

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA OPEN FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 22, 2025**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Ashley Snellenberger, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Director; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Colleen Ballard, Nancy Bean, Patricia Bouchard, Bethany Clark, Craig Dwyer, Steve Eustis, J. Hemenway, Max Mueller, Marlon Verasamy, Sharon Wille Padnos, Stephen Wille Padnos, Resa, Scott.

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

Steve Eustis spoke regarding the Tree Farm Management agreement. He noted that capital projects are typically handled by the Capital Committee and asked where one could bring forward proposals for capital projects related to the Tree Farm (such as trail maintenance to address trail erosion). City Manager Mahony replied that the agreement up for consideration tonight has requirements to establish a capital plan, as well as mechanisms to collect user fees to fund capital projects related to the Tree Farm. She suggested that any ideas for projects be sent to her in writing for now, until a more formal process is established to intake ideas.

Stephen Wille Padnos expressed appreciation for the Meet Me On Main events, which he attended. He also spoke about the cannabis license up for renewal tonight for TrichomeVT, saying that he hopes the Council will follow the advice from the Vermont Supreme Court ruling and not renew the cultivation license, given that the applicant also has a manufacturing license. Craig Dwyer, another member of the public, also urged the Council not to renew the cannabis cultivation license. Sharon Wille Padnos, another member of the public, further urged the Council not to renew the cannabis cultivation license. All members of the public cited concern as neighbors of the applicant.

5. RECOGNITION

a. Resolution of Appreciation for Troy Wilber

Councilor Miller read a Resolution of Appreciation for Troy Wilber into the record, given his contributions to the City of Essex Junction and in light of his recent, unexpected passing earlier this month.

b. Resolution of Appreciation for John Rowell

Councilor Certa read a Resolution of Appreciation for John Rowell into the record, given his contributions to the City of Essex Junction as a career firefighter of 43 years.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. *Interview Police Community Advisory Board Applicant for Open Position

The Council interviewed Nancy Bean for an open position on the Police Community Advisory Board. The applicant spoke about her relevant experience, involvement in the community, qualifications, and her interest

in participating on the PCAB. She was asked by Councilors about ideas for bidirectional communication between the community and the Police Department and was given the opportunity to ask questions of the Council.

See item #9a below for further information.

b. Annual Essex Rescue Presentation

Colleen Ballard, Executive Director of Essex Rescue, presented on this agenda item. She began by noting that Essex Rescue is not seeking an increase in municipal contribution funding for Fiscal Year 2027, saying that the per capita funding rate will remain at \$19.56. She noted that the organization's focus areas for FY27 will be to continue strengthening the workforce, optimize resource allocation, and ensure ongoing financial stability. She noted that there have been 155 more calls than there were at this time in 2024, that call volume has increased 36% since 2018, and that there has been a 30% increase in the last four years. She also noted that mutual aid calls account for 25% of the total call volume. She noted that peak call times are typically 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM. She spoke briefly about mutual aid statistics across Essex Rescue's entire service area. She spoke about implementing a minimum ambulance standard on July 1, 2025, which guarantees ambulance coverage during peak call times in addition to the standard 24/7 ambulance coverage. She said that this necessitated an increase in the workforce of three full-time staff, to guarantee 5,616 hours of coverage. She said that since this period with this increased workforce, they have been able to respond to 167 additional calls. She said that based on preliminary fiscal analysis, the \$300,000 spent on these additional positions would result in an increase of approximately \$281,666 in revenue (resulting in minimal fiscal loss).

Councilor Certa asked whether Essex Rescue is projecting needing additional staffing or equipment resources in future years and asked about staffing levels and certifications. Executive Director Ballard replied that they hired three Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) into those three open positions and have staffed their ambulances in the most financially efficient ways possible. She acknowledged the challenges of the state and national healthcare systems, noting that EMS is often used when other parts of the health system fails to meet needs. She said that if the system continues as it is, she anticipates needing to put additional ambulances on the road in future to address rising demand. She noted that the state is interested in further regionalization of EMS, but also noted that Essex Rescue is already operating somewhat of a regionalized model. Councilor Certa asked what other EMS services are available to respond in mutual aid situations. Executive Director Ballard replied that other services are hiring per diem staff to help respond to mutual aid, and she noted the challenges of this approach (given that Essex Rescue pursued this option several years ago prior to hiring additional full-time staff).

Councilor Haney commended Essex Rescue for its work to stabilize its finances. She asked whether Essex Rescue purchased an additional ambulance, and Executive Director Ballard clarified that Essex Rescue has three ambulances but utilizes one as a backup for when one of the active ambulances goes down. She spoke about capital funding to purchase a replacement ambulance as well as retrofit existing ambulances in future. City Council President Thibeault echoed Councilor Haney's commendation of Essex Rescue's financial stabilization efforts.

