SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE
(DRAFT) October 30, 2019

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE - SPECIAL MEETING
October 30, 2019

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS: George Tyler, Chair; Andy Watts; Raj Chawla; Max Levy.
ADMINISTRATION: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Ann Janda.

OTHERS PRESENT: Bridget Meyer; Ken Signorello; Margaret Smith, Irene Wrenner.

1. CALL TO ORDER
George Tyler called the meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and Town of Essex Selectboard Subcommittee on Governance (hereafter referred to as “Subcommittee on Governance”) to order at 6:30pm.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES
George Tyler proposed an addition to the agenda of a set of questions for transforming KSV survey results into a merger proposal. He suggested including it as an attachment to current items 5a and 5b.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL
MAX LEVY made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, that the Subcommittee on Governance approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed 4-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
Mr. Signorello stated his concern that the surveys conducted by KSV may be interpreted as a representative sample of residents in the Town and Village of Essex, when they represent neither a random sampling of residents nor statistically valid results. He urged the Subcommittee not to draw conclusions about a merger based solely on the survey results, and suggested that when results are discussed they should be qualified by noting that the results are based on this set of respondents, not the entirety of residents nor the populations of the Town or Village. Mr. Tyler acknowledged that the surveys were not part of a controlled scientific study but rather a polling of residents to gather information and feedback.

Ms. Wrenner asked that public officials consider integrating new ideas from the public, more specifically around ensuring equal representation on the Selectboard regardless of a merger. She noted a grassroots proposal called Separate and Share, which would manage costs without shifting expenses from Town to Village or vice versa. She added that this would particularly help with departments or municipal functions that have in the past resisted consolidation. She urged the boards to consider new proposals such as this in addition to other merger proposals. Mr. Tyler clarified that unconsolidated departments had not resisted consolidation, and that the Selectboard and Trustees have the authority to consolidate departments at their discretion, though the public can give input.
5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discuss survey results and follow-up from Oct. 29 Selectboard & Trustee Joint Meeting

Mr. Tyler proposed discussing agenda items 5a and 5b together, as well as briefly reviewing the draft list of questions for transforming the KSV survey results into a merger proposal. He asked the subcommittee to think about how it could incorporate the information from the surveys and focus groups into a proposal, which components and results should be included or excluded, and how a merger proposal should be drafted. He suggested that each member review the draft list of questions after this meeting and be prepared to discuss at the next Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Levy and Mr. Watts stated that the surveys will be important to help develop an outline for the first draft of a merger proposal, but that the surveys serve more as a guide to frame the proposal rather than information to define the proposal itself.

The Subcommittee discussed the process and timeline for drafting a merger proposal. Mr. Levy suggested drafting the merger proposal in sections and having each one vetted by the Selectboard and Board of Trustees as it is drafted. Mr. Tyler noted that the most complex issue is around representation and suggested focusing on that topic first. Mr. Chawla added that the representation section of the proposal would then help inform the drafting of other sections, such as taxation and timelines.

Mr. Chawla suggested that the group also think about presenting information to the public to explain the merger and consolidation process for each specific service, adding that residents might be hesitant to vote on an initiative if they don’t understand the full picture.

Mr. Teich suggested that the Subcommittee and Boards should still seek out opportunities to solicit feedback from the public around the merger conversation, such as through mini-surveys.

Next steps:

1. Members will review and answer draft questions proposed by Mr. Tyler and the Subcommittee will review responses at the next meeting;
2. Members will focus on ideas around representation, which will be discussed at the next meeting;
3. Subcommittee will brainstorm around developing a communication plan for the public;
4. Mr. Tyler will work with Dan Richardson to develop a comprehensive outline of the elements needed in a merger plan, in order to develop a timeline for drafting a proposal;

b. Discuss next steps and consider approving process

This item was combined with item 5a above.

c. Review draft FAQs and consider approving for use on GreaterEssex2020 website

Ms. Janda noted that this iteration of the FAQs has been consolidated for readability and that new additions were pulled from the Essex Reporter column pertaining to the merger.

d. Review summary packet binders

Mr. Tyler thanked staff for compiling information pertaining to the current governance initiative into one reference document. Members of the public requested copies of the binders, and staff
noted that all materials are public documents and can be found on the Town and Village websites.

e. Consider future meeting schedule
The Subcommittee on Governance will meet next on November 14, 2019 at 6:30pm.

f. Approval of minutes

September 12, 2019:
RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and MAX LEVY seconded, to approve the Subcommittee on Governance meeting minutes from September 12, 2019 with the following corrections:
- Line 29: Insert “with sharing” after “separation” and before “be considered”
- Line 37: Insert “did not include” after “topic” and before “all 80 members”

Motion passed 4-0.

6. ADJOURN:
RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and MAX LEVY seconded, to adjourn the meeting.
Motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:33pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt
Recording Secretary

Approved this day of , 2019
(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)