

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING  
May 27, 2026**

**COUNCILORS PRESENT:** Amber Thibeault, President; Tim Miller, Vice President; Bethany Clark, Clerk; Raj Chawla, Brian Shelden.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Regina Mahony, City Manager;

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Robert Frederick, Cheryl Hacker, Michael Miller, Reed Nye, Beth Parent, Kirstie Paschall, Sarah Reeves, Mike Sullivan, Amanda Svensson, Dennis Thibeault, Ian Van Kirk, Judy, Resa.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

City Council President Thibeault requested removing Business Item #5d and postponing it until a future City Council meeting.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

**Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Shelden, to amend the agenda to postpone item #5d until a future City Council meeting. The motion passed 5-0.**

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from Public

None.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Interview and Consideration of Appointments to Bike Walk Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and Moderator

City Council President Thibeault began by noting that appointments will likely be made at the Council's June 10, 2026 meeting, as they will be conducting further interviews after tonight's meeting.

The Council interviewed Robert Frederick, Cheryl Hacker, and Ian Van Kirk for open positions on the Bike Walk Advisory Committee. The applicants spoke about their relevant experience, involvement in the community, qualifications, and their interest in participating on the Bike Walk Advisory Committee. Councilors asked them questions related to ideas or recommendations they have for the Committee, their experience with the City's pedestrian and bicycling network and infrastructure, and whether they would be interested in serving on another committee if they are not selected for appointment to the BWAC.

The Council interviewed Kirstie Paschall and Amanda Svensson for an open position on the Planning Commission. The applicants spoke about their relevant experience, involvement in the community (including past experience on the Planning Commission), qualifications, and their interest in participating on the Planning Commission. Councilors asked them questions related to their experience serving on the current Planning Commission (in Ms. Paschall's case), and whether they would be interested in serving on another committee if they are not selected for appointment to the Planning Commission.

b. Fire Department – Department Head Brief to Council

City Manager Mahony began by noting that she and the Finance Director spoke with the Fire Chief last week about the rolling stock and postponing the Request for Quotes (RFQ) for the fire truck that is slated for Fiscal Year 2030 in the capital plan, because the City is currently underfunded for that purchase. She said that they will be adding a specific rolling stock agenda item at a City Council meeting in June for further discussion.

57 Fire Chief Gaboriault began by noting that the Fire Department's call volume for 2026 is significantly down  
58 (by 20%) from this time in 2025, which is reflected in the salary line of the Fire Department's budget. He said  
59 that the budget line item that is currently running high is the truck maintenance line. He said that they allocate  
60 \$25,000 per year for vehicle maintenance, and that has already been exceeded for the fiscal year. He said  
61 that they anticipate being able to cover that excess with funding from the salary line, as noted above. He said  
62 that apparatus lead times are around three years, which is why they had hoped to pursue a new fire truck  
63 now to come online in FY30, but that they will discuss this further in June. He said that the department has  
64 quotes for the new command vehicle, but that they are in a holding pattern given the uncertainty around  
65 funding. He noted that staffing remains strong, with two staff leaving in June but two applicants lined up to  
66 replace them. He noted that three positions are currently fulfilling military obligations and that one has been  
67 deployed, but that all three individuals should return by the end of the summer. He spoke about activity  
68 around the training site at the Champlain Valley Expo. He emphasized that the Fire Department's highest  
69 priority is its rolling stock, which is projected to be underfunded for the next ten years.

70  
71 Councilor Chawla asked if there are further details around the drivers of the 20% reduction in call volume.  
72 Chief Gaboriault noted that even though call volume is down, the department does respond to a number of  
73 repetitive alarms. The Chief said he will discuss the rolling stock issue further with the Council at its June 10,  
74 2026 meeting.

75  
76 c. Discussion and Consideration of the Engagement Plan

77 Communications & Strategic Initiatives Director Snellenberger spoke about this agenda item. She began by  
78 noting that staff have been working over the last year to develop this engagement plan, through researching  
79 other municipalities' engagement strategies, to determine what would work best for Essex Junction. She  
80 spoke about the three main components of the plan, which include the framework that defines the  
81 engagement vision (including how the City will engage with the community, and role definition for individuals  
82 involved in the engagement process), community engagement goals and actions (including how the City will  
83 improve engagement over the next five years), and an engagement toolkit for staff to have tools and  
84 procedures and resources for how staff will develop engagement with their respective projects. She said that  
85 this initial draft has been reviewed by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)  
86 Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, as well as the Economic Mobility Manager, and that they are also  
87 soliciting feedback from staff on the toolkit component specifically. She said that this is an opportunity for the  
88 City Council to review and discuss the initial draft and propose feedback or comments for consideration.

89  
90 Councilor Chawla commended staff for their work on this initial draft. He said that the initial draft seems like  
91 more topical or project-based engagement and a roadmap for that. He asked how this could be leveraged to  
92 build relationships with the community holistically. Director Snellenberger replied that this engagement plan  
93 is envisioned to achieve both topical engagement and more holistic engagement and trust-building with the  
94 community. She said that the City's day-to-day work needs to have direction and a process for engagement  
95 that is consistent, which will also help build trust. She said that the plan also contemplates whether to have  
96 a Community Engagement Committee and proposes building a community network map so that the City can  
97 leverage it in an ongoing way. Councilor Clark asked about the timeline for implementing the engagement  
98 plan and its priorities. Director Snellenberger replied that the timeline will be informed by the Council's  
99 feedback and level of comfort with the contents of the proposed plan, and that components of the  
100 engagement plan will be built into departments' individual work plans. Councilor Shelden asked about the  
101 social network engagement strategies articulated in the plan and Director Snellenberger noted that the  
102 avenues for social network engagement are those that are currently in place but that they could add additional  
103 outlets and tools as needed and as the City's engagement plan evolves over time. Councilor Shelden  
104 suggested that the City could do a better job of communicating that is emergency-based, such as when  
105 Public Works has acute infrastructure issues and needs to conduct repairs, for example. He asked whether  
106 the plan could consider ways to have more emergency action communications. Director Snellenberger noted  
107 that this plan focuses more on broader engagement than specific communication strategies. City Council  
108 President Thibeault said that for the next discussion on this topic, it could be useful to have more specific  
109 examples of strategies to react to. City Manager Mahony provided examples of projects that had

communications plans associated with them, which include the Connect the Junction project and the City's Comprehensive Plan updates. Councilor Chawla said he would like more details on the feedback from the CCRPC during the next discussion on this topic. He also asked whether some of these activities have been built into departments' budgets. He said this is a very worthwhile topic to have on the Council's agendas over the coming months. Councilor Clark suggested that it would be helpful if staff have guiding questions that can help inform future Council discussions on the plan.

d. Discussion and Consideration of Essex Junction – Vermont's 10<sup>th</sup> City – Historical Marker Application  
\*\*AGENDA ITEM POSTPONED\*\*

No discussion.

e. Discussion and Consideration of FY27 Chittenden Solid Waste District Budget

Sarah Reeves, Executive Director of Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD), spoke on this agenda item. She provided an overview of the FY27 budget for the City Council's review and consideration. She began by noting that there was a project fraud incident related to the new Materials Recycling Facility (MRF), in which CSWD fell victim to a significant phishing scam and lost \$3 million in payments that were intended for its construction partner. She said that there is currently an open investigation related to this, that CSWD is cooperating fully with law enforcement, and that the CSWD Board is conducting an internal review of the incident with an independent third party. She said that CSWD will share further updates with its municipal members as they are available, and that CSWD is reconfiguring its budget to bear the burden of closing the project funding gap (without placing that burden on municipal members). She said that all FY27 revenue in excess of budgeted needs will be directed to the MRF project fund, that they are deferring other capital needs, and that CSWD anticipates needing to seek a short-term bank loan to fill the gap. She spoke about CSWD's projected FY27 revenues of \$19.2 million and projected FY27 expenses of \$16.1 million. She compared the FY27 and FY26 budgets, noting changes in both revenues and expenses. She noted increases for tip fees, material sales increases, SWMF increases, and product stewardship reimbursement increases. She noted anticipated level-funding of expenses from FY26 to FY27, with decreases in administrative costs, promotion and education, professional fees, equipment and fleet, and travel and training. She spoke in further detail about fee increases, including for facility use fees, leaf and yard fees, material recycling facility fees, organics recycling facility fees, and solid waste management fees.