Councilor Miller asked about mutual aid calls and strategies for working with other EMS services in the area. Executive Director Ballard spoke about activities related to strategizing with other EMS services in the area, such as St. Michael's, Williston, and Richmond, to adjust service areas where needed. Councilor Miller asked about any work being done to work with care facilities to respond to non-emergency transportation in order to take pressure off the EMS system, and Executive Director Ballard replied that she and the organization's medical director have provided assisted living facilities with additional education on when to call EMS, but noted the unique clinical challenges faced by assisted living facilities (given that they are not nursing homes).

c. Governance Committee Update and Presentation

Steve Eustis and Marlon Verasamy presented on this item. Mr. Eustis spoke about the Committee's work to seek information from nine similar municipalities (in terms of size and demographics), seek community input through public engagement and surveys, and that they will be presenting this information at one of the City Council's December meetings. He spoke about the topics the Governance Committee is considering, which includes looking at who runs the City, who runs the City Council, how many City Councilors there are, term lengths, term limits, stipends and stipend increases for Councilors, charter review, and the election of City Councilors (at-large versus through a ward system).

Councilor Certa commended the Governance Committee on the clear and simple ways it has presented its information and potential decision points to the Council and the public, which will aid greatly in future community engagement on these key questions. Councilor Haney asked about the discussion regarding the formation of neighborhood assemblies. Mr. Verasamy replied that the topic is complex and warrants exploration by a full committee in order to do it justice. City Council President Thibeault asked if the November 5, 2025 meeting has an online option. Mr. Verasamy replied that they are still discussing the best way to have a hybrid meeting option and to engage members of the community who are online, given that the format of the meeting will be interactive in the physical meeting space. He said that if they are not able to make that meeting work for online attendants, they may explore options related to focus groups and engaging virtual attendants that way.

d. Rebranding Project Brief

Communications and Strategic Initiatives Director Snellenberger provided the update related to this agenda item. She noted that a 2-hour discovery session kicked off the rebranding process in July, in which the Rebranding Committee reviewed the shared goals and vision for this project. She said that they then built a survey that launched in tandem with one of the Meet Me On Main events, as well as an online survey, which garnered a combined response of 272. She said that these informed the project brief that the consultant developed, which will guide their creative team to develop brand identity options (logo, tagline, etc). She asked whether the Council would like to add content to the project brief. She spoke about opportunities for the Council to discuss options and revisions, with an anticipated final identity option brought forth to the Council in February. She said that this timeline is subject to change based on complexity of revision between rounds of revisions, but that this is the currently anticipated timeline. Councilor Haney said she is impressed by the community feedback received so far. Councilor Certa also expressed appreciation for the community feedback and said the brief seems to cover everything that has been brought up. Councilor Miller concurred with these sentiments.

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council approve the project brief as written. The motion passed 5-0.

e. Acting as the Local Cannabis Control Commission: Consideration of S-000009646, Outdoor Cultivator Tier 1 Small Cultivator for TrichomeVT

City Manager Mahony recommended that this item be tabled, given that the Applicant was not notified that this item was on the agenda. She noted that while this is not a quasi-judicial process and the City is not required to notify the Applicant, it feels like inherently the correct course of action for this item and discussion.

City Council President Thibeault made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to table this item until the November 12, 2025 City Council meeting. The motion passed 5-0-1 (Councilor Shelden abstaining).

f. **Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to Discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation
See item #9b below.

7. **CONSENT ITEMS**

- a. Approve Meeting Minutes: October 8, 2025
- b. Approve Amendment to FY26 Wastewater Capital Plan
- c. Approve the Lease and Management Agreement with the Tree Farm Management Group for Management of the Tree Farm
- d. Approve Applications for a Human Services and Educational Facilities Grant for the Senior Center and a Recreational Facilities Grant for the Multi-Purpose Room at Maple Street Park

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

8. **COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:** City Manager Mahony noted that the City is assisting the Champlain Water District with a project on West Street and that there will be some road disruptions on West Street and water line interruptions tomorrow. Councilor Certa thanked the City for its outreach regarding this project to affected rate payers and residents. Councilor Miller expressed appreciation and thanks for the Meet Me On Main events, saying that he enjoyed engaging with the community at all four of those events. He said he looks forward to additional community events like this. Other Councilors agreed.

9. **READING FILE**

- a. Check Warrant #24097 – October 17, 2025
- b. Planning Commission Minutes – October 2, 2025
- c. Bike Walk Advisory Committee Minutes – October 9, 2025
- d. Governance Committee Minutes – October 9, 2025
- e. Essex Junction Selected for Homes for All Program

10. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. *An Executive Session May be Needed to Discuss the Appointment of a Public Official
Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss the 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 Miller, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:26 P.M.

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to appoint Nancy Bean to the Police Community Advisory Board with a term ending June 30, 2027. The motion passed 5-0.

- b. ** 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, and 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.

11. **ADJOURN**

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:27 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt