for the VLCT Annual Meeting.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, that the City Council approve Marcus Certa as the voting delegate for VLCT, PACIF, and VERB. The motion passed 5-0.

e. *Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to Discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation

6. CONSENT ITEMS

- Approve Meeting Minutes: August 27, 2025
- Acting as the Liquor Control Commission – Approve Liquor/Tobacco Licenses
- Authorize City Manager to Implement the ICMA Economic Mobility and Opportunity (EMO) Special Assistants Program
- Approval of Teen Center/Essex CHIPS Lease for 2 Lincoln

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 noted that the 2 Lincoln Street building has been reopened for business and that there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the building on Friday, September 26, 2025 at 10:00 A.M, and that there will be tours after that. She said that they will also host tours on the following Saturday afternoon. She noted that there will be City-hosted events on Main Street on September 20, September 27, October 4, and October 11 from 4:00 to 7:00 P.M.

8. READING FILE

- a. Check Warrant #24085, September 25, 2025
- b. August Financials
- c. Regional Boards and Committees Memo
- d. Development Review Board Minutes – August 21, 2025
- e. Police Community Advisory Board Minutes – August 19, 2025
- f. Governance Committee Minutes – August 28, 2025

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

a. *An Executive Session may be needed to discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation
Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council make the specific finding that premature disclosure of the confidential attorney-client communications regarding a probable litigation would place the city at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 5-0.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss confidential attorney-client communications regarding probable litigation, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(E) and 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(F) to include the City Council and City Manager. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:13 P.M.

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:42 P.M.

10. **ADJOURN**

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:42 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt