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 7:01 p.m.

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

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

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

4. Public to Be Heard
Ms. Wrenner stated that it is critically important that both the Town outside the Village and the Village be represented on this Subcommittee.

5. Business Items
a. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair
Mr. Teich called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Chair.
MAX LEVY nominated George Tyler for Subcommittee on Governance Chair, and GEORGE TYLER seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.

Mr. Tyler called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Vice Chair.
GEORGE TYLER nominated Max Levy for Subcommittee on Governance Vice Chair, and ANDY WATTS seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.

b. Selection of the recording secretary
Mr. Tyler called for nominations for the Subcommittee on Governance Recording Secretary.
GEORGE TYLER nominated Raj Chawla for Subcommittee on Governance Recording Secretary, and MAX LEVY seconded the nomination. The nomination passed 4-0.

c. Schedule of future meeting dates

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

- May 23, 2019
- June 6, 2019
- June 20, 2019
- July 18, 2019

Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed.

d. Identifying next steps for the Governance change initiative

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

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

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

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

Mr. Chawla suggested that, in addition to surveys, holding focus groups would be another valuable source of information on public sentiment. Focus groups could be better representations of diverse demographics and communities within the Town and Village, and could also provide more immediate and actionable data to inform governance change proposals. Mr. Teich suggested that focus groups could help guide survey development as well, and that the results of focus group discussions could be used to conduct larger, more targeted surveys. These could, in turn help guide the Town and Village boards in their decision-making regarding consolidation initiatives. Mr. Chawla emphasized that any focus groups be well-publicized and that they be
accessible to all members of the community by holding them at various times (morning, afternoon, evening) and locations that are on public transit routes. Mr. Duggan noted that the Heart & Soul initiative conducted a network analysis to target segments of the communities for participation in focus groups and events, and that something similar could be done to solicit feedback for this initiative.

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

Next steps:
- Staff will research firms that could recruit for and conduct focus groups for the initiative;
- Staff will simultaneously research firms or organizations that could conduct surveys regarding the initiative;
- Subcommittee members will develop a list of priority questions for the focus groups prior to the subcommittee’s May 23 meeting;
- Subcommittee members will develop a list of demographic areas and communities to target with the focus groups and survey for discussion at the subcommittee’s May 23 meeting.

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

e. Discuss financial plan for Governance change initiative

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

f. Approval of minutes: March 11, 2019

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

6. ADJOURN:

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

Respectfully Submitted,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE
FINAL

May 13, 2019

138  Amy Coonradt
139  Recording Secretary