

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.

47 **5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

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

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

55  
56 Mr. Levy and Mr. Watts stated that the surveys will be important to help develop an outline for  
57 the first draft of a merger proposal, but that the surveys serve more as a guide to frame the  
58 proposal rather than information to define the proposal itself.

59  
60 The Subcommittee discussed the process and timeline for drafting a merger proposal. Mr. Levy  
61 suggested drafting the merger proposal in sections and having each one vetted by the Selectboard  
62 and Board of Trustees as it is drafted. Mr. Tyler noted that the most complex issue is around  
63 representation and suggested focusing on that topic first. Mr. Chawla added that the  
64 representation section of the proposal would then help inform the drafting of other sections, such  
65 as taxation and timelines.

66  
67 Mr. Chawla suggested that the group also think about presenting information to the public to  
68 explain the merger and consolidation process for each specific service, adding that residents  
69 might be hesitant to vote on an initiative if they don't understand the full picture.

70  
71 Mr. Teich suggested that the Subcommittee and Boards should still seek out opportunities to  
72 solicit feedback from the public around the merger conversation, such as through mini-surveys.

73  
74 Next steps:

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

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83 **b. Discuss next steps and consider approving process**

84 This item was combined with item 5a above.

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

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

89  
90 **d. Review summary packet binders**

91 Mr. Tyler thanked staff for compiling information pertaining to the current governance initiative  
92 into one reference document. Members of the public requested copies of the binders, and staff

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93 noted that all materials are public documents and can be found on the Town and Village  
94 websites.

95

96 **e. Consider future meeting schedule**

97 The Subcommittee on Governance will meet next on November 14, 2019 at 6:30pm.

98

99 **f. Approval of minutes**

100 *September 12, 2019:*

101 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and MAX LEVY seconded, to approve the Subcommittee**  
102 **on Governance meeting minutes from September 12, 2019 with the following corrections:**

- 103 • **Line 29: Insert “with sharing” after “separation” and before “be considered”**
- 104 • **Line 37: Insert “did not include” after “topic” and before “all 80 members”**

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106 **Motion passed 4-0.**

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108 **6. ADJOURN:**

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110 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and MAX LEVY seconded, to adjourn the meeting.**

111 **Motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:33pm.**

112

113 Respectfully Submitted,

114 Amy Coonradt

115 Recording Secretary

116

117

118 Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2019

119

120 **(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)**