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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING
April 29, 2026**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Jess Morris, Finance Director; Ashley Snellenberger, Communications & Strategic Initiatives Director; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: David Achee, Raj Chawla, Bethany Clark, Cora Delucia, Daniel Liguori, Reed Nye, John O'Brien, 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

Resa spoke about high community interest in the community garden program in Essex Junction and asked whether some community garden plots could be subsidized by the 1% social services fund that was approved on the ballot. City Council President Thibeault noted that there are scholarships available through EJRP, and said that these scholarships could potentially be used for community garden plots. Councilor Certa asked about the timing and availability of funding through the social services fund. City Manager Mahony said that funds will be available at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2027 (in July), and added that the social services fund program will begin after that. Cora Delucia spoke about the Park Street project and expressed support for bicycle lanes on Park Street.

5. **PUBLIC HEARING**

a. Large User Water Rate Setting Public Hearing

Finance Director Morris spoke on this agenda item. She noted that the large volume water user rate is designed for large volume water consumption exceeding 2.5 million gallons per day, which currently only applies to GlobalFoundries. She said that a public hearing is required for larger water user rates, and that rates are set by the Council at or after that public hearing. She provided a brief overview of the FY27 City Water Fund Budget, noting a 3.8% increase from FY26, the primary drivers of which are an increase in personnel benefit expenses, an increase in the administrative fees paid from the Water Fund to the General Fund, and a \$50,000 planned increase in planned contributions to the capital reserve. She said that for the larger volume water user rate, there was a decrease between FY26 and FY27 of 7.98%. She said that the rate is calculated as 13% of the City's water operating budget plus a proportionate share of unaccounted water divided by estimated water usage and that there is a reconciliation at the end of the fiscal year, at which time GlobalFoundries either pays more or receives a credit depending on water usage and the amount of unaccounted water. Councilor Haney asked how the 13% threshold of the water operating budget was arrived at, and Director Morris replied that the policy has been at 13% for a number of years. Councilor Certa asked why the large water user rate is decreasing while residential and other rates are increasing, and Director Morris replied that all rates are based on usage. She noted that GlobalFoundries is paying the wholesale rate and state fees directly, and that the City had projected a larger amount in the state fee than the fee ended up being, which is why their rate is decreasing through this reconciliation process. City Manager Mahony noted that the two rates (residential and large water user) are calculated using different methodologies and cannot be compared.

57 City Council President Thibeault closed the public hearing.
58

59 **6. RECOGNITION**

60 a. Resolution of Appreciation for Elaine Haney

61 Councilor Sheldon read a resolution of appreciation for Elaine Haney into the record. Councilor Haney said
62 that it has been an honor to work with her fellow Councilors, Trustees, City staff, and constituents, and she
63 expressed thanks for the recognition.
64

65 b. Resolution of Appreciation for Marcus Certa

66 Councilor Miller read a resolution of appreciation for Marcus Certa into the record. Councilor Certa expressed
67 thanks for the recognition and appreciation.
68

69 **7. BUSINESS ITEMS**

70 a. Discussion and Consideration of FY27 Enterprise Fund, Water, Wastewater, Sanitation, and Stormwater
71 Rates

72 Director Morris spoke on this agenda item. She said that the combined costs of the water, wastewater, and
73 sanitation to a City resident using the average of 120 gallons per day will increase by around 7.5% or
74 approximately \$62 per year. She said that the larger user rate will decrease by approximately 8%, the
75 wastewater treatment wholesale rate will decrease by 0.3%, and the stormwater rate will increase by \$34.59
76 per ERU. She said that the stormwater rate increase is largely due to the addition of the capital reserve
77 contribution for the Stormwater Fund. She said that these rates are based on the budgets that were approved
78 at the end of March.
79

80 **Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, that the City Council approve the**
81 **FY27 utility rates for water, wastewater, sanitation, and stormwater as presented. The motion passed**
82 **4-1 (Councilor Certa dissenting).**
83

84 b. Finance Department Head Brief to Council Including Capital Review Committee Update

85 Director Morris spoke on this agenda item. She summarized highlights from the last year, noting successful
86 audits and monitoring visits from the State of Vermont and continued work around process improvement for
87 grants. She noted that the City hired a new accounts receivable coordinator, who has been providing support
88 for utility billing and is being cross-trained on payroll activities. She spoke about new rules and regulations
89 from the federal government and staff's work to learn about them and understand their impacts. She spoke
90 about successfully having enterprise budget projections ready for review and consideration along with the
91 General Fund budget, which has been a goal for the past several years. She also spoke about how the
92 Vermont Governance Finance Officers Association Board hosted the New England fall conference at Jay
93 Peak last year, which was well-attended and a great networking and learning opportunity. She then spoke
94 about the Capital Committee's activities over the last year, noting that they switched to holding quarterly
95 meetings and that they have worked to re-rank existing projects and obtain new cost estimates for them. She
96 also noted that they ranked a new project this year, which was the Main Street Shared Use Path. She said
97 that these activities were conducted in time to pass recommendations on to staff and the Council for Capital
98 Budget planning processes for FY27. She spoke about activities for the Finance Department for the next
99 year, which include cross-training, policy updates, rolling out the next phase of utilizing the new budgeting
100 software, inventorying the City's fixed assets in preparation for the year-end audit, updating the City's key
101 control document. She then spoke about activities for the Capital Committee for the next year, which include
102 reviewing and adjusting existing projects on the ranked list, discussing sidewalk policy updates and how any
103 sidewalk work interacts with the Local Option Tax (LOT) funds designated for sidewalk improvement.
104

105 Councilor Certa asked for examples of ideas that arose from the conference that Director Morris mentioned,
106 and Director Morris spoke about an interesting presentation on cybersecurity, fraud, and scammers, at which
107 federal and state officials spoke about scamming activities and best practices for municipalities to protect
108 themselves. Councilor Miller asked how the Finance Department handled the changes in federal tax law that
109 excluded certain overtime from being taxable. Director Morris replied that it was somewhat difficult to

110 implement in real-time, but that the department worked to understand legal requirements, best practices from
111 other municipalities across New England, and implement manual workarounds to ensure alignment with
112 requirements. Councilor Shelden asked if the Finance Department is prepared if the City moves its annual
113 election to Town Meeting Day and she reported that the department is definitely prepared for this.
114

115 c. Discussion and Consideration of Rebranding Initiative – City Entry Signs and Rollout Timeline

116 Communications & Strategic Initiatives Director Snellenberger spoke on this item. She said that they include
117 designs for entrance signs and municipal signs as part of the City’s rebranding effort. She noted that the
118 Rebranding Committee is recommending that the City move forward with Concept A, which they felt was the
119 most readable sign, has a prominent display of the logo, and ties into some of the City’s other approved
120 branded items, such as the banner. She noted that this sign would be displayed outside of the City’s municipal
121 offices, Brownell Library, and on any other signs within the City. She reviewed the Concept B, Concept C,
122 Concept D, and Concept E options as well. She also spoke about the organizational panels that would go on
123 the signage, noting that the Rebranding Committee is recommending leaving the panel off of the signage for
124 now. She also spoke briefly about logo design for uniforms, distinguishing between staff uniforms and
125 potential merchandise for the public, and logos for fleet vehicles. She said that the Rebranding Committee
126 has also been reviewing templates and that she has asked department heads to also review the templates.
127 She said that they anticipate having another package to review by May 22, and to roll the revised designs
128 out by June 1.
129

130 Councilor Certa agreed that the organizational panels should not be included in signage and further
131 expressed support for Concept A. Councilor Shelden asked whether the organizations featured on the
132 organizational panels had paid for those panels to be on municipal signage. Councilor Miller pointed out that
133 they could add the organizational panels back into Concept A signage, but that many of the panels are in
134 disrepair and would need to be replaced anyway. Director Snellenberger noted that if they wanted to add the
135 organizational panels back into signage, they would need to re-pole the signage to account for the additional
136 height of the signs. Councilor Miller asked for confirmation that the entry signs were included in the original
137 rebranding budget but the municipal sign is not included in that allocation, and Director Snellenberger
138 confirmed that there is funding available for the entrance signs and the banners, but the municipal signs do
139 not currently have a funding source.
140

141 The following public comments were received:

- 142 • Resa asked if the signs will be high enough off the ground to withstand large storms and weather
143 events. Councilor Miller said that he was estimating height based on renderings and that the signs
144 will likely be higher off the ground than that. Director Snellenberger added that she will work with
145 Public Works and the sign company to determine the best height for the signs.
146

147 **Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council approve Option**
148 **A for the City Entrance sign design. The motion passed 5-0.**
149

150 d. Discussion and Consideration of the Railroad and Main Streets Kiosk

151 City Manager Mahony noted that this pertains to a current sign at the intersection of Railroad Street and Main
152 Street that is in disrepair. She said that one side of the sign was paid for through Chittenden County Regional
153 Planning Commission (CCRPC) with federal dollars that require a set period of time that the sign cannot be
154 significantly modified. She said that they can update the sign but they need to retain the concept of this being
155 a wayfinding sign as part of the larger Lake Champlain scenic byway. She said that staff have worked with
156 CCRPC to have the panels redesigned and updated. She said the Council needs to decide what should be
157 done with the top of the sign, given that it currently contains non-functioning clocks. She said one option is
158 to replace the clocks with functioning, low-maintenance clocks, a second option still utilizing the clock concept
159 but with different colors for the lettering, a third option with just the City’s new logo, and a fourth option that
160 removes the clock and logo altogether. She said that they will likely need to use the Economic Development
161 Fund to pay for the costs of whatever option the Council chooses. Councilors Haney and Shelden expressed
162 support for option 3.

163
164 **Councilor Sheldon made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council authorize the**
165 **use of the Economic Development Fund in an amount not to exceed \$7,000, for the Kiosk**
166 **Replacement Project. The motion passed 5-0.**
167

168 e. Discussion of Traffic Calming Policy and Update

169 Community Development Director Yuen spoke about this agenda item. He began by noting that the City
170 Council adopted an updated Traffic Calming Policy at its December 17, 2025 meeting, and that this policy
171 changes the process through which residents and stakeholders can request roadway modifications to
172 address speed and safety concerns. He said that staff compiled previous speed concerns and complaints
173 that have been received and conducted a desktop analysis to get a preliminary sense of what the priorities
174 look like and how the scoring system is working. He noted that the Traffic Calming Policy also contains
175 thresholds that need to be exceeded in order for further engagement and design work to continue. He pointed
176 out on the map of Essex Junction where the highest priority areas are and noted areas that didn't meet the
177 thresholds. He noted that Park Street has two locations that are the highest priority based on the scoring
178 metrics. He said that this is an informational item for the Council at this juncture, and that staff will conduct
179 public engagements and hold required public meetings for some of the higher-priority locations, and will take
180 next steps within available resources.

181
182 Councilor Certa noted that there are five high priority areas and asked if the City has resources to conduct
183 projects for all five of them now. Director Yuen replied that the policy spells out a process of how to obtain
184 final priority scores, which will further help prioritize among those five areas. He said that public engagement
185 and design considerations are part of this process, which will inform prioritization. Councilor Sheldon asked
186 if parking on the street (and the narrowing that does to the street) is contributing to the ranking of areas on
187 Grove Street as high priority. Director Yuen said he doesn't have specific details to share but noted that there
188 are a number of land use factors that contribute to whether an area hits the threshold.

189
190 The following public comments were received:

- 191 • John O'Brien noted that this is data from three previous years and none of it was recently submitted.
192 He said that in order to move forward, it would be good to solicit more current feedback from the
193 public.

194
195 Councilor Certa asked if any of this preliminary data could be acted on, and Director Yuen replied that he
196 thinks a good next step is to take some of these areas to a public engagement session and solicit feedback.
197 City Manager Mahony noted that staff would reach out to the residents in these areas and invite them to a
198 public meeting, as well as place signage in the greenway noting that there is a meeting scheduled to discuss
199 traffic calming in those areas. Councilor Sheldon observed that most of the complaints in his area of the City
200 are related to high school traffic, and that measurements taken in the summer would be far different than
201 those taken when school is in session. Director Yuen said that future traffic and speed studies would take
202 seasonality into account.

203
204 f. Discussion and Consideration of Park Street Complete Street Improvements – Public Engagement
205 Results, Parking Data, and Alternative Selection

206 Director Yuen spoke about this agenda item. He noted that a significant amount of work has been completed
207 with the design and outreach about Park Street's proposed changes. He noted that Park Street is a critical
208 gap in the bike network on the north-south bicycle route between Tree Farm Soccer Complex, Five Corners,
209 and Taft Corners in Williston. He said that changes to Park Street and this type of project have been called
210 for in the Town/Village Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan of 2014 and the Connect the Junction Transit-Oriented
211 Development Master Plan of 2025. He noted that Park Street currently has significant safety issues, such as
212 wide lanes that encourage speeding, high observed speeds, drivers crossing the centerline to pass bikes,
213 and parked cars impeding driveway sightlines. He provided a review of where on-street parking spaces are
214 currently located on Park Street by zone (Zones A-D). He summarized the reconfiguration alternatives, which
215 include #0 (do nothing and maintain existing conditions), #1 (buffered bike lanes, and #2 (bike lanes with

parking on one side). He said staff believe that Alternatives #1 and #2 would both improve safety, through narrower lanes, dedicated space for each user, managing conflict between moving traffic and parked cars, and improving driveway visibility. He summarized the expected benefits and tradeoffs of each alternative. He noted that Alternative #1 would result in 23 fewer on-street parking spaces than there are now, and Alternative #2 would result in 15 fewer on-street spaces. He said that in terms of cost, the alternatives would involve pavement marking only, with no utility or curb work involved, and would be coordinated with annual restriping for efficiency. He spoke about public engagement, noting that in March and April the City published content on social media and its website, published a press release, conducted mail and in-person outreach to adjacent business and property owners, and conducted a public survey. He provided further detail on the public survey responses. He noted that most respondents drive on Park Street rather than bike or walk, that speed is the top safety concern, followed by close passes between cars and bicycles, that respondents rarely use on-street parking, that removal of on-street parking would have little or no effect on visits (though 20% of respondents said that it would make them less likely to visit that area), and that 46% of respondents expressed a preference for Alternative #1, but that 73% combined chose an alternative that would add bike lanes. He spoke about qualitative survey feedback, particularly noting concerns raised by the community. These include the fact that bike lanes won't get enough use (due to long winters), the design leaving out people who can't bike, concerns that narrowing lanes would make traffic worse, and concerns that removing parking would hurt businesses and customers. He provided a summary of feedback from business owners, noting that they were mailed or hand-delivered information packets and that a number of business owners responded to the survey. He noted that the majority of business owners expressed a preference for Alternative #0 (no change). He provided further detail of parking counts, including sources and timing. He spoke about the most recent study conducted in 2026, which were spread over different times of the day, different days of the week, and covered statistical peak demand times for businesses. He noted that Zone A has the highest utilization (51%) on average, and that utilization drops in zones further to the south. He said that Zone A's utilization at peak demand times is around 60%, Zone B's is between 20% and 33%, and that Zone C and D did not have utilization at peak times. He then noted that the parking study found that the area has ample off-street parking but that parking isn't shared between businesses, that West Street's on-street spaces have higher turnover, that on-street parking utilization is relatively high in Zone A, and that parking at Park Place Tavern and Green Mountain Clippers sometimes exceeds available off-street spaces. He noted that there is ample off-street parking for most times, though acknowledged that on-street parking is a point of individual preference.

Councilor Miller asked about the feasibility of designating parking spaces in Zone A in front of 27 Park Street as limited time parking spaces, given that those spots have low turnover during business hours. Director Yuen said that that would require an ordinance change, and that if there is a strong desire by the Council to do this, it could be noted as a condition of final approval, but that it has not been contemplated in this project to date. Councilor Shelden asked whether the City has the ability to enforce one-hour parking. City Manager Mahony said that this would fall to the police, that it would take a lot of proactive work, and that the City doesn't meter its spaces. Councilor Miller noted that in that area, many of the food service delivery trucks have to park in the street as they are unable to get into parking spaces, and that this is something to consider when thinking about bike lanes. Councilor Certa noted that in terms of accessibility, handicapped parking is located at designated spots at associated retailers, and not located on the street. He asked whether retailers truly see a drop in foot traffic if on-street parking in proximity to them is removed, given that this is a chronic complaint across municipalities when they are considering removing certain parking spaces. Director Yuen said that he does not know whether the impact would be noticeable, and said that adding different transportation modalities also stands to benefit these businesses. Councilor Miller noted that this past winter, many of these parking spaces were covered in snowbanks, and expressed concern about snowbank impacts on a narrower road with a bike lane. Director Yuen said that the roadway still should be wide enough as proposed to handle some form of snow encroachment.

The following public comments were received:

- David Achee of the Bike Walk Advisory Committee expressed support for Alternative #1, saying that it received a significant amount of support at the Committee’s last meeting. He spoke about how dangerous Park Street currently is to bicyclists.
- John O’Brien spoke about the public engagement data that the City collected, much of which was supportive of this project, saying that it will reduce speeds, not increase traffic, and provide a safe corridor to connect to Williston. He expressed support for Alternative #1.
- Raj Chawla expressed support for Alternative #1. He noted general support for Alternatives #1 and #2. He said that proximate business on-street parking on the City’s main thoroughfare is likely going to become less feasible in the future, given the development that the City is likely to see over the next decade.
- David Liguori of the Bike Walk Advisory Committee expressed support for Alternative #1 as the safest option. He noted that having a buffer will signal to drivers to cede that space to cyclists, and noted that a four-foot buffer is the legal passing distance in Vermont that a car should take when passing a cyclist.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sheldon, that the City Council select Alternative #1 for the Park Street Complete Street Improvement Project, and direct staff to proceed with final design and implementation. The motion passed 5-0.

8. **CONSENT ITEMS**

- a. Approve Meeting Minutes – April 15, 2026
- b. Acting as the Liquor Control Commission – Approve Liquor/Tobacco Licenses
- c. Acting as the Cannabis Control Commission – Approve Tier 1 Cannabis Manufacturer License Renewal – TrichomeVT
- d. Approve the 2026 Resurfacing Projects Bid Award
- e. Approve Funding for 5th Annual Substance Use Addiction Summit with Opioid Settlement Funds
- f. Approve VTrans Electric Vehicle Fast Charging – Site Host Opportunity

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

9. **COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:** None.

10. **READING FILE**

- a. Check Warrant #24116 – April 17, 2026
- b. City of Essex Junction Annual Meeting 2026 Election Results
- c. Chittenden County Regional Plan Second Public Hearing Notice and Information
- d. Bike Walk Advisory Committee Minutes – April 13, 2026
- e. Development Review Board Minutes – April 16, 2026
- f. Police Community Advisory Board Minutes – April 21, 2026
- g. Tree Farm Minutes – April 13, 2026

11. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. None anticipated

12. **ADJOURN**

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:34 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt