



VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES  
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD  
Subcommittee on Governance  
Special Meeting Agenda

2 Lincoln Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Thursday, June 20, 2019  
7:00 PM

E-mail: [manager@essex.org](mailto:manager@essex.org)

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*The Governance Subcommittee consists of two members of the Essex Junction Board of Trustees and two members of the Essex Selectboard. The members will not discuss or take action on any issue outside of the scope of the subcommittee and shall not act as the Town Selectboard or Village Board of Trustees at the meeting.*

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [7:00 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - a. Review draft survey with KSV
  - b. Schedule upcoming meetings based on KSV timeline
  - c. Update on merger website—Greg
  - d. Approve minutes: June 6, 2019; June 13, 2019
6. **READING FILE**
7. **ADJOURN**

*Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair or President, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the Chair or President. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings, like all programs and activities of the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Unified Manager's office at 878-1341.*

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_ 06/18/2019 \_\_\_\_\_ *Amitchell*

**Memorandum**

**To:** Governance Subcommittee; Evan Teich, Unified Manager

**From:** Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager GSD

**Re:** Review of draft resident survey on governance change

**Date:** June 18, 2019

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**Issue**

The issue is for the Governance Subcommittee to provide feedback on the draft of the first resident survey about governance change.

**Discussion**

KSV, the market research firm hired to conduct surveys and focus groups on governance change, has provided a draft of a resident survey (attached). The Governance Subcommittee should review the survey and provide feedback to KSV.

**Cost**

n/a

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Governance Subcommittee provide comments on the draft resident survey about governance change.



**Town of Essex Merger  
Resident Survey 1 Draft  
June 19, 2019**

Proposed Link: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/EssexSurveyJune2019](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EssexSurveyJune2019)

Survey Intro

The Town of Essex wants to hear from residents about issues that impact the future of our community, primarily the topic of merging the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction.

We appreciate your honest and candid thoughts on this subject. Your opinions will help us inform a potential merger plan that aims to improve everyone's quality of life in our community.

The following survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

**Commented [DT1]:** Once we program this on the survey platform, we will have a better estimate of the time to complete and will update this accordingly.

S1. Are you a resident of the Town of Essex (either the Village of Essex Junction or the Town Outside the Village)?

- Yes, I live in the Village of Essex Junction (also known as Essex Junction, Essex Village, or The Town Inside the Village)
- Yes, I live in Essex Town (also known as the Town Outside the Village or The Town)
- No, I live someplace else besides the Town of Essex [terminate]

S2. What will be your age on **November 3, 2020**? [single selection]

- Under 18 [terminate]
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+

S3. Do you currently serve as any of the following:

- Town of Essex Selectboard Member
- Village of Essex Junction Trustee



- Town or Village Planning Commission Member
- Town or Village Committee Member
- Yes [terminate]
- No

Q1. In your opinion, what is the most important issue the Town of Essex faces? [open-ended]

Q2. How familiar would you say you are with the structure of the local governments of the Town of Essex and The Village of Essex Junction? [single selection]

- Extremely familiar
- Very familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Slightly familiar
- Not at all familiar

Q3. Are you aware that residents of the Village of Essex Junction and residents of The Town Outside of the Village have separate governments and pay different taxes based on where you live? [single selection]

- Yes
- No

#### Description Text/History of the Two Municipalities

The Essex community has two municipal corporations - The Town of Essex (which includes Essex Junction) and the Village of Essex Junction (separate from the Town of Essex). Each has its own government and elected board with taxing authority.

For many years, the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction have worked toward merging the two under a single charter with a consolidation of governing boards and services provided to the community.

Some municipal services have already been consolidated within the last few years, such as the Essex Westford School District and the Essex Area Senior Center. These services are paid for and provided to all members of the Essex community, regardless of whether you live in the Village or the Town Outside the Village.

**Commented [DT2]:** For Town of Essex:  
Are there better examples we should reference here?



Many other services are funded separately, such as the recreation departments and libraries. Services paid by Essex Junction residents through local property taxes may be available only to Essex Junction residents or at discounted rates for Essex Junction residents (for example, Maple Street Pool passes). Services paid through Town of Essex property taxes, which also includes residents of Essex Junction, are available to all residents in the Essex community.

**Commented [DT3]:** For Town of Essex:

Are there better examples we should reference here?

We would like to hear your opinions on merging the government, consolidating services, and how you believe it would impact you as a resident in our community.

Q4. How familiar are you with the past efforts to merge the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction under one charter? [\[single selection\]](#)

- Extremely familiar
- Very familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not at all familiar

Q5. Knowing what you know today and thinking about the future, how much are you in favor of the merger of the Town and Village? [\[single selection\]](#)

- Very much in favor
- Somewhat in favor
- Neither in favor nor not in favor
- Somewhat not in favor
- Very much not in favor

Q6. What do you believe would be the **benefits** of merging the Town and Village governments and consolidating services? [\[open-ended\]](#)

Q7. What do you believe you would be **challenges or negative impacts** if the Town and Village merged and consolidated services? Additionally, how could these challenges be overcome? [\[open-ended\]](#)

Q8. Which **specific services or municipal functions** do you believe would be **best kept separate**? Why do you say this? [\[open-ended\]](#)



Q9. Which **specific services or municipal functions** do you believe would **improve if combined**? Why? **[open-ended]**

Q10. How important is it to you that The Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex retain aspects of separate identities even with a merger of governments and consolidation of services?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important

Q11. Why did you select the answer you did in the previous question? **[open-ended]**

Q12. In your mind, what does the ideal merger between the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction look like? **[open-ended]**

Q13. Where did you get the link for this survey or obtain a paper copy? **[single selection]**

- Town of Essex or Village of Essex Junction affiliated website
- Social media account (ex. Facebook, Twitter) run by Town of Essex or Village of Essex Junction
- Email from Town of Essex or Village of Essex Junction government or affiliated organization
- Essex Reporter
- Front Porch Forum ad
- Essex Area Senior Center
- Brownell Library
- Essex Free Library
- Link was shared by a neighbor or colleague
- Other (please specify)

Q14. Where do you normally get information pertaining to local news and events in the Town of Essex? Select all that apply. **[multiple selection]**

- Town of Essex or Village of Essex Junction affiliated website
- Town or Village social media accounts



- The Essex Reporter
- Front Porch Forum
- Seven Days
- Burlington Free Press
- Neighborhood email list
- Flyers at the library, recreation centers, or senior centers
- Channel 17 / Town Meeting TV
- Other (please specify)

Please tell us a little more about yourself.

Q15. Do you own or rent your primary residence?

- Own
- Rent
- Other (please specify)

Q16. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q17. Do you have children under the age of 18 living in your household?

- Yes
- No

Q18. What was the combined income for all members of your household last year?

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000-\$199,999
- \$200,000+
- Prefer not to say

Q19. Are you registered to vote in the Town of Essex?

- Yes, District 8-1
- Yes, District 8-2

**Commented [DT4]:** For Town of Essex:

We have the option of including images in the survey. Would you be interested in having us upload a version of this PDF to help people figure out which district they're in?

[https://www.essex.org/vertical/sites/%7B60B9D552-E088-4553-92E3-EA2E9791E5A5%7D/uploads/VotingDistricts2018\\_18x24\\_revised.pdf](https://www.essex.org/vertical/sites/%7B60B9D552-E088-4553-92E3-EA2E9791E5A5%7D/uploads/VotingDistricts2018_18x24_revised.pdf)



- Yes, District 8-3
- Yes, but I'm not sure of my district
- No

Q20. We are planning to host a series of listening sessions and conduct a future survey related to the town merger.

Please provide your name and email address if you would like to be informed about future surveys (OPTIONAL):

[open-ended]

**Commented [DT5]:** For Town of Essex:  
The idea is to be able to build out an email list to ensure that those completing this survey are invited to complete the focus group screener and the survey following the groups.  
What can you tell us about the ramifications of collecting email addresses here to build that list? Does it become "public record," potentially exposing resident email addresses? Or will these addresses be kept private by the Town?





**Town of Essex Merger  
Proposed Schedule of Research Activities  
June 13, 2019**

**Phase 1: Initial Qualitative Survey to Residents (June 14 – July 18)**

- KSV to develop survey draft – Fri 6/14 – Tue 6/18
- **Essex review of survey draft – Wed 6/19 – Fri 6/21**
- KSV survey revisions – Mon 6/24 – Tue 6/25
- **Essex final review/approval of survey – Wed 6/26 – Fri 6/28**
- KSV survey programming – Mon 7/1
- **Survey link to Essex for deployment – Mon 7/1**
- Data collection – Mon 7/1 – Mon 7/15 (15 days)
- KSV to develop survey report – Tue 7/16 – Wed 7/17
- **Presentation of survey findings – Thu 7/18**

**Phase 2: Focus Groups (July 8 – August 22)**

Recruiting

- KSV to develop recruitment screener – Mon 7/8 – Tue 7/9
- **Essex review of screener – Wed 7/10 – Fri 7/12**
- KSV revisions to screener – Mon 7/15 – Tue 7/16
- **Essex final review/approval of screener – Wed 7/17 – Thu 7/18**
- KSV to program screener – Fri 7/19
- **Screener link to Essex for deployment – Mon 7/22**
- Screener live in field – Mon 7/22 – Wed 8/7 (17 days)
- KSV scheduling of focus group participants – Mon 7/22 – Wed 8/7
- **Recruitment grid sent to Essex – Thu 8/1**
- **Essex feedback on recruitment grid – Thu 8/1 – Mon 8/5**
- KSV follow-up/confirmation with focus group participants – Mon 8/5 – Mon 8/12
- **Final recruitment grid to Essex – Thu 8/8**

Discussion Guide Development

- KSV to develop focus group discussion guide(s) – Fri 7/19 – Tue 7/23
- **Essex review of discussion guide(s) – Wed 7/24 – Fri 7/26**
- KSV discussion guide revisions – Mon 7/29 – Tue 7/30
- **Essex final review/approval of discussion guide(s) – Wed 7/31 – Fri 8/2**



## Focus Groups

- **Focus group dates – Tue 8/13 – Thu 8/15**
  - If we do two groups per day over three days, we recommend that groups take place from...
    - 6:00pm - 7:30pm
    - 7:45pm - 9:15pm
  - If we do three groups per day over two days, we recommend that groups take place from...
    - 4:00pm – 5:30pm
    - 6:00pm - 7:30pm
    - 7:45pm - 9:15pm
- KSV to develop focus group report – Fri 8/16 – Wed 8/21
- **Presentation of focus group report – Thu 8/22**

## **Phase 3: Post-Groups Quantitative Survey (August 23 – October 17)**

- KSV to develop survey draft – Fri 8/23 – Wed 8/28
- **Essex review of survey – Thu 8/29 – Thu 9/5 (accounting for Labor Day weekend)**
- KSV revisions to survey - Fri 9/6 – Tue 9/10
- **Essex final review/approval of survey – Wed 9/11 – Fri 9/13**
- Survey programming – Mon 9/16
- **Survey link to Essex for deployment – Tue 9/17**
- Survey in the field – Tue 9/17 – 10/4 (18 days)
- KSV to develop survey report – Mon 10/7- Wed 10/16
- **Presentation of survey report – Thu 10/17**

## Memorandum

**To:** Governance Subcommittee; Evan Teich, Unified Manager  
**CC:** Rob Paluba, IT Director; Ann Janda, Merger Project Manager  
**From:** Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager GSD  
**Re:** Merger website update  
**Date:** June 18, 2019

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### Issue

The issue is to provide the Governance Subcommittee with an update on a merger website, and for the Governance Subcommittee to recommend a web address to the Trustees and Selectboard.

### Discussion

Staff has looked into the possibility of creating a standalone website dedicated to merger issues for the Village of Essex Junction and Town of Essex.

Staff plans to use Weebly to create the website. Weebly is fairly straightforward and staff can build and maintain the website in-house. CivicPlus, the platform for the new Town website, would not be ready to launch a merger website until August or September. By using Weebly, the merger website will remain separate from the Village and Town municipal websites, although the municipal websites can contain links to the merger website.

Staff has reserved three web addresses as the potential home of a merger website:

- Essexmergervote2020.org
- Essexmerger2020.org
- Essexmerger.org

Essexmerger2020.org is descriptive of the site, without being overly long.

### Cost

The three web addresses have already been reserved for \$130/year.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Governance Subcommittee recommend that the Selectboard and Trustees use [www.essexmerger2020.com](http://www.essexmerger2020.com) as the address for a merger website.

1                                   **VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES**  
2                                   **TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD**  
3                                   **SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE - SPECIAL MEETING**  
4                                   **JUNE 6, 2019**

5  
6 **GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS:** George Tyler, Chair; Raj Chawla; Max  
7 Levy.

8 **ADMINISTRATION:** Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager.

9 **OTHERS PRESENT:** Erin Fagnant, KSV; Bridget Meyer; Margaret Smith; Irene Wrenner;  
10 Tucker Wright, KSV.

11  
12 **1. CALL TO ORDER**

13  
14 Mr. Tyler called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

15  
16 **2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

17  
18 **MAX LEVY MOVED AND RAJ CHAWLA SECONDED A MOTION TO ADD THE**  
19 **FOLLOWING ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

- 20  
21       **1. A Brief Summary of the Essex Community Political Structure and the Challenges it**  
22       **Poses for Consolidation**  
23       **2. Essex Junction Trustees/Essex Town Selectboard Joint Governance Subcommittee**  
24       **Report 4/9/19.**

25  
26 **THE MOTION PASSED 3-0.**

27  
28 **4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

29  
30 There were no comments from the public.

31  
32 **5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

33  
34 **a. Planning for Public Engagement around Governance Change**

35  
36 Ms. Erin Fagnant and Mr. Tucker Wright from KSV were present to begin developing a public  
37 engagement plan to prepare for a governance change vote in November 2020. Both Ms. Fagnant  
38 and Mr. Wright were familiar with the history in Essex with regard to merger efforts in the past.  
39 KSV plans to offer surveys and focus groups, with the Governance Subcommittee (GS) acting as  
40 a steering committee. Members discussed the desired extent of surveys and focus groups, as well  
41 as timelines and process. Ms. Fagnant and Mr. Wright explained KSV's recommendation to  
42 begin the process with a qualitative (80% ideal approval vote for 2020) public survey to help  
43 identify the knowledge base of residents about governance, any challenges and any biases. Those  
44 findings and findings from previous surveys would then be used as a facilitation guide for the  
45 focus groups. Focus group discussions will be recorded on video and transcribed. The last step to  
46 the process is a quantitative public survey that would identify and confirm the right options and

47 further feedback for the governance change vote in November 2020. Mr. Tyler felt the proposed  
48 process from KSV embodied the intent of GS recent discussions. Members briefly discussed the  
49 importance of educating the public before and throughout the process to ensure a good  
50 understanding of the issue. Ms. Ann Janda was hired as a point person for the governance change  
51 vote, and members discussed the possibility of her creating a website and other online resources  
52 to objectively describe the governance structure today, efforts for merger in the past and what is  
53 being proposed for the future and why. The members would like to meet with Ms. Janda and Mr.  
54 Teich to discuss the extent to which she could complete these tasks. Mr. Wright confirmed for  
55 Mr. Tyler that the length of time for the initial survey, focus groups and final survey was from  
56 eight to 16 weeks, which would mean completion in the fall. Mr. Chawla was pleased with this  
57 timing because the GS could then determine if it is going in the right direction. Mr. Wright and  
58 Ms. Fagnant confirmed for the members that they would provide a very detailed outline of the  
59 project, the phases and the feedback along the way. The ultimate goal for this effort is to warn a  
60 presentation to the public at Town Meeting in March.

61  
62 With regard to frequency of meetings with KSV, it was decided that if there is information for  
63 the members to review, email will be used to distribute materials, but not for discussions. If there  
64 are any substantial discussions or decisions to be made, they should meet. Mr. Wright explained  
65 that sometimes they will need to meet weekly and other times meetings can be further in  
66 between. Initially, Ms. Fagnant explained that they will draft a project plan in the next week or  
67 two and should have a meeting at that point. Members will wait to hear from KSV and then warn  
68 the meeting.

69  
70 With regard to the scope of the project, members agreed with the recommended process of an  
71 initial survey, focus groups and a final survey. With regard to focus groups, Mr. Tyler and Mr.  
72 Chawla agreed that it may be difficult to have the business community as a focus group and that  
73 residents and voters should be the target for those groups. Mr. Levy commented that the impact  
74 on businesses needs to be considered, but the focus groups and survey should include the voters.  
75 Mr. Tyler agreed that the opinion from the business community is important, but could be  
76 realized through the Economic Development Commission, and members agreed. One question  
77 that needed to be answered regarding focus groups, was how they will be structured. Mr. Wright  
78 explained that there are pros and cons to special interest focus groups versus mixed focus groups.  
79 When there is a consolidated group, then the community would know the opinion of that group.  
80 On the other hand, a specific subset group can create a “group think” mentality versus individual  
81 opinions. The number of focus groups also plays into how they could be structured to suit the  
82 needs of Essex. The analyst from KSV, Mr. Dave Treston, who could not be at the meeting  
83 tonight, could weigh in more on this issue at the next meeting. Mr. Tyler commented that the tax  
84 structure in the community is such that there will be a difference in burden in order to reach tax  
85 equity. He referred to the Agenda Addition that explains the political structure and the challenges  
86 it poses for consolidation. Mr. Chawla wanted to make sure everyone felt comfortable expressing  
87 their opinions during the focus group discussions. Mr. Tyler clarified for Ms. Bridget Meyer that  
88 the survey and focus groups will help determine the basic structure of governance that will be  
89 presented to the public at Town Meeting and proposed to the voters in 2020. Mr. Tucker  
90 explained that the participation of residents in the process should be statistically significant to the  
91 total population. Mr. Duggan commented that statistical significance is surprisingly low for  
92 phase 1 (approximately 375 residents for 95% confidence).

93  
94 With regard to the number of focus groups, Tier 2 of KSV's proposal recommends six focus  
95 groups comprised of eight to 10 members. With regard to the structure of the focus groups, Mr.  
96 Chawla suggested two from inside the Village, two from outside the Village and two mixed, and  
97 members agreed. If there needs to be a shift at any point during the effort, KSV will inform the  
98 GS.

99  
100 It was confirmed that KSV will draft a scope and schedule, and will work with the staff and GS  
101 to schedule an initial kick-off working meeting in one to two weeks to collaborate on questions  
102 for the survey and a proposal to bring to the Selectboard and Trustees. It was confirmed for Mr.  
103 Levy that the final reading of the survey would occur in the fall based on the KSV's Tier 2  
104 proposal. It was confirmed for Mr. Chawla that the data video will be owned by the Town and  
105 Village.

106  
107 Ms. Irene Wrenner felt equal representation from inside and outside the Village was missing in  
108 the proposal and should be acknowledged in this process. Mr. Tyler felt that the process will  
109 uncover identity issues inside and outside the Village. Mr. Tyler reviewed the Agenda Additions  
110 with Mr. Wright and Ms. Fagnant, which included the current governance structure. Contact  
111 information was exchanged, and members and staff will wait to hear from KSV.

#### 112 113 b. Discuss Communications Outreach Strategy

114  
115 The issue is for the GS to discuss a communications outreach strategy.

116  
117 Mr. Tyler suggested a weekly column in the Essex Reporter written by different people from the  
118 community highlighting information to the public about this issue. Mr. Levy suggested  
119 addressing questions from the public as well. Members agreed with the first two columns being  
120 written by staff to share the background and history of the governance structure and how it is  
121 today. Mr. Chawla added that people should be encouraged to send questions, and he suggested  
122 discussing a plan to moderate a Facebook page, which could also publish facts and answer  
123 questions, without the ability for debate. Members discussed using Front Porch Forum to  
124 communicate information with a link to the Essex Reporter. Members discussed creative ideas  
125 such as inviting well-known people in the community to provide information on the topic and to  
126 use a graphic that represents both communities as a way to catch people's attention. Ms. Meyer  
127 requested there be a quick link to past articles available to the public. Mr. Duggan explained that  
128 Ms. Janda will act as an organizer for outreach. Mr. Tyler expressed interest in an independent  
129 site for this issue that could be found on both websites. Members agreed that the online outreach  
130 needed to be monitored to avoid any political arguments. Ms. Meyer wanted a one click source  
131 of information on this issue and stated that it was important for all the questions to get answered.  
132 Members agreed that Mr. Teich and Ms. Janda could answer the technical questions, and then if  
133 questions get political, those questions could be referred to the Selectboard (SB) and Trustees.  
134 Ms. Wrenner was concerned with having a balanced perspective and checks and balances when  
135 questions get political. She would like to avoid what happened with the recreation consolidation  
136 effort. Members discussed the potential challenges with social media and decided to discuss this  
137 further with Mr. Teich and Ms. Janda. Ms. Meyer was not for or against using social media, but  
138 knew that there was a large population that used that form of communication. She stated that a

139 savvy person needs to manage it. She also noted that there are many different people who use  
140 different forms of communication and suggested sending information via water or tax bills. Mr.  
141 Levy wanted to check with the lawyer first before entertaining that idea.

142

143 Mr. Levy noted that it was important to go where the people are, like what the SB does during  
144 outreach for Town Meeting and the Town budget. With regard to public forums and meetings  
145 with local groups and organizations, members agreed those would occur later in the effort.

146 Members also decided to keep the June 20 subcommittee meeting unless they hear from KSV  
147 sooner. Mr. Duggan will remind KSV that 48 hours is needed to warn a meeting.

148

149 c. Approval of Minutes: May 23, 2019

150

151 **MAX LEVY made a motion, and RAJ CHAWLA seconded, to approve the minutes of May**  
152 **23, 2019, as presented. The motion passed 3-0.**

153

154 **6. READING FILE**

155

156 **7. ADJOURN**

157

158 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and MAX LEVY seconded, to adjourn. The motion passed**  
159 **3-0 at 8:31 p.m.**

160

161

162 **Respectfully Submitted,**

163

164 **Saramichelle Stultz**

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES  
TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE - SPECIAL MEETING  
June 13, 2019**

**SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS:** George Tyler, Chair; Andy Watts.

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Elaine Haney, Margaret Smith, Irene Wrenner, Jessica Wisloski, Bruce Post, Betsy Dunn, Robert Bates, Bridget Meyer, Erin Fagnant, KSV; Dave Treston, KSV.

**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 7:00 p.m. A quorum of the Subcommittee was not present.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

**3. AGENDA APPROVAL**

A motion was not made to approve the agenda as written due to lack of quorum.

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

There were no comments from the public at this time.

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Governance outreach project kickoff workshop with KSV**

George Tyler provided an overview of the project kickoff workshop with KSV, a market research firm. He described the history, scope, and charge of the Subcommittee on Governance. The Subcommittee on Governance had previously researched forms of local government and developed a few basic structures that could be considered for merger of Town and Village governance structures. Because this would involve changing at least one charter, it would need to be voted on by residents. The Subcommittee on Governance would like to gather public input on the issues that voters feel are the most prominent or concerning in the context of consolidation, and has hired KSV to help field qualitative and quantitative surveys and hold focus groups.. Mr. Tyler then invited members of the public to give comment.

Jessica Wisloski noted that a significant amount of prior work in this area had been done by a grassroots, community-led group (Budget to Ballot) which then formed the Essex Governance Group and produced a report with recommendations to improve civic engagement and governance in 2015.

Betsy Dunn asked the Subcommittee members to clarify whether it had decided on a single charter with an elected board or a voting district structure. Mr. Tyler noted that this is an exploratory phase and no decisions have yet been made on structure.



47  
48 Margaret Smith stated that the population in the Town outside the Village is almost equal to that  
49 of the Village, though the Village is much smaller in area. She stated that the Town outside the  
50 Village is not equally represented in Board meetings, and that equal representation is essential to  
51 this conversation.

52  
53 Robert Bates described his involvement in the Budget to Ballot group and the recommendations  
54 made by that group in its report. These included launching an effective communication program  
55 to address issues of transparency and citizen awareness, empowering neighborhoods with  
56 neighborhood assemblies, switching to an enhanced town meeting/Australian Ballot hybrid for  
57 voting, and instituting same-day voting.

58  
59 Mr. Tyler noted that the Subcommittee has looked at a number of governance models and ranked  
60 them by criteria (including criteria outlined by Heart & Soul and the Essex Governance Group);  
61 an example of this criteria is whether a particular governance model would make it easier or  
62 more complicated to vote.

63  
64 Irene Wrenner voiced her concern with wording in some of the KSV materials (for example,  
65 using statements that include “Town versus Village”). She is concerned about a lack of  
66 representation from the Town outside the Village, and that access is a prominent issue. Mr. Tyler  
67 noted that one of the objectives of this kickoff meeting is to help make KSV aware of the context  
68 and sensitivities in the community around certain issues and language.

69  
70 KSV representatives Erin Fagnant, Director of Client Relationships, and Dave Treston, Head of  
71 Research, described their purpose and scope of work as consultants. They will work to ensure  
72 that they are gathering input from all parts and demographics of the community and collect data  
73 to inform decision-making. They described the three phases of work, which are to: 1. Draft and  
74 field a qualitative survey to residents to gather input on potential obstacles and issues (access,  
75 voting, representation, identity, and others); 2. Use the survey to inform the direction of focus  
76 groups, six of which will be held (two each for the Town outside the Village and the Village, and  
77 two with mixed Town-outside-the-Village/Village participation); and 3. Use the feedback  
78 gathered from the focus groups to inform a more narrowly-scoped, quantitative survey to  
79 residents, and present the results of that to Essex.

80  
81 Ms. Fagnant and Mr. Treston also described the objectives of tonight’s kickoff meeting, which  
82 are to align on key components of the work, including reviewing the project timeline, target  
83 research participants, survey distribution methods, research probes, and focus group logistics.

84  
85 Ms. Wisloski asked if KSV has had previous experience working with governments to form new  
86 governance structures. Ms. Fagnant outlined work with past clients, including work with New  
87 York State to develop the state’s energy policy, in addition to working with other regulated  
88 businesses.

89  
90 *Survey/Focus Group Representation:*  
91 Mr. Treston asked the Subcommittee to confirm the proposed representation on the focus groups,  
92 which would be two groups of Village residents, two groups of Town outside the Village

93 residents, and two with mixed representation. He also requested information on the desired  
94 demographics of the survey and focus groups, noting that demographics questions will be on  
95 both the qualitative survey and the screener for the focus groups. He asked how specific a place  
96 of residence question on the surveys should be. Mr. Watts noted that there are three voting  
97 districts. Elaine Haney proposed grouping options into neighborhoods. Mr. Treston noted that  
98 the survey could ask for addresses, but this might dissuade potential respondents from  
99 participating. He suggested adding a map to the survey for respondents to click on their  
100 neighborhood/area of residence. He then asked what exclusion criteria should be applied to the  
101 surveys, and Subcommittee members agreed that the survey should exclude respondents who are  
102 not of voting age as of November 2020, nonresidents, and residents who are on the Selectboard  
103 or Trustees. The group noted that residents include homeowners and renters.

104

105 *Survey/Focus Group Screener Distribution:*

106 Mr. Treston discussed how links to surveys and screeners could be distributed. He suggested  
107 online distribution channels (Town/Village websites, Front Porch Forum, social media outlets  
108 such as Facebook and Twitter). Others suggested the Essex Reporter, posting on bulletin boards,  
109 libraries, postcard mailings, fliers at grocery stores, and potentially including in upcoming water  
110 or tax bills. Some expressed concern that rural residents are not as connected to either social  
111 media or in-town social outlets, and asked that further consideration be given to how best to  
112 reach them. Mr. Post suggested asking neighborhood watch groups to send to residents through  
113 their distribution lists. Ms. Haney suggested asking the school district to include survey  
114 information in one of its newsletters to parents (these are sent out even in summer months).

115

116 *Research Topics/Potential Questions:*

117 KSV consultants recommended that the initial, qualitative survey be open-ended to gather as  
118 much community input as possible. The survey would gather demographic information, feedback  
119 on awareness of past consolidation efforts, gauging the interest in consolidation, the level of  
120 satisfaction with Town and Village services, perceived benefits/challenges of consolidation,  
121 whether respondents have a desired consolidation model in mind, which services should be  
122 combined or kept separated after consolidation, and any other non-consolidation-related issues.  
123 The qualitative survey would be distributed to the entire community.

124

125 Subcommittee members discussed additional questions they would like in the survey. Mr. Tyler  
126 would like to ask how familiar respondents are with the current structure of local government.  
127 Mr. Watts would like to ask whether respondents are willing to pay more taxes for more services.  
128 Mr. Watts further noted that each of the current proposed options for consolidation has many  
129 potential versions. Mr. Tyler noted that one of the challenges to soliciting community feedback  
130 will be addressing the nuances within each proposed option.

131

132 Mr. Teich suggested asking how respondents normally get local information and from where,  
133 how much Town/Village identity means to respondents, what community connections  
134 respondents have, and whether they think that consolidation would lead to an impact in quality of  
135 life in terms of access to community amenities.

136

137 Mr. Duggan suggested that the survey could be used as a way to educate the public about the  
138 merger. He suggested including a two-page infographic to give respondents background and

139 context. He also suggested including a follow-up question to perceived challenges, asking  
140 respondents how they think any challenges that they noted could be overcome.

141  
142 Public comments on the survey included frontloading the survey with broader questions and  
143 narrowing the survey's focus in later questions, that an introduction and contextual information  
144 would be good to accompany the survey, and including a question in the survey on whether  
145 voters would like an Australian ballot for the budget vote. It was also suggested that voters may  
146 not be familiar with governance structures, but that the survey may not reflect that. Ms. Haney  
147 suggested asking whether respondents were aware that the Village and Town are separate  
148 governments, with different tax structures. Depending on responses, further public education  
149 about the issue may be needed prior to focus groups and quantitative survey development.

150  
151 *Focus Groups:*

152 KSV described their proposed approach to focus group structure, purpose, content, and  
153 facilitation. They will outline the three proposed governance structure options to focus group  
154 members and ensure they understand the concepts in each, and will outline potential issues, such  
155 as equity, identity, representation, and issues or topics based on responses from the qualitative  
156 survey. The goal of the focus groups will be to understand what respondents see as their favorite  
157 option and why, and what, if anything, they would modify about the option they like. Similar to  
158 the first survey, the focus groups will be qualitative, and also have quantitative aspects.

159  
160 Mr. Tyler noted that before the options are given to the focus groups, the Town and Village  
161 boards will be able to give their input in phrasing and content of the options. He also noted that  
162 the options will be accompanied by any pros and cons of implementing that option. Ms. Dunn  
163 asked if options other than the three currently proposed options could come out of this process.  
164 Mr. Tyler responded that yes, new options may emerge from the qualitative information-  
165 gathering process. Ms. Wrenner stated that the options seem to only pertain to taxation. Mr.  
166 Tyler clarified that the options don't only pertain to taxes, but also to voting districts, and to  
167 addressing representational and political imbalances. Ms. Wisloski noted that much of the  
168 discussion is around taxation, which implies property taxes. She further stated that 40% of the  
169 Village and 30% of the Town outside the Village are renters and not property owners. Mr. Tyler  
170 noted that the question at hand is to examine whether two chartered municipal corporations can  
171 be integrated, and taxation is a large component in that.

172  
173 *Triggers/Hot Button Issues:*

174 Mr. Treston asked if there are certain words and phrases that would cause people to respond to a  
175 survey in a certain, nonconstructive way. He noted that the Essex Junction and Town Outside the  
176 Village nomenclature are sensitive and sometimes confusing. He also asked the Subcommittee's  
177 opinion on the terms merger vs consolidation, and wanting to understand what words would be  
178 divisive and which would be constructive. Mr. Tyler noted that integration may be a better term  
179 to use, but that the technical term is merger.

180  
181 Mr. Duggan noted that this the goal of this process is to be forward-thinking, and developing the  
182 best path forward instead of focusing on the issues that were negative in the past. He also noted  
183 that a list of definitions of agreed-upon terms has already been developed by the Selectboard and  
184 Trustees.

185  
186 Mr. Treston asked if there are any local issues that are controversial that may surface through the  
187 course of the focus group discussion. Mr. Tyler noted that development around the Five Corners  
188 area in the Village has been controversial, but that the issue is independent from this discussion.  
189 Mr. Watts also noted that there may be changes in where a person can discharge a firearm in the  
190 Town, and that the two entities have different firearms ordinances. Mr. Bates noted that the most  
191 prominent issues in the Essex Governance Group forum was a perceived lack of transparency,  
192 and that decision-making did not take place in a transparent fashion. Ms. Haney noted that there  
193 is a perception that Village residents are represented twice (in both Town and Village boards),  
194 and that the at-large election process can make residents feel underrepresented.

195  
196 *Focus Group Logistics:*

197 Mr. Treston stated that the focus groups required a space that could hold ten respondents, a  
198 moderator, and several staff members. Mr. Teich offered a number of spaces to host the focus  
199 groups, including the Village or Town offices, the Senior Center, the Essex Junction Recreation  
200 and Parks offices, the fire stations, local hotels with conference centers, and the libraries.

201  
202 Mr. Treston asked if there would be issues if the groups were recorded, and that they would  
203 notify respondents in the screener and would have them sign releases at the actual focus group  
204 event if the event were to be recorded. The Subcommittee agreed that a recording would be  
205 reasonable, and that KSV would retain and own the recorded media.

206  
207 *Schedule:*

208 Mr. Tyler stated that the Subcommittee would like to have a good sense of a preferred  
209 governance structure by the end of calendar year 2019, and that they would like KSV's work  
210 concluded in October. Mr. Treston outlined the proposed schedule of deliverables, noting that it  
211 takes holidays and summer vacations into account, and aligns with the Subcommittee's desired  
212 timeline. Generally, the first survey would be deployed in the beginning of July, focus groups  
213 would be held mid-August, and the final survey would be fielded mid-September, with  
214 presentation to Essex of the final results in mid-October. The surveys would be in the field for  
215 more than two weeks, to ensure a statistically significant sample size. Mr. Tyler noted that the  
216 public would have ample opportunity to engage in the process throughout, as results will be  
217 brought to the Trustees and Selectboard for review when available.

218  
219 **b. Approval of minutes: June 6, 2019**

220 A motion to approve the minutes of June 6, 2019 was tabled until a future meeting due to lack of  
221 quorum.

222  
223 **6. READING FILE:**

224  
225 **7. ADJOURN:**

226  
227 A motion to adjourn the Subcommittee on Governance meeting was not made due to lack of  
228 quorum. Meeting adjourned at 9:45pm.

229  
230

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE  
(DRAFT)**

**June 13, 2019**

231 Respectfully Submitted,  
232 Amy Coonrad  
233 Recording Secretary

234  
235  
236

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

238

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

DRAFT