

# VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION NEWS

“In the whole world, there is only one Essex Junction”

Issue No. 38

March 2015

## Please Come to Annual Meeting

Essex Junction's general fund budget, which pays for municipal services such as road maintenance, fire department, and library, is decided by an “aye” or “nay” vote from the audience at the Village's Annual Meeting. Every vote counts.

This year the budget is designed to allow a three-year trial of shared services with Essex Town. The goal is to reduce municipal taxes throughout the Village and Town by equalizing costs for all taxpayers and making more efficient use of the dollars we spend. Local government in the Essex community is changing. Come to Annual Meeting if you've got questions, want to learn more, or have something to say about closer ties between the Village and Town.

We'll also be presenting ideas for a new Village center based on input from your Village neighbors and professional designers. With intelligent redevelopment our community center could be more pedestrian and business friendly, move traffic more efficiently, and provide a downtown that's more attractive and safe. Come find out how it works.

The free pre-Annual Meeting community supper begins at 6:00 p.m. in the Essex High School cafeteria on Wednesday, April 1, 2015.

Free childcare begins at 7:00 p.m.

Free rides for Seniors, call 878-6940.

Annual Meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. in the Essex High School auditorium.

## State of the Village 2015

By George Tyler, Village President  
On behalf of the Essex Junction Board of Trustees

Let's put budgets and governance aside for a moment and talk about the real reason Essex Junction continues to be the most comfortable and livable community in Vermont. Each month, hundreds of our citizens provide the human energy that keeps the heart of our community beating by volunteering precious hours of their time to serve on Village commissions, committees, organizations, and working groups.

Citizens give their time to serve on our volunteer fire department which, at the cost of a reasonable stipend, provides comprehensive fire and rescue

services at a fraction of the price of a paid full time department. We have planning commissioners who must grasp complex statutory and technical standards, and make tough decisions that are not always popular, but consistently reasonable and forward-thinking. We have Friends of the Brownell Library whose continued financial and organizational support has elevated our library to its position as one of the leading public cultural and information centers in the state. We have a Zoning Board, a Capital Projects Committee, a Bike-Walk Committee, a Tree Committee, and a Stormwater Policy Committee, all of which help us make intelligent decisions about infrastructure planning and growth. Popular events that strengthen community spirit such as the Memorial Day

Parade, Block Party, Train Hop, and Five Corners Farmers Market all require many hours of planning and supervision by citizen volunteers working with Village staff. We have Heart & Soul of Essex helping us define community values that should inform government policy, and the Essex Governance Group exploring ways to increase voter turnout.

From our vantage point as the elected governing board for the Village, it is a great joy to see so many of you willing to roll up your sleeves and tackle these jobs. We know each of you got involved because you want to give back to the community by doing something worthwhile and which you care about. You're not in it for praise, but we want to honor you nonetheless. Your commitment humbles us, energizes the Village staff, and provides an inspiration to all for a hopeful, positive world. Thank you!

### **A Transformative Year**

IBM becomes GlobalFoundries. The iconic People's Bank becomes a multistory, commercial-residential building. The year 2014 brought many changes to our community, but perhaps none bigger than the commitment of the Village and Town governing boards to jointly enter a period where we actively explore shared municipal services. Why tamper with the status quo relationship between the Village of Essex Junction and Town of Essex? Why not investigate the possibility of simply merging the two governments or completely separating them?

As the Village's elected leaders, one of our responsibilities is to anticipate, to the best of our abilities, challenges we must face in the coming years. One of the most predictable challenges is the rising cost of municipal services. All Village taxpayers are also residents of Essex Town, the Essex Junction School District, and the Union 46 (Essex High School) District. Costs are increasing in all those municipal entities as well. We, along with the Essex Town Selectboard, believe we must do a better job reining in tax increases while providing the high quality municipal services our constituents expect and deserve. We believe that finding creative ways to share existing municipal services by rearranging administrative oversight is

one of the most promising areas for achieving that goal while maintaining our traditional "Village-Town" identity. A thoughtful and highly detailed study undertaken by former Village and Town officials familiar with private sector merger and finance supports that belief. (See "Shared Services Report" on the Village of Essex Junction website.) Members of the two boards also acknowledged that past efforts (of which there have been many) to completely merge or separate the Village and Town not only failed completely, but sowed seeds of misunderstanding and mistrust that have hindered community relations for years.

So far, this "third way" approach of sharing services without restructuring our charters has proved promising:

- The shared municipal manager model, which both boards put in place in May 2013, has greatly improved communication between the two governments and significantly lowered administrative costs in the Village with no additional cost to the Town.
- We combined all municipal and school taxes into one tax bill, which not only saved thousands of dollars in administrative costs but made paying our taxes a little easier.
- The Town's agreement to help pay for the Village's new fire truck (which serves both communities) has defrayed some of the cost for Village taxpayers while eliminating the need for the Town to purchase its own truck.
- Our