

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE  
FINAL**

**July 26, 2019**

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES  
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE - SPECIAL MEETING  
July 26, 2019**

**SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS:** George Tyler, Chair; Max Levy, Vice Chair; Raj Chawla; Andrew Watts

**ADMINISTRATION:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Ann Janda, Project Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Betsy Dunn; Jerry Fox; Bruce Post; Ken Signorello; Margaret Smith; Dave Treston, KSV

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. 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 8:07 a.m.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

Mr. Tyler asked to add comments to item 5a, Review focus group discussion guide.

**3. AGENDA APPROVAL**

**MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to add comments to item 5a. Motion passed 4-0.**

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

Ken Signorello asked for the subcommittee members and staff to give their names.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Review focus group discussion guide**

Mr. Treston of the market research firm KSV provided an overview of the draft focus group discussion guide. The guide contains questions and talking points to direct conversation during the upcoming focus groups about governance change. Mr. Treston said the focus groups will look at proposed options for merger of the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction governments, as well as keeping the status quo. Mr. Treston said he would moderate the group conversations. He said the groups would have printouts to help review the governance options.

Mr. Treston reviewed the discussion guide and explained the expected process of welcoming participants, setting ground rules, and discussing topics around governance.

The subcommittee decided not to use an informational video about Essex and Essex Junction, since it was produced three years ago and contains outdated information. The subcommittee did want to have a one-page summary about the existing governance structure. The subcommittee also wanted informational sheets about the options for different governance structures, with the info sheets to be approachable and contain a high-level presentation of information. The sheets

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47 should also contain information about taxes. Staff agreed to put together info sheets with bullet  
48 points and graphics by the week of August 5.

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50 Mr. Chawla asked that the info sheets make clear that the discussion about governance change  
51 only affects municipal taxes, and that school taxes make up the majority of tax bills. The  
52 subcommittee agreed, and also wanted the focus groups to discuss a palatable timeline to reach  
53 equal tax rates for the entire Essex community.

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55 Mr. Watts and Mr. Duggan suggested that the discussion guide ask focus groups about their  
56 expectations for service levels to increase or decrease along with any changes in taxation.

57  
58 Ms. Janda noted the semantics of saying taxes will increase or decrease, since it is unlikely that  
59 taxes will decrease. Rather, they may increase at a faster or slower rate because of governance  
60 changes.

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62 Mr. Treston asked if the Subcommittee on Governance wanted to dispel any notions during the  
63 focus groups. Mr. Tyler said neither of the fire departments nor the libraries would close.

64  
65 Mr. Tyler asked that the focus groups probe into the issues of economic development and  
66 attracting businesses and residents to Essex.

67  
68 Mr. Treston explained that one of the goals of the focus groups is to get people to talk about  
69 themselves, the impacts of governance change on them, as opposed to their neighbors or friends.  
70 He said the focus groups would touch on themes of identify, culture, timing of changes, and the  
71 importance of naming the community. He also said the focus groups can be asked how people  
72 want to be informed about the issue of governance change.

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74 **b. Schedule future meetings of Governance Subcommittee**

75 The Subcommittee on Governance agreed to hold upcoming meetings at 8 a.m. on Friday, Aug.  
76 2 at 2 Lincoln St., and at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 22 at a location to be determined.

77  
78 **c. Approve minutes: July 18, 2019**

79 **MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by ANDREW WATTS, to approve the**  
80 **Subcommittee on Governance meeting minutes from July 18, 2019. Motion passed 4-0.**

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82 Mr. Post asked who would select the participants for focus groups. Mr. Tyler said KSV would  
83 make the selections.

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85 **6. ADJOURN:**

86 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and MAX LEVY seconded, to adjourn the meeting.**  
87 **Motion passed 4-0 at 9:31 a.m.**

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89  
90 Respectfully submitted,  
91 Greg Duggan  
92 Deputy Manager

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96 Approved this 8TH day of AUGUST, 2019

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