

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
April 4, 2012**

Moderator Steve Eustis welcomed the assemblage to the 120th Annual Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction. Boy Scout Troup 624 presented the flags. The ADL Intermediate School Select Chorus sang the Star Spangled Banner and the assemblage recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Village President, George Tyler, introduced members of the Board of Trustees in attendance (John Lajza, Dan Kerin and Mary Morris) and Village Manager, Dave Crawford. The Village Administrative team was in the front row and available for questions.

RECOGNITIONS

Service to the Village by retiring Trustee John Lajza was recognized to include three terms on the Board of Trustees (2003-2012) and as Village representative to the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Channel 17 Board of Directors, Chittenden County Solid Waste District Board of Directors, Tri-Town Waste Water Treatment Plant Committee, various ad hoc and subcommittees and Village affiliated groups. Trustee Lajza commented favorable on his rewarding experience of serving the community and encouraged others to volunteer.

State representatives, Tim Jerman and Linda Waite-Simpson, and Essex Selectboard members, Irene Wrenner and Max Levy, were recognized.

Members of the ADL 8th Grade Class were in attendance to observe the town meeting process and ask questions on civic matters.

Candidates for vacancies on the Board of Trustees were announced (Mary Morris, Andrew Brown and Elaine Sopchak). Volunteer groups in the Village were recognized (Fire Department, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Farmers Market, Memorial Day Parade, Block Party, Brownell Library Board, Railroad Ave. Revitalization, Gardeners Group).

The public was asked to complete the survey on the Village that was provided to them.

Moderator Eustis called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM and explained the procedure to be followed.

ARTICLE 1: Shall the voters act upon the report of the auditor?

MOTION by Chuck Barry, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to approve Article 1 as read.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried. Article 1 is adopted.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters approve the annual General Fund budget in the amount of \$3,256,340 for fiscal year July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 of which \$2,666,989 is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?

MOTION by Chuck Barry, SECOND by Mary Jo Engels, to approve Article 2 as read.

DISCUSSION: A presentation on the FY13 budget was given. George Tyler explained the Village administration was tasked with providing essentially a level service budget and to make a list where cuts can be made. The initial budget was a 3% increase over the existing budget, but with cuts the amount was reduced to 2.8% or \$87,000 over last year's budget amount. The increase covers a 2% salary increase for employees, \$50,000 toward the purchase of the ladder truck, and support of the negotiated contract with the Employees Association which includes the Employees Association paying an increased contribution to health care (12% in the first year of the contract and 14% in the second year of the contract, saving the Village \$27,000). George Dunbar, III, Juniper Ridge Road, had questions or comments on the following:

- Amount being taken out of the unreserved fund balance (\$35,000).
- Salary increases being higher for the library and fire department.
- Amount in the budget for training and conferences under Administration (104% increase from 2008-2013) and Planning (82% increase from 2008-2013) while the fire department shows a decrease in training by 29%. The amount spent by the Village on training and conferences in the Administration budget is as much as Essex Town spends for the Town's entire training budget. The situation is the same for travel in the Administration and Planning budgets. The dollar amount implies 7,000 miles per year of travel.

Linda Costello, Williams Street, spoke in support of investing in training and education for staff which will return twofold to the Village. There were no further comments.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried. Article 2 is adopted.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the Village authorize the transfer of all funds above \$100,000 in the Land Acquisition Fund, estimated balance to be approximately \$320,000, to the Capital Program Fund?

MOTION by Andrew Brown, SECOND by Harlan Smith, to approve Article 3 as read.

DISCUSSION: George Tyler explained the Land Acquisition Fund established in 1997 has not been used to date, and the recommendation is to direct most of the fund (maintaining a balance of \$100,000) toward capital projects. Questions and comments were as follows:

- Alison Werner, Lincoln Street, asked about purchase of the tree farm and soccer fields.
- Andrew Boutin, Cascade Street, suggested applying money saved due to the mild winter toward capital projects or to increase the amount in the reserve account.

- **George Dunbar, III, Juniper Ridge Road, mentioned there are several potential uses for the funds including adding to the reserve fund, applying the money toward the ladder truck to reduce the amount of the loan, using the money to reduce the tax impact of the new police facility, or returning the money to the voters. Mr. Dunbar urged taking no action on the transfer of funds from the Land Acquisition Fund at this point in time until a detailed plan for use of the money is provided to the Board of Trustees by the appointed capital projects committee.**
- **Marie Schonholtz, Beech Street, pointed out there are projects in the Village that could result in some land acquisition, such as the crescent connector or the Amtrak train station.**

There were no further comments.

VOTING ON ARTICLE 3: majority of ayes; motion carried. Article 3 is adopted.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the Village authorize the Trustees to use up to \$25,000 of the remaining balance in the Land Acquisition Fund for the purchase of property?

MOTION by Chuck Barry, SECOND by Mary Jo Engels, to approve Article 4 as read.

DISCUSSION: George Tyler explained the Board of Trustees would like to be able to act on property quickly should the situation arise. The money would be used to research the property. There was discussion of the wording of the article and the need to be clear that the money is used toward the purchase of land.

AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 4 by George Dunbar, III, SECOND by Mike Plageman, to redraft Article 4 to read: "Shall the Village authorize the Trustees to use up to \$25,000 of the remaining balance in the Land Acquisition Fund for a down payment or costs associated with the purchase of real property?"

DISCUSSION ON AMENDMENT: None.

VOTING ON AMENDMENT: unanimous; motion carried. Article 4 is amended.

DISCUSSION OF ARTICLE 4 AS AMENDED: Questions and comments were as follows:

- **Andrew Brown, Brickyard Road, asked if the authorization is for a one time use or in perpetuity.**
- **Darryl Stultz, Seneca Ave., asked if expenditure is one time in a year or over several occasions. Mr. Stultz spoke against approval due to confusion on what is being authorized.**
- **Bill Guthrie, Vale Drive, urged rejecting the article due to confusion in wording of the article and understanding of the mechanism for purchasing property. Mr. Guthrie asked if there would be public hearings to get public opinion on potential property before any research or purchase takes place.**
- **Bill Mayville, Main Street, asked about needing more than \$25,000 or if multiple pieces of property can be considered.**
- **Tim Jerman, Sycamore Lane, spoke in support of providing the Trustees with the flexibility to be able to move quickly on real estate.**
- **Chris Halpin, School Street, spoke in support of having flexibility, noting the boundary issue with Stevens Park may need quick action by the Trustees.**

- **George Dunbar, III, Juniper Ridge Road, asked if money will continue to be contributed to the Land Acquisition Fund each year.**

There were no further comments.

VOTING ON ARTICLE 4 AS AMENDED: majority of ayes; motion carried.

Article 4 as amended is adopted.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters approve holding the 2013 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 3, 2013 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 9, 2013 to vote for the Village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot?

MOTION by Chuck Barry, SECOND by Richard Smith, to approve Article 5 as read.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried. Article 5 is adopted.

ARTICLE 6: To transact any other business that may lawfully come before the meeting.

MOTION by Diane Clemens, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to suspend the rules and allow nonvoting attendees to speak. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

Questions and comments from 8th Grade students at ADL School

- Discussions of merger of services between the Village and Town to save money should be held.
- Recycling bins for bottles and plastic/paper waste should be placed next to trash cans in public places. Restaurants should be mandated to recycle.
- The drug abuse problem in the area by the train station needs to be eliminated before doing improvements to the station.

Miscellaneous comments/questions

- Alison Werner, Lincoln Street, asked about sidewalk and streetlights on the north side of Route 2A (Lincoln Street) to St. James Church.
- Mike Sullivan, Orchard Terrace, proposed a vote on the Village either merging with the town or separating from the town, but not allowing the status quo.
- Cathy Shearer, North Street, spoke about the growing problem of homelessness in Essex Junction and the need to find prevention based solutions, such as offering more affordable housing and having inclusionary zoning.
- Tim Jerman gave kudos to John and Barb Lajza for their hundreds of hours of service to the community and noted the passing of Rene Blanchard, Dave Willey, Larry Yandow, Al Overton, and other former Village trustees. All will be missed. Rep. Jerman also noted the legislature passed a bill that mandates recycling by manufacturers, and the decision by both the Town and Village should be reaffirmed not to use annual meeting as a forum to weigh in on issues, such as merger.
- Jennifer McClintock, Maple Street, asked about WiFi service in the Village.

Presentations: Crescent Connector, Heart and Soul, Amtrak station upgrade

Crescent Connector

Staff gave a brief presentation on the crescent connector project. The project has been approved by the legislature for inclusion on the list of project to improve the flow of traffic in Chittenden County absent the circ highway. With the crescent connector, traffic will decrease at Five Corners by about 12%. In addition traffic will have an alternate route when the woodchip train is moving through the crossings. Comments/questions from attendees were as follows:

- Ed Von Sitas stated Maple Street is gridlock now and another curb cut will add more traffic.
- Karen Robertson asked about the impact on school enrollment with more housing.
- Jennifer McClintock suggested a simple solution to the traffic problem on Maple Street is to have school buses transport the schoolchildren to and from school.
- George Dunbar, III, urged looking at the CCMPO 2010 traffic study for the crescent connector which does not indicate a 10% traffic decrease.
- Elaine Sopchak pointed out the curb cut is a new street with two sides exposed to development, and it is important for the Village, planning commission, and developers to work hard so retail spaces are affordable to local businesses and not just large retail stores so the character and code of the Village downtown is maintained.
- Mike Sullivan stated \$6 million will be spent for a dead-end road.
- Genevieve Melle opined adding another road to the Village will not increase the quality of life. The road is not a good investment. The road once built will have to be maintained. Even with beautiful stores people will still shop at the “box stores” in Williston. The Village is a junction town, not a town like Middlebury or Portland. All the extra elements (another crossing guard, police presence, maintenance) must be considered before building the road.

Heart and Soul (Orton Foundation Grant)

Sue McCormack reported the Orton Foundation grant will look at the history and the future of the Village and how the residents want to shape that future. Information on the Heart and Soul program is on the Village webpage, Facebook, and Front Porch Forum.

Amtrak Train Station Redesign

George Tyler reported the train station is being redesigned to meet ADA standards. One proposal shows a covered platform area with a level entrance onto the train. Staff is working on creating additional parking spaces. Sue McCormack suggested tying design elements at the fairgrounds entrance to the train station redesign.

H.559 Single Payer Health Care

MOTION by Carl Houghton, SECOND by John Houghton, that the citizens of Essex Junction request the Vermont legislature to provide the current cost estimates and source of funding for H.559 (proposed single payer health care) by September 1, 2012.

DISCUSSION: Rep. Linda Waite-Simpson spoke against setting an artificial deadline, assuring when the information is compiled and ready to be made public this will be done. Carl Houghton pointed out the legislature had a year

of preparation. The request is for an estimate, not a final number. The source of the funding needs to be known. Jon Houghton, School Street, stated employers are concerned how health care will be funded especially since the legislative panel indicated it is unclear where funding will come from. The vote is nonbinding and simply to bring information to the people. Studies by CPA, Wendy Wilton, shows the health care plan will result in a multi-million dollar deficit in perpetuity. There were no further comments.

VOTING: majority of nays; motion did not carry.

Adjournment

MOTION by Chris Putnam, SECOND by Chuck Barry, to adjourn the 120th Annual Meeting of the Village of Essex Junction. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM. Voting by Australian ballot will take place on April 10, 2012 from 7 AM to 7 PM at Essex Community Educational Center.

Attest:


Village Trustee


Village Trustee


Village Clerk