



**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

Online & 75 Maple St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Thursday, September 11, 2025  
6:30 PM

This meeting will be in-person at Essex Junction Recreation and Parks located at 75 Maple Street and available remotely. Options to join the meeting remotely:

**JOIN ONLINE:** [Join the meeting now](#)

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS** [6:30 PM]
2. **ADDITIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA**
3. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
4. **REVIEW & APPROVE MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING**
5. **DISCUSS PLAN MOVING FORWARD AND IDENTIFY NEXT STEPS**
6. **ADJOURN**

**Attachments:**

- Draft Meeting Minutes August 28, 2025
- Governance Thoughts & Questions
- Interview Reports

*Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chairperson, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the Chairperson. Regarding remote participants, if individuals interrupt, they will be muted; and if they interrupt a second time they will be removed. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the Governance Committee, like all programs and activities of the City of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Essex Junction Recreation and Parks office at 802-878-1375 TTY: 7-1-1 or (800) 253-0191.*

**City of Essex Junction Governance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, August 28, 2025 @ 6:30 PM**

**Members present:** Bethany Clark, Thomas Coen, Steve Eustis, Elaine Haney, Deb McAdoo, Candace Morgan, Brian Sheldon, Gabrielle Smith, Marlon Verasamy

**Staff present:** Brad Luck

**Members of the public present:** None

Steve Eustis called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. There were no amendments or additions to the agenda. There was no public to be heard.

Marlon Verasamy moved and Deb McAdoo seconded the approval of the minutes of the August 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Review & Discuss Interviews with Other Communities**

Marlon shared his notes from his conversation with Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak of Burlington. Thomas reviewed his conversation with the town manager of Barre Town. Candace and Bethany shared notes from their conversation with the manager of St Albans City. Deb and Gabrielle shared their notes about their conversations with the manager and selectboard chair of Brattleboro.

Notes from all the interviews can be found in this document:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1u51AqBQXHvU8wpK57oyrXfX60Xw-D56hcvPNH32zRXY/edit?usp=sharing>

**Discuss Plan Moving Forward & Identify Next Steps**

Before we go out to the public:

- What do we need to know?
- How will we find that out?
- Be mindful of limited time and resources.

We also must remember that some community members may not be aware of the form of governance we have now; will need to include education on that as well.

It was noted that whatever the committee comes up with will have to go before the city council, which will also want to take public input. In addition, anything that results in charter changes will require a public hearing process.

It will be important to include explanatory information about the choices and why the committee arrived at them.

The committee agreed that a good next step is gathering consensus from members on the items covered in the interviews. Brad will create a form for committee members to submit their thoughts about the information we've gathered so far.

The next meeting is Thursday, September 11, 2025 at 6:30 PM.

Marlon moved and Deb seconded to adjourn. Steve adjourned the meeting at 8:12 PM.

**1. Form of Government: Should we have a Council-Manager form of government as we do now, whereby the chief administrative officer is appointed? Should we have a Strong Mayor system like in Burlington where the chief administrative officer is an elected position? Should we have a Weak Mayor system whereby the elected leader of the council has some powers, but the role is mostly ceremonial, and the chief administrative officer is an appointed position?**

I don't know.

Seems like our current setup with a manager is working and we can remove a manager relatively quickly if needed. It gives us the opportunity to have a manager that is trained in running a municipality. For me a professional manager is going to be less political and well trained. A professional manager also allows for "average" people to be on the council. I think we need to encourage non-political, not super-connected people to be on the council.

I don't have an opinion on this yet. I am not inclined to a Strong Mayor system, but I could be convinced otherwise once we have done our research.

I first want to understand what challenges we are experiencing under our current form of government. If our current structure is working well to meet our needs, then do not think we should be looking for change for the sake of change itself. If there are current challenges, then I would want to uncover which alternative forms of government address those challenges and what drawbacks they have. Personally, having apolitical professional staff run the city makes sense to me, particularly for a city of our size.

What are the added benefits of changing to a different model than current?

Challenges of strong mayor system resulting in frequent major changes.

Does a mayor (strong or weak) align better and provide clarity given we are a city?

What are the cost implications of different models? Concerns of a strong mayor model adding additional paid political layer within government on top of existing professionals.

Concerned about power – ensuring it is limited and gives room for more voices.

Value expertise in the chief executive.

I don't have a strong opinion here except for this: CM seems to be working. I haven't heard any strong objections to CM except “we're a city, why don't we have a mayor?”

Consider spelling out the role/responsibilities of the President of the Council or Mayor in the Charter

Is there a gap in leadership, visibility, economic development, and other roles as an extension of the staff that the President of the Council or Mayor can/should play?

Do some of the expected or desired roles or perceived gaps need to be written in the Charter or communicated/stated in some other way or document?