Councilor Chawla asked if CSWD is now carrying fraud insurance, and Ms. Reeves replied that CSWD had insurance but it was not adequate to cover the incident. She said that the Board is recommending its members take a look at this, given that they are insured by VLCT but with minimal coverage, and VLCT has recommended adding a supplemental insurance policy. She said that in the next year's budget there is funding for a supplemental insurance policy. Councilor Chawla asked whether CSWD has contemplated distributing compost to municipalities, given that it has a composting program and residents are required to compost. Ms. Reeves replied that they are hoping to implement a compost redistribution program in one of the next few years. Councilor Clark asked if there are other safeguards that have been put in place since the fraud incident, and Ms. Reeves replied that they are intending to develop a one-page report of the incident and associated findings and actions to implement. She said that they have had their internet service provider conduct a scan and that there was no breach in security, which is fortunate. She said she anticipates the Board's report to be ready for distribution within the next month.

**Councilor Clark made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to approve the Chittenden Solid Waste District Fiscal Year 2027 budget as presented by District staff. The motion passed 4-1 (Councilor Chawla dissenting).**

f. Discussion and Consideration of Voting Delegate for the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) Special Meeting

City Manager Mahony noted that VLCT is holding a special meeting on June 22, 206 and that the City needs to assign a voting delegate for participation.

162  
163 **Councilor Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to designate Bethany Clark as the**  
164 **City's Voting Delegate for the VLCT special meeting. The motion passed 5-0.**  
165

166 g. \*Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to Discuss Attorney Client Communication and  
167 Litigation  
168 See item #9a below.  
169

170 6. **CONSENT ITEMS**

- 171 a. Approve Meeting Minutes: May 6, 2026; May 13, 2026  
172 b. Acting as the Liquor Control Commission – Approve Liquor/Tobacco Licenses  
173 c. Approve Amendment to the Delinquent Tax Policy to Incorporate Annual Meeting Vote on Not Honoring  
174 Postmarks  
175

176 **Councilor Shelden made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to approve the consent agenda.**  
177 **The motion passed 5-0.**  
178

179 7. **COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:** City Manager Mahony noted a number of  
180 community events occurring this weekend, including Pride Fest at Maple Street Park, the 1920s-themed  
181 event associated with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Brownell Library, Girls on the Run at CVE, and a track  
182 and field invitational at the high school. She said that reappraisal letters are also being sent out in the  
183 mail and urged residents to review those closely. She said that any questions should be directed to the  
184 Town Assessing Office by June 11<sup>th</sup> to schedule reappraisal appointments. City Council President  
185 Thibeault also noted that reappraisal letters are also available online. Councilor Chawla noted that his  
186 neighborhood is disappointed with the change in the parade route this year, given that the previous route  
187 included more accessibility accommodations. Councilor Clark said that she also heard similar feedback,  
188 and she also noted that there was no advertisement about the addition of food trucks or other vendors at  
189 the event this year, which seems like a missed opportunity to solicit participation from more vendors.  
190 Councilor Miller said that the route change was a pilot, and also noted that it was still a good event despite  
191 the route change. City Council President Thibeault said she received positive feedback from businesses  
192 that had been affected by road closures in past years.  
193

194 8. **READING FILE**

- 195 a. Check Warrant #24118 – May 15, 2026  
196 b. All Hazard Mitigation Plan CY2025 Progress Report  
197 c. Update on Transition of Community Justice to City of Burlington  
198 d. Planning Commission Minutes – May 7, 2026  
199 e. Tree Farm Management Group Minutes – May 11, 2026  
200 f. Brownell Library Trustee Minutes – May 19, 2026  
201 g. Police Community Advisory Board Minutes – May 19, 2026  
202

203 9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

204 a. \*An Executive Session may be needed to discuss Attorney Client Communication and Litigation  
205 **Councilor Clark made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the Council make the specific**  
206 **finding that premature disclosure of the confidential attorney-client communications regarding a**  
207 **probable litigation would place the City at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 5-0.**  
208

209 **Councilor Clark made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, that the City Council enter into**  
210 **executive session to discuss confidential attorney-client communications regarding probable**  
211 **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**  
212 **City Manager. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:03 P.M.**  
213

214  
215  
216  
217  
218  
219  
220  
221  
222  
223  
224

Councilor Clark made a motion, seconded by Councilor Chawla, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:24 P.M.

10. ADJOURN

Councilor Shelden made a motion, seconded by Councilor Clark, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:24 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Coonradt