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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
INFORMATIONAL HEARING
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 23, 2026
Approved April 15, 2026**

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

21 **ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager; Mark Brislin, EJRP Director; Colleen Dwyer,
22 Human Resources Director; Steve Eustis, Moderator; Chris Gaboriault, Fire
23 Chief; Wendy Hysko, Library Director; Ricky Jones, Public Works
24 Superintendent; Susan McNamara-Hill, Clerk/Treasurer; Chelsea Mandigo,
25 Water Quality Superintendent; Jess Morris, Finance Director; Ashley
26 Snellenberger, Communications & Strategic Initiatives Director; Chris Yuen,
27 Community Development Director.

28 **OTHERS PRESENT:** Raj Chawla, Bethany Clark, Andy Suntup, Linda Suntup, Resa.

29 1. **CALL TO ORDER**

30 Moderator Steve Eustis called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

31 2. **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND PROCEDURES OVERVIEW**

32 Moderator Eustis began the meeting by conducting a round of introductions. He then spoke about
33 procedures, noting that this is an informational meeting and that there are no motions or amendments to be
34 made, and that it pertains to the warned items that will be voted on by ballot.

35 3. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 1:** Shall the voters approve an annual General
36 Fund Budget in the amount of \$12,921,469 for Fiscal Year July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027, \$11,891682 of
37 which is to be levied in taxes against the City Grant List?

38 City Manager Mahony noted that this General Fund budget represents an approximately \$500,000 or 4%
39 increase over the prior fiscal year's budget. She said that the estimated tax impact is an approximately \$118
40 annual increase over the prior fiscal year, for a \$280,000 property. She also provided a summary of the utility
41 rates and estimated changes for FY27. She provided a summary of the General Fund budget expenditures
42 and revenue streams. She noted that approximately 76% of the City's revenue comes from residential
43 property taxes, with the remainder comprised of commercial property taxes, miscellaneous revenues, and
44 the GlobalFoundries property taxes. She further noted that Essex Junction is undergoing a reappraisal, which
45 will conclude this summer, and may result in some shifting between these categories.

46 City Manager Mahony then spoke briefly about the development and finalization of the City's Community
47 Vision and Strategic Action Plan report in June of 2024, which it has used to guide the City's strategic
48 planning and budget building.

49 City Manager Mahony spoke about the goals for FY27 budget development, noting that the City strove to
50 present a budget that would have as minimal increases as possible. She said that the main cost drivers of
51 the budget increase include wage/merit increases, technology subscription and license costs, vehicle repair
52 and maintenance costs, health insurance premium increases, increased cleaning and contracted service
53 costs, an increased FTE in the assessor's budget, and a contractually mandated increase in the police
54 budget. She spoke about cost containment strategies to minimize increases on the General Fund budget.
55 She also spoke briefly on transfers from the operating budgets to capital reserve funds.

56 4. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 2:** Shall general obligation bonds or notes of
57 the City of Essex Junction in an amount not to exceed Thirteen Million, Nine Hundred and Sixty Thousand
58 Dollars and Zero Cents (\$13,960,000.00) be issued under Chapter 53 of Title 24, Vermont Statutes

56 Annotated, payable from the City’s general fund, derived from the taxation of real property for a period
 57 not to exceed thirty years, and subject to reduction by available grants-in-aid or other funding sources,
 58 be issued to finance the cost of constructing a public works facility (the Project)?
 59 City Council President Thibeault began by noting that the current public works facility is not sufficient to meet
 60 the needs of the City. She walked through photographs of the current facility and how they are inadequate
 61 to meet current storage and staff needs. City Manager Mahony said that one challenge with large pieces of
 62 equipment in small spaces is that it is impossible to service the equipment inside, which is difficult in the
 63 winter.
 64

65 5. **ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ARTICLE 3:** Should the compensation paid to the City Council members
 66 change from \$2,500.00 a year to \$3,600.00 a year starting July 1, 2027.
 67 City Council President Thibeault said that the next four articles (3-6) are recommendations from the
 68 Governance Committee, which recommended increasing the annual minimum pay for City Councilors due
 69 to the time, work, and responsibilities required of the Council.
 70

71 Linda Suntup asked how many hours Councilors work annually and how other Vermont municipalities
 72 compensate their local legislative bodies. City Council President Thibeault said that she spends between 5-
 73 10 hours outside of each meeting preparing for each meeting. Councilor Sheldon noted that compensation
 74 in other municipalities varies, with some members receiving no compensation and others receiving a stipend
 75 similar to that of Essex Junction.
 76

77 6. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICE 4:** Shall the voters approve an amendment to
 78 the City of Essex Junction Charter that changes the City Council President’s annual compensation to be
 79 twenty-five percent (25%) more than the annual compensation paid to the other City Council members?
 80 (strikethrough represents a deletion, and underline represents an addition):
 81 Subchapter 2: Governance Structure
 82 Section 205. Compensation -
 83 (a)(1) The President of the Council shall be paid an annual compensation that is twenty-five percent
 84 (25%) more than the annual compensation paid to the other Council members.
 85 No discussion.
 86

87 7. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 5:** Shall the voters approve an amendment to
 88 the City of Essex Junction Charter where compensation paid to the City Council members adjusts
 89 annually, effective July 1 of each year, in a manner consistent with any percentage change in the
 90 Consumer Price Index for the Northeast Region, as published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for
 91 the most recent calendar year? (strikethrough represents a deletion, and underline represents an
 92 addition):
 93 Subchapter 2: Governance Structure
 94 Section 205. Compensation
 95 (a) Compensation paid to the Council members shall be ~~set by the voters at the annual meeting,~~
 96 adjusted annually, effective July 1 of each year, by the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index
 97 for the Northeast Region, as published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for the most recent calendar
 98 year, with a minimum of
 99

100 City Council President Thibeault noted that this also came out of recommendations from the Governance
 101 Committee. Councilor Haney noted that this takes decision-making about board member compensation out
 102 of the hands of board members and makes it an automatic change.

103 8. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 6:** Shall the voters approve an amendment to
 104 the City of Essex Junction Charter that states that the City Council shall appoint a Charter Review
 105 Committee, at least once every 12 years, to conduct a comprehensive review of the City of Essex
 106 Junction Charter? (strikethrough represents a deletion, and underline represents an addition):
 107 Subchapter 12: AMENDMENT OF CHARTER AND INITIATIVES
 108 Section 1202. Charter Review Committee The City Council shall appoint a Charter Review
 109 Committee at least once every twelve (12) years for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review

of this charter. A majority of the Committee’s members shall be residents of the City, who are not members of the City Council.

City Council President Thibeault noted that this recommendation also came out of the Governance Committee recommendations. She noted that while this change would require a charter review every twelve years, the charter could be updated more frequently if needed.

9. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 7:** Shall the voters authorize a planning loan through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for a project in the Water Enterprise Fund to be used for service line material identification and nonlead service line validation as required by federal drinking water regulations in an amount not to exceed \$892,771 to be financed over a period not to exceed ten years?

City Council President Thibeault noted that the voters authorized a loan for lead service line inventory in 2023, which was completed, but the EPA is now requiring further investigation, including of non-lead service line validation. She noted that there is additional funding available, and that the final repayment should be around \$400,000.

10. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 8:** Shall the City of Essex Junction voters approve a one-cent Social Services Contributions tax to support social service organizations, such amount being reasonably necessary and for the support of programs to benefit City of Essex Junction residents?

City Council President Thibeault noted that prior to separation from the Town, the City contributed to a similar fund to this fund, but that the City hasn’t had a fund like this since separation. She said that the fund would support social, health, and human service organizations to benefit Essex Junction residents, and would be around \$113,000 on a one-cent tax. She said that this fund would be brought to voters annually on Town Meeting Day.

Linda Suntup asked what types of services have been provided when the City was previously contributing to a fund like this. Councilor Haney said that this fund began in the Town in 1987, and it evolved into a grant program with an application process. She said that these organizations would be non-profit and that the criteria would require organizations to show how the funds would benefit City residents. She said that these organizations generally support initiatives related to housing, safety, health, etc., and include entities such as Aunt Dots and COTs.

11. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT ARTICLE 9:** Shall the voters authorize payment of real property taxes in equal installments on March 15 and September 15 by physical delivery or electronic payment to the tax collector by close of business on that date?

City Council President Thibeault said that the City charter does not specify how or when tax payments must be delivered, so the City has been following State statute. She said this question asks whether the charter should be modified to not accept postmarks as proof of on-time payment and to align with the City’s policy for utility bill due dates.

12. **ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ARTICLE 10:** To elect City officers required by law including: two City Council members (three-year terms) and one Library Trustee (five-year term)?

Moderator Eustis noted that there are three individuals running for the two City Council positions—Marcus Certa, Raj Chawla, and Bethany Clark, and that one person is running for the Library trustee position—Linda Hassan.

13. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

Moderator Eustis noted that the voting day aligns with the School District and will be held on April 14 at the Champlain Exposition. He noted that mail-in ballots are also accepted.

City Council President Thibeault recognized that this is Councilor Haney’s last informational meeting as a Councilor and thanked her for her years of service to the Junction.

14. **READING FILE**

165 a. Annual Report Newsletter
166

167 15. **ADJOURN**
168

169 **Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to adjourn the meeting. The motion**
170 **passed 5-0 at 7:07 P.M.**

171
172 Respectfully Submitted,
173 Amy Coonradt