

1                                   **VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES**  
2                                   **TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD**  
3                                   **SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE - SPECIAL MEETING**  
4                                   **May 13, 2019**

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6 **SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Raj Chawla, Andy Watts, Max Levy, George Tyler.

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8 **ADMINISTRATION:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager.

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10 **OTHERS PRESENT:** Irene Wrenner

11  
12 **1. CALL TO ORDER**

13 Mr. Tyler called the meeting of the Village of Essex Junction Trustees and Town of Essex  
14 Selectboard Subcommittee on Governance (hereafter referred to as “Subcommittee on  
15 Governance”) to order at 7:01 p.m.

16  
17 **2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

18 Mr. Duggan noted that staff received additional feedback on non-responses to the recent Request  
19 For Proposals (RFP) for a public engagement effort regarding potential governance changes, and  
20 would like to include it in Business Item #5.

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22 **MAX LEVY made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, to include additional feedback**  
23 **in Business Item #5. The motion passed 4-0.**

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25 **3. AGENDA APPROVAL**

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27 **GEORGE TYLER made motion, and ANDY WATTS seconded, that the Subcommittee on**  
28 **Governance approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 4-0.**

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30 **4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

31 Ms. Wrenner stated that it is critically important that both the Town outside the Village and the  
32 Village be represented on this Subcommittee.

33  
34 **5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

35 **a. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair**

36 Mr. Teich called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Chair.

37 **MAX LEVY nominated George Tyler for Subcommittee on Governance Chair, and**  
38 **GEORGE TYLER seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.**

39  
40 Mr. Tyler called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Vice Chair.

41 **GEORGE TYLER nominated Max Levy for Subcommittee on Governance Vice Chair,**  
42 **and ANDY WATTS seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.**

43  
44 **b. Selection of the recording secretary**

45 Mr. Tyler called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Recording Secretary.

46 **GEORGE TYLER nominated Raj Chawla for Subcommittee on Governance Recording**  
47 **Secretary, and MAX LEVY seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.**  
48

49 **c. Schedule of future meeting dates**

50 The Subcommittee members discussed scheduling future meetings, and decided to hold meetings  
51 on the following days, at 7 p.m.:

- 52 ▪ May 23, 2019
- 53 ▪ June 6, 2019
- 54 ▪ June 20, 2019
- 55 ▪ July 18, 2019

56  
57 Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed.

58  
59 **d. Identifying next steps for the Governance change initiative**  
60

61 Mr. Tyler began the discussion on next steps for the governance change initiative by noting that  
62 formal bids on the RFP were not received, but that feedback was received on why no bids were  
63 submitted. He also outlined the issues and potential roadblocks that would cause the public to  
64 vote against a consolidated governance structure for the Town of Essex and Village of Essex  
65 Junction. These issues include tax equity between the Town and Village, representation on  
66 boards for the Town and Village, and issues of identity. He also outlined the timeline for  
67 developing a consolidation plan/proposal, which would entail developing a proposal to refine the  
68 charter between now and the end of the calendar year so that changes could be publicized and  
69 circulated by spring/summer 2020 for a fall 2020 ballot vote.

70  
71 Mr. Levy suggested that the previously released RFP could be broken up into smaller, more  
72 specific tasks, such as survey development and educating and marketing the proposed changes to  
73 the public, with staff completing some of these tasks and outside consultants hired to complete  
74 others.

75  
76 Members of the subcommittee agreed that survey data from the public would be vital to the  
77 governance change initiative, that any surveys fielded could also be used as educational tools,  
78 and that they should attempt to reach as many members of the public as possible.

79  
80 Subcommittee members agreed that staff should be directed to identify potential candidates for  
81 survey development by June, and that members of the subcommittee should think of survey  
82 questions in the interim.

83  
84 Mr. Chawla suggested that, in addition to surveys, holding focus groups would be another  
85 valuable source of information on public sentiment. Focus groups could be better representations  
86 of diverse demographics and communities within the Town and Village, and could also provide  
87 more immediate and actionable data to inform governance change proposals. Mr. Teich  
88 suggested that focus groups could help guide survey development as well, and that the results of  
89 focus group discussions could be used to conduct larger, more targeted surveys. These could, in  
90 turn help guide the Town and Village boards in their decision-making regarding consolidation  
91 initiatives. Mr. Chawla emphasized that any focus groups be well-publicized and that they be

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92 accessible to all members of the community by holding them at various times (morning,  
93 afternoon, evening) and locations that are on public transit routes. Mr. Duggan noted that the  
94 Heart & Soul initiative conducted a network analysis to target segments of the communities for  
95 participation in focus groups and events, and that something similar could be done to solicit  
96 feedback for this initiative.

97

98 Mr. Levy suggested that survey development could occur in tandem with holding focus groups,  
99 in order to use time most efficiently.

100

101 Next steps:

- 102     ▪ Staff will research firms that could recruit for and conduct focus groups for the initiative;
- 103     ▪ Staff will simultaneously research firms or organizations that could conduct surveys  
104         regarding the initiative;
- 105     ▪ Subcommittee members will develop a list of priority questions for the focus groups prior  
106         to the subcommittee's May 23 meeting;
- 107     ▪ Subcommittee members will develop a list of demographic areas and communities to  
108         target with the focus groups and survey for discussion at the subcommittee's May 23  
109         meeting.

110

111 Mr. Watts had a number of legal questions regarding whether tax districts can have their own  
112 libraries, whether different water districts need separate governance, and voting procedures  
113 around charter changes, noting that the state legislature is currently working to clarify language  
114 in statute regarding process for charter changes in Bennington. Mr. Teich offered to pass Mr.  
115 Watts' questions to Dan Richardson, the Town and Village's special counsel on governance.

116

117

### 118 **e. Discuss financial plan for Governance change initiative**

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120 The Subcommittee briefly discussed the financial plan for the governance change initiative. Mr.  
121 Tyler noted that the financial plan is currently in the process of being drafted, and that he will  
122 direct staff to specifically look at the different water and sewer rates for the Town and Village,  
123 based on interest from members at tonight's meeting regarding the differences between the two.

124

125

### 126 **f. Approval of minutes: March 11, 2019**

127 **MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, to approve the**  
128 **Subcommittee on Governance meeting minutes from March 11, 2019. The motion passed 4-**  
129 **0.**

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131

### 132 **6. ADJOURN:**

133 **MAX LEVY made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, to adjourn the meeting. The**  
134 **motion passed 4-0 at 9:05 p.m.**

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136

137 Respectfully Submitted,

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138 Amy Coonradt  
**139** Recording Secretary