**2. Council Composition: How many elected officials should we have (currently have 5)? Should the leader of the Council be elected by the Council or the people?**

7. I don't know about the leadership role.

I haven't seen a reason (or anyone even hinting more is better) to have more than 5. It is easiest if the council chair is elected by the councilors as it prevents a lot of hassle with dealing with special elections if council challengers win or lots of political games if people need to resign their seats to run for head of council. We had a lot of problems with our previous system. Have there been any perceived problems with the current system?

I don't have an opinion yet on either question. I am open to expanding to 7, especially if we combine that increase with wards or other district form.

Five seems like a reasonable number given the size of our city. We want to keep an odd number so the alternative would be moving to 7. That of course makes decision making harder, increases some administrative expenses/burden, and needs to be sufficient interest from residents to serve in those new positions. Based on our peer cities, 5 seems reasonable. But again, would like to hear from folks on how our system is currently functioning, including from city councilors.

Is five equitable? How many people should one representative represent?

Having more councilors allows for larger sub-groups/committees without triggering a quorum.

Consideration of advantages/disadvantages to staggered terms and number of seats up for election at one time.

Is a smaller team (i.e. 5 vs. 7) more effective and/or efficient vs. larger?

Is a smaller number better i.e. 3 or 4?

More councilors = more voices

Would we have enough people running for elections?

Admittedly with little experience here, but, it seems like 5 is working? But I'm open to any odd number. If the president / mayor / chair is elected by the people, you'd have to give them more power in some way. Someone elected at-large by the people would want more power than someone only elected by a subset of the people. Otherwise, why would you run at-large? It's more work – both to run and to serve – and more expensive.

More councilors could help spread out the workload better

Greater flexibility if elected by the Council for roles to change annually instead of on full-term cycles.

### **3. Councilor Term Lengths: What is the right number of years for a councilor term? Should they all be the same or different lengths?**

3-4 years

It takes a year or two to really get your feet under you to know the councilor job well. Therefore 3 years seems like a good amount of time because of this learning curve.

Don't have an opinion yet

For equity, councilor terms should all be the same length. I've never heard of different term lengths for the same elected position before. 3 years seems like a reasonable time and is aligned with our peers. But again, would want to get feedback from stakeholders — is that currently working, what challenges does it create? Current terms are overlapping (i.e. council members are up for election at different times). In general, I think this is a good idea as it brings continuity to the council while also ensuring regular participation from the public on council members. It also provides some insulation from short term political winds since not all seats are up at any one point in time. Also follows models from other cities.

Concerns of large turnover in any one given year.

Consideration of time that it takes for councilors to learn the role – learning curve.

Is a shorter term more appealing/less of a commitment for some community members?

Three (3) years seems a good trade-off between commitment (longer would discourage people to stand up) and ability to gain experience before re-election (shorter would be continuously up for election). The important bit here, to me, is that they overlap. I don't think we should have the whole council be up at the same time like the State Legislature or US Congress. Too easy to lose institutional knowledge.

Length and staggering are ways to consider stability, consistency, gradual change, and opportunities for new perspective

#### **4. Councilor Term Limits: Should there be a maximum number of years or terms that a councilor may serve?**

No.

I generally believe term limits makes sense to keep fresh viewpoints on the council. If we add term limits, we might want to consider a number of years break before someone could run again. In other words not a lifetime limit, but rather "streaks". Perhaps 5 years off after becoming term limited.

I'm not a fan of term limits in general. Could be convinced otherwise for City Council.

Term limits are helpful if there are substantial barriers to participation and entrenched incumbency. I don't see that as current issues. Council campaigns are relatively low-cost and short. Council members have voluntarily not run again. With a small city, instituting term limits can also have the adverse effect of limiting institutional knowledge and limiting the pool of qualified candidates. It does not seem like there is an overabundance of candidates at the moment (only 2 ran for the most recent open council seat).

Concern of aggregation of power

Is it a barrier for new participation if people don't want to run against incumbents?

Value of institutional knowledge vs. new voices. Stagnation vs. fresh perspective.

Are these being used in other communities? What is the experience?

Is there a better opportunity for a smoother transition if a term limited councilor knows they cannot run again?

"When the playing field is leveled and the process is fair and open, it turns out we have term limits. They're called elections." –Aaron Sorkin, The West Wing S1E20

No. I don't think that term limits accomplish what people think they do. People just run for other things, and you lose institutional knowledge as they do.

[https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/content/pubs/rb/RB\\_1104BCRB.pdf](https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/content/pubs/rb/RB_1104BCRB.pdf)

**5. Election of Officials: Should officials be elected at-large (without regard to residence location within the City), or through districts/wards, an overlay of wards within districts, or a hybrid of some at-large and some through districts/wards?**

At Large.

I am feeling that the city is small enough and similar enough to not need wards. I was able to follow all the Front Porch Forums prior to consolidation to one. Frequently and over long periods of time, similar issues were brought up all over the city. Without wards we can have the best people on the council regardless of where they live. It also eliminates the need to rebalance every 10 years when new census data is available. The city is also not so big that it is difficult to reach all the citizens if campaigning at-large. If we were a merged Essex (which we aren't), wards would make more sense to me since there are 3 very different regions in Essex.

I am very interested in exploring this with the committee.

I think there is a benefit to simplicity for voters, especially in a small city like Essex Junction. If we were larger, then I do see a benefit of having ward specific councilors, but based on our city size this again can have the adverse effect of limiting the pool of qualified candidates. If we did want to consider this, should be done in tandem with increasing the council size (which doesn't seem like a current need). Would also want to better understand if some areas of the city feel under-represented on the council geographically. And then what are some options to address that (i.e. through better community engagement/outreach).

I generally think that EJ is too small to justify wards, but I'm open to the idea.

Two counter arguments:

1) an EJCC seat has more constituents (11,000) than a Vermont State Representative Seat (4,100 or 8,200 in a two-member district). Meaning it's more work (and more expensive) to run for an EJCC seat than a State Rep seat. Is that what we want?

2) if we go this route let's make sure that any wards we draw are legal (one person one vote), follow the Voting Rights Act of 1968, and are redistricted regularly and fairly.

If we're considering wards seriously, let's start by breaking out some redistricting software to see what any legal wards would look like.

I have done this for our House Seats, but it's been a while. I used Dave's Redistricting to look at Essex Town and Essex Junction when the legislature asked

the Essex BCA for feedback after the 2022 reapportionment. I learned some interesting things.

I think people are picturing drawing lines around, say, the South Summit neighborhood, Countryside, Rivendell, and the Fairgrounds / Grandview neighborhood and calling those the wards. However, those neighborhoods are *very* different in sizes. And they are hard to connect together: nobody lives in the CVE, Global Foundries, or the High School.

Point is: I don't think legal wards would look like what people think they would look like.

If we go the ward route, I would recommend using the Austin, TX, ward and redistricting ordinance as a model.

(<https://www.austintexas.gov/content/independent-citizens-redistricting-commission>)

Happy to present on the Austin Redistricting Commission (and/or cut up some sample wards) if anyone is interested.

What would wards solve?

What is wrong with the current system and what would we gain from a change?

Concerns of challenges of finding candidates to run.

**6. Councilor Compensation: What is an appropriate amount to pay councilors annually for their service (currently \$2,500/year)?**

I don't know.

\$2,500 seems like a fair amount of compensation. What are the reasons to think it is not enough? That much can certainly pay for child care, pet care, and other financial constraints of the position. It is nice to get something for your time and this seems to accomplish that.

I would like to see the compensation increased. I see the concept of volunteering for a significant time commitment like this to be outdated and exclusionary. Most residents are either full or over-employed or retired. We need to make the City Council an option for those who cannot afford to commit to the time required for free, or who wouldn't do it for free for whatever reason. I like the range of \$7,500 - \$10,000, but that is a pretty undereducated guess.

I think we should definitely increase councilor compensation. It is a huge time commitment and the limited remuneration is a barrier for participation for many individuals. I'm not sure yet what is the right level that is both affordable, practical, and appropriate, but maybe close to \$10k/year with built in annual inflationary increases? Would want to learn what peer cities are doing, but think in general pay across the board is too low if we want to broaden who is able to serve.

Well, I didn't run for this seat for the money.

What I would recommend, is, that whatever compensation we have be indexed for inflation. And/or for the midpoint of the merit increase staff gets.

It's very easy to demonize politicians voting to raise their own salary. Therefore, unless we want to find out that we're not paying people enough to consider a run in (say) 2045, when \$2,500 only buys a creemee :- ) we should index it for inflation and forget about it.

Where are other communities at?

Does higher compensation draw or allow others to consider participating in this way?

Does a higher compensation make being a Councilor more accessible?

Is the current compensation a barrier to Council participation?

More generally, what are the barriers to participation (compensation, fear of attacks, etc.)?

How do you increase it over time? Automatic? Set period of time? Ensure a built-in method of annual/regular increases.

Can we track or get an estimate of number of hours that Councilors put in per month and assign an appropriate dollar amount to it?

Balance of money not being a motivator.

Other way of compensating? i.e. discount on property taxes

What are other communities doing?

Should the President of the Council receive a higher stipend?

Consider additional stipends for additional committee work

Considerations of equity and opportunity – does the amount (current or higher) allow others to consider serving

Should it be a per meeting stipend instead of a set amount – which could also count the extra meetings for the chair/vice chair?

Being a councilor involves a lot of time and work, not only for the individual, but also for their family

## **7. Neighborhood Assemblies: Should there be neighborhood assemblies?**

Yes. I am concerned about the attendance though.

I do not know enough about neighborhood assemblies. What are they trying to accomplish? What is the definition of a neighborhood? Is it better to just have city wide outreach, such as the annual meal meeting (January), and planning/zoning initiatives, celebrations (block party, etc.), etc.

I am very interested in exploring how this might work in EJ.

I think we definitely need some form of intentional community engagement strategy. I'm not sure that neighborhood assemblies are the answer (but they could be!) They strike me as a time- and resource-intensive approach and think other community engagement approaches could be more efficient at achieving the same results. But want to learn more.

I don't see exactly what these would accomplish. There's so little feedback given to the City now, adding a hierarchy seems like overkill. But, I'm listening.

What is a neighborhood?

What are we trying to accomplish? What issue are we trying to solve? Citizen access? Communication of City business? Increased opportunities for citizen input and engagement?

What role would we want them to play? Official City business/engagement/neighborhood relations?

Does this increase accessibility for residents – easier, more comfortable, more local point of access? Does this give people more of a voice?

Important to consider set-up, role, “power,” responsibility, follow-through, meeting frequency? Is it the same for all or does each neighborhood define for themselves?

What are we trying to address and once defined, are neighborhood assemblies the right solution? Is there another solution or avenue for people to have \_\_\_\_\_ (if the blank is better access to local government, better input, easier engagement, less intimidated engagement, less formal opportunities to participate, greater comfort in engaging in dialogue about municipal business)?

Are there other affinity group options to satisfy the goal(s)? What do other communities do?

For non-English speakers – added challenges of language barriers, fear, safety.  
Building cohesion, engagement, and input opportunities from people at a lower level –  
access points where people are comfortable talking

Are there non-charter related issues that we would like to address in terms of how  
meetings are run, information is communicated, how/when the community is engaged?

What is the “right” size of a neighborhood to accomplish goals?

Is this a charter change recommendation of some sort or something else?

**8. Voting Date: Should we vote on the budget and elect officials on Town Meeting Day? In April as it is now? Regardless, be on the same day as the school vote?**

Yes, move to Town Meeting Day.

I prefer to move both the school vote and city vote to Town Meeting Day. There is so much statewide hype and public interest in Town Meeting Day it would be great to take advantage of it.

Yes, move the vote to March Town meeting day, yes to voting on budget, elected officials and school vote on the same day.

We should definitely vote on budget, election officials, and the school budget all on the same day. Voter participation is already low — having separate dates creates greater barriers to participate and less incentive. We should consider moving all this to town meeting day in March to take advantage of statewide publicity of voting on town meeting day.

Yes, move to Town Meeting Day. This was part of my campaign platform, and I heard 0 objections and many supporters.

Value in aligning with broader Vermont voting. Hype/attention/interest about budgets and elections statewide in March.

School district expressed interest in moving to Town Meeting Day by spring 2027.

### **9. What other thoughts, comments, or questions do you have?**

I have an open mind on things and look forward to debating the merits of the various proposals. I just listed my current insights based on my experience interacting with the city as a citizen, moderator, and member of the governing board. My general principals are to keep things as simple as possible, discourage politics and crony networks, and have as many average people involved in the governance, backed by a professional staff.

Excited to discuss, learn more, and meet with various stakeholders and officials from other cities!

Curious about other advisory/committee/etc. role for community members to engage other than Council but in a meaningful way that may address some barriers to being a councilor i.e. long-term lengths.

Engagement and communication

## Interview Reports

Group:	A					
Group Members:	Thomas Coen					
	Candace Morgan					
	Marion Verasamy					
Community:	Burlington		Barre Town		St. Albans City	
Interviewee:	Chief Administrative Officer	Head of Elected Body (Mayor)	Chief Administrative Officer	Head of Elected Body	Chief Administrative Officer	Head of Elected Body
Interviewee Name:			Chris Violette		Dominic Cloud	
Question:	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation
Form of Government		Strong Mayor with City council. Strong mayor has only been Overall the structure works well, a strong mayor is needed to Great from an accessibility, equity and inclusion angle as There are 18 depts under the mayor that they are in the	5-member select board with a manager, been this way a long Was one of the last councils to meet weekly — recently Structure works well, wouldn't change anything		7 member city council with a weak mayor Main measuring stick for him is the ability as a community to 7 members allows for them to manage through elections Mayor's job is to build consensus on the council; they never Political leadership is building consensus	
Number of Elected Officials		1 Mayor, 12 City Councilors - 8 Wards and 4 Districts Used to be 14 when the Mayor was on City Council Thinks that it could actually be less as it's hard sometimes to	5 currently, would not decrease to 3-5 suits us well. Doesn't see a big need to move to 7 — would need to have a		7 members serves them well, as mentioned above Question shouldn't be to increase because of work - focus St. Albans meets once a month for two hours	
Leader of Elected Board Selection		Elected by the board. The Mayor is there but does not lead There are some exceptions where the Mayor presides, such, Council has struggled under the last few of City Council	Selected by board		Mayor presides over the Council but also as Council Standing committees established by the Council. Public Standing meetings are ad hoc, but most work happens here	
Term Length Number/System		Mayor is 3 years and City Council is 2 so that there in some. Thinks that the Council should be 3 as the first year you are provides	3 have 3-year terms, 2 have 2-year terms. Has worked well. Have to run for a specific seat with a designated length		Staggered, Council is 3 years; Mayor is 2 Tend to have longer tenures - ensures stability & shorter	
Term Limits		Emphatic yes to term limits. In the past, things have gotten None currently and doesn't have a specific number that	No term limits Have had more tenured members on select board and has Wouldn't want someone to be there for 30+ years but not Term limits not currently needed.		No term limits & wouldn't recommend Charter should be enabling and not constraining - charters	
Elected Officials Compensation		\$5000 for Council Members Mayor makes appx \$125K Believes that stipends need to be increased for all the Would like to see these eventually become full time paid	\$2,000 per year, same for all (including chair), paid twice a Amount hasn't changed in a long time — outlined in our Chair should get more given more work that occurs Amount could go up but still wants this viewed as a volunteer Want to make sure people run for the right reasons		No compensation, per the Charter Have thought about changing and acknowledges there's	
Election of Officials Method		Wards and Districts, Mayor is at-large Some of the wards could be combined like the Districts are	At large structure — has worked well Could see a benefit to shift to wards because Barre Town is		St Albans is divided along Main Street from old railroad days Without wards it would have just been run by the hill section Charter follows Burlington pretty closely He feels wards are unnecessary for Essex Jct	
Neighborhood Assemblies or Concepts		Loves the idea of the Neighborhood Assemblies, but feels Some neighborhoods pair up for meetings, but have also had Some issues with the same folks always at meetings and not Can be a drain on resources. Staff time is needed to help run Still would recommend exploring the idea	Don't have these — think they would take up a lot of staff		St. Albans doesn't have these and something like it has You need to have a really large city and population to do St. Albans is two square miles - not really large enough to	
Government Engagement			See above			
Surveying/Polling						
Gauging Resident Satisfaction						
Example of Success						
Other Resources						
Anything Else		The effectiveness of any government is dependent not just Lack of training and on going supports can undermine and Strong relationship between the Mayor and Council If you ever do go the route of Strong Mayor, you have to set			Charters and Governance is mostly about process - our Does the charter help us get greater outcomes or be more Question should be how do we produce more not how do we Vermont's problems are about outcomes & not about The Merger/Separation discussion in EJ is a great example	
Miscellaneous		For any engagement, be accomodating and inclusive, hybrid, went to a mayor's conference and was surprised that there				

(things you want to add)						
Most Important Takeaways From This Conversation						

# Interview Reports

Group:	B					
Group Members:	Steve Eustis					
	Brian Shelden					
	Elaine Haney					
Community:	Rutland	Head of Elected Body	Williston	Head of Elected Body	Barre City	Head of Elected Body
Interviewee Position:	Chief Administrative Officer		Chief Administrative Officer		Chief Administrative Officer	
Interviewee Name:	Governance Committee Interview Notes - Mayor Mike Doenees Rutland		Governance Committee Interview Notes - Erik Wells Williston		Governance Committee Interview Notes - Nick Storellicastro Barre City	
Question:	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation
Form of Government		Strong Mayor (weird strong mayor). Might not recommend it	works well	works well	7 member council; incl mayor + 2 councilors elected from each ward; terms are staggered so every year there's a ward councilor seat up; mayor's term is 2 years; clerk is also elected	
			clarity on roles	mgr does not get into politics	Mayor is the chair of the council; they vote on ties; preside over meetings; "outdated" provisions in charter that grant mayor some "strange" powers like ability to command police force in an emergency; council appoints manager, hired by contract	
		Gaps: losing institutional knowledge	no changes	no changes	Weak mayor; hiring of staff and budgeting are the manager's responsibility; thinks this is a good model for Barre; apolitical—allows him to make independent, objective recommendations that the council then decides whether to take up	
		Elected treasurer / clerk. Appointed others		chair sets agenda	Enjoys the network of other City / Town managers throughout Vermont; something we've heard before. Only issues have been relationships and not structural nature of the council; there's a residency requirement in the charter for the manager and he would change that; feels balance of power between manager and council is equalized.	
		Mayor is 4 roles: manage 150 staff / marketing & comms for Rutland / political baby kissing / development			Nick ok with the 2-year terms and does not feel like Barre is losing institutional knowledge with terms shorter than some. Especially because every ward has an election every year; feels that that active election every year encourages participation with residents	
		Would like to have a city manager				
Number of Elected Officials		11 aldermen. Used to be ward based, now at-large; Thinks 7 would be a better number. 11 makes sense if the city had a much bigger population.	5	5 - is the right number	6 members on the City Council & a mayor elected at large	
			3 is too small; hasn't thought about 7	no sub committees; sometimes an ad hoc committee	Feels it's the right number of voices in the room. The bigger it becomes the more unwieldy it can become.	
		All elections including mayor are non-partisan.			Some wards are won by/with only 120 votes. Making the wards any smaller might be problematic	
		6 one year / 5 next, 2 year terms				
		2 years not really enough time to get work done. "18-month time frame." Large # of members—harder to get people to show up; diversity important. 11 is difficult.				
Leader of Elected Board Selection		Voters have a nativist approach, though there are some non-Vermonters; last election a lot of repeat members were elected again. Very loud vocal minority	by board	by board	Gives the mayor a bully pulpit (in a good way); value in someone who is the face of the city who can advocate and has the backing of the public as a whole, instead of being from one ward.	
		Board of aldermen president is selected by board. Thinks it's a good system. Able to align mayor's vision with the president's and board's vision. Don't agree on everything. Beneficial for the board to have a representative to the mayor. Current president is the most recent mayor.	works well	separate election by voters would create factions; board has to work with the chair and knows capabilities when selecting	Elected clerk was on the ballot to make it appointed but this was soundly defeated.	
		Mike thought the voters picking the President is a bad idea because then it is about popularity and the board needs to work with the President so will have the best interest to pick the best President	long serving chairs			
Term Length Number/System		2 year terms. 5 seats one year, 6 seats another year. 3 years is reasonable. Aligning appointment term lengths with elected term lengths would be good.	mix of 2 and 3 years terms	mix of 2 and 3 year terms	2-year terms not too short; feels just about right; can do a lot in 2 years; meets every other week; enough time to learn what councilors' concerns and ideologies are; 3 years might be fine but he prefers that every ward has an election every year. 2 years is a good length if someone turns out not to be a good councilor	
			good that <50% up for election each year (maintain institutional knowledge)	works really well		
			exactly 2 of 5 up for election each year, but separate elections and not just top two vote getters.	always 40% of board up for election		
			no contested race in 3-4 years			
Term Limits		No term limits. Personally thinks an 8-10 year term limit would be good. Long term members have an expectation that it's "their" board. Can become apathetic. Stuck in old ways. A term limit can spur more motivation to get things done.	none	none	They don't have term limits; has experienced this in other jobs and thinks Barre is so small that term limits could be a problem; a lot of returning councilors (served previously and came back on the council); term limits would prevent that and in a small town that could be a problem; concerned about losing good people with a lot of institutional knowledge; implications for leadership—makes them less effective	
			could help, but could hurt	has never been discussed	Nick has mixed opinions here. Watched term limits implemented in CO and lost a lot of good people. Later saw people serving for 40 years in the NY Assembly having stale ideas.	

Elected Officials Compensation		Aldermen make \$2600/year. Mayor salary has fallen behind in terms of COL increases. Mayor now makes \$106k. Was \$89k when he came in. CEO of ~150 staff. A city manager makes ~\$140k. Some run for mayor to get the salary. If the mayor's salary were more in line with board salaries, different people would run. It's a FT position. In the budget as part of the executive department, approved by voters. Part of the pay grade table. 4 different unions (PW, rec, police, fire). Doing a salary audit soon; also uses VLCT salary survey.	\$1200 and inflation adjusted	\$1200 (\$1500 chair)	\$2000 for mayor and \$1000 for councilors; in the charter to pay them but not an amount; budget line item; Has been those amounts for the last few years; hasn't heard a lot of feedback on it; people have asked to compensate committee members and he's opposed to that; a councilor asked for an intern for a project and council rejected this; mayor and other councilors donate their stipends for a holiday party; staff do the research and legwork; work of the manager and staff depends on whether there's a majority on council who want to see it done	
			in budget	no drive to increase; reduced recently	Creates agenda in coordination with mayor; councilors can request items to go on agenda; also works on topics councilors want to work on; ratio is about 75% manager/city business 25% councilor ideas; having a good relationship between the manager and council is more important than even a clearly worded charter.	
			no concerns raised from community		Barre does not compensate committee members	
					Interesting discussion about a councilor who wanted "leg staff." Nick did not think that that was a good idea. Prefers to have City staff do the policy analysis. Also: the example he cited was a minority idea. One councilor wanted to research a policy where the rest of the policy didn't agree. Nick thought it therefore inappropriate to use city \$\$ for a minority proposal	
		Despite mayor salary increase, he believes it is "too low" and should be more like \$130K. He mentioned some people running for office and others running for salary.				
Election of Officials Method		Used to have wards but they don't anymore. Mayor is considering merging city & town. Wards are good if you have geographic size. Wards could add value to properly representing a region however.	at large	at large	It's been 3 wards for a very long time; geographic and condensed around specific neighborhoods; each ward is very compact and walkable; interests and ideologies tend to align within each ward; elections are very competitive; officially nonpartisan but definitely party based; ward 3 has lowest turnout, which tracks with demographics; each ward is distinct from the other when you look at the city as a whole; wouldn't change it; having a ward election every year gets people to the polls to weigh in on other important things like the budget	
		Mentioned that Rutland as it currently exists is too similar across the city to justify wards. If there was a merger with another community, the extra diversity from a large community might mean wards could make sense.	as Taft corners builds out, it could make sense to explore geographic representation since that area is so different than rest of Town	no issues at this time	Ward lines a reexamined every 10 years with the census; clerk's office does this; elected clerk is in charge of redistricting; Barre population is stable and so wards wouldn't dramatically change	
Neighborhood Assemblies or Concepts		Nothing in particular. Some people have started up things on their own. Police divide the city into sectors. Different purpose though. Closest thing is sector meetings for police and not a lot of people show up. [to define not a lot, he mentioned a handful of people show up]	none	none	No; people haven't called for it; will do public outreach based on wards; post-flood outreach an example; people don't necessarily associate with their ward; good unit of outreach and could be conducive to engagement in that way; subcommittees had existed in the past but have been repealed;	
		Sometimes it's a discussion. Recently held a series of public safety events and hundreds attended. Town hall style meetings are important, making them smaller and in different places would probably not have worked. He said he thought it best that everyone received/participated in the same message at the same time.	for large initiatives like new town plan, they hold meetings in different locations in order to get more engagement	They reach out for info in general	As needed ward meetings but not often; some councilors will do them for feedback or a grant app for example	
				If an issue affects a neighborhood, the mgr reaches out to that neighborhood	are able to hold these ward meetings in each ward. Trade off is walkable vs parking	
Government Engagement		Social media and national media have broken down communication on the local level. Too many methods (10-12) of delivery needed to actually reach people. Uses social most bc that's where most people seem to be. Sends press releases (Herald, 7D, VTDigger). TV stations are helpful. #1 effective but also most expensive is direct mail. \$4k each time, EDDM.	always working to improve	nothing special	Has a new Barre alert app that's been very successful so far (Regroup); Facebook because that's how a lot of people get their news (not that it's very effective); city website is "poor" and they don't really invest in it and people don't use it; now does a full page ad in the Times Argus that serves as a newsletter of sorts; use FPF for agendas but not for anything timely—too much of a time lag (which means probably that Barre residents may not use FPF that much)	
		No one showed up to a public meeting with the topic of comms.	the more personal the better	mgr channel 17 show sometimes	#1 was Regroup which has 900 residents signed up, #2 was FB, and #3 was website (in that order of effectiveness)	
			surveys	Selectboard moves meetings around sometimes, but that doesn't always bring new people in to the meeting		
			being present at town events			
Surveying/Polling			no		Last year they did a web-based budget survey ahead of the budget process; Qs on services, how happy people were with them, received about 200 responses; used Regroup to notify people about the survey	
Gauging Resident Satisfaction		He uses some social media tools for this—sentiment, polls, etc. Calculated the most frequent posters/sharers/watchers. Lot of popcorn eaters out there.	no			
		Downtown partnership and RPC and EDC also do a lot of this and they share results.				

Example of Success		Their new TIF committee. Can't have more than 2 aldermen be on the committee.	focus has been on land use.		Just bought a PW garage in Barre Town that was owned by the current mayor; manager was able to engage with mayor as a private citizen and came to the council to get approval; mayor was able to recuse himself and manager's objective opinion on suitability of the building helped the council make the decision.	
Other Resources			VLCT, ICMA, UVM MPA, Ctr for Rural Studies; Chris Koliba book on governance			
Anything Else		Professionals, professionals, professionals. Decision makers guiding the day to day operations of the city should be professionals. That's why a city manager is so important. Don't want to clean up mistakes made by volunteers.	Government is working well for Williston	watch out for skewed version of what majority wants, in the cases of arbitrary trying to stack feedback by geography, income, etc.		
				at end of day, Selectboard is responsible for a lot and each person can't know it all		
Miscellaneous (things you want to add)						
Most Important Takeaways From This Conversation			Williston's government is working really for Williston	Williston's government is working really for Williston		

# Interview Reports

Group:	C					
Group Members:	Deb McAdoo					
	Gabrielle Smith					
	Bethany Clark					
Community:	Winoski		Brattleboro		Montpelier	
Interviewee	Elaine Wang, City Manager, Chief Administrative		Kristine Lott, Mayor, Head of Elected Body		Chief Administrative Officer	
Interviewee Name:	Interviewed together		John Potter, Town Manager		Liz McLoughlin, Selectboard Chair	
Question:	1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation		1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation		1 to 5 Key Takeaways From This Conversation	
Form of Government	City Council/Weak Mayor		Charter committee reviewing updating model to remove	Selectboard Chair compensation \$10k, Members \$8k per	agreed with mayor	city manager has extensive knowledge of city management
	Wouldn't change the form of government	same, wouldn't change	Charter is reviewed every 15 years as required by Charter.	Term limits on Committee volunteers (9yrs, can come back	job is combo of policy-making and management	ideal; enables active city council
	it is helpful to have a Mayor that is the clear focal point to	the title of Mayor has a certain weight to it, with pluses and	Community is challenged with high rate of social issues.	Amazing civic culture in community.		full-time administrator deals with complexities and carries out
	he Strong Mayor form of government in Vermont is		Three newspapers helps with community engagement and	Brattleboro is a tri-state community and there are special		strong mayor is a huge job and difficult to find with turnover
			More SB members would equal more staff required to	They had a mayor and it didn't workout for them. Selectboard		
Number of Elected Officials			5	5	2 councilors in each voter district - 6 councilors total	city councilor has a number of bosses but mayor gives main
					mayor and city manager meet weekly	
Leader of Elected Board Selection	5, including the mayor	The Mayor is elected by the voters, and this is the right		Member elected.		mayor is popularly elected
		Being the Mayor is a big responsibility. I set the agenda with.				
Term Length Number/System	2 years	2 year term for councilors and 3 years for Mayor (just	More younger Selectboard members running this past year.	Two 1-yr terms and three 3-yr terms, one year to get feet wet		2 year terms for city council and mayor; mayoral term could
						so people can run for mayor without relinquishing council
Term Limits	With our dynamic and younger community (I didn't note the	"welcome" Sometimes on the commissions we see lengthy	Term limits on Committee, not Selectboard	Term limits on Committee, not Selectboard		no term limits, have never been considered
				Volunteer vs. Elected determines term limits.		
Elected Officials Compensation		Set by voters, as long as you see it as a stipend for actual costs, not time served, it feels fair. For Mayor, I spend 8 - 15 hours a week.	\$10,000 Selectboard Chair and \$8,000 Members per year.	Acknowledged number of hours and need to support expenses, used example of budget not passing and number of additional hours required to rebudget and revote.	last increase was 2017	city councilors are not paid enough
			Previously worked in CO and sees stipend as still too low inspite of being highest in VT.	Higher stipend did not change motivation of volunteers, money did not change motivation of service.		pay for city elected officials is a line item in city budget so voters vote on it as part of voting for the budget annually
				Compensation in Charter and	\$2040 for city council; \$4080 mayor	
Election of Officials Method	City Councilors are elected at large. What comes to mind - ICMA recommendation that if you don't have wards now, don't	Perception that it is hard to do and get people running. Thinks it might be harder with wards. We are so small, not as critical. However, we do have concentrations of race.				districts are small; make sense for size and population and neighborhood make up
				vote at first meeting.		redistricting happens periodically but only minor changes are made
						3 districts
						questions for districting: how much to spend on elections, ensure it's not too big
Neighborhood Assemblies or Concepts			Not in favor of RTM model.	Representative Town Mtg similar idea, area districts have elected Town Mtg Representatives and these are the people who vote on the budget approval.	more council members have had district meetings to hear from constituents	
			issues with open meeting rules and compliance with remote mtg access.	Representative Town Meeting does not equate to one voice one vote	city councilors urged to engage where citizens are, at farmer's markets, kiosks, community forums	
				Representative Town Meeting is not working, politicized and not representing citizens	no formalized community involvement or engagement	
Government Engagement	Finding connectors, folks who are already well connected. For ex. I kept visiting the local mosque, took several visits, finally worked. Elaine spent time reaching out to business owners. Make the effort to find, build relationships with connectors.		described community as highly engaged.	Social issues keep people engaged these days, community split on approach.		
Surveying/Polling	Focus groups for spending ARPA money					city councilors tend to hear from the same people; not representative polling
	Reached out to unheard voices, focus groups on policy chief, also surveys					best community forums when they are about specific issues
	Go to events, QR codes, go to where people are					
Gauging Resident Satisfaction						
		he Finance Director created an engagement activity with residents to use Monopoly money to crowd source input into budgeting.				

Example of Success		The challenge is to spend the time. Staff maintains a spreadsheet to track engagement, contacts - this allows us to pay attention to groupings, identities. Explicit about engaging diverse populations.				
Other Resources						
Anything Else						
Miscellaneous (things you want to add)						Montpellier's first woman mayor was in 1986; ever since then, it's alternated male and female
Most Important Takeaways From This Conversation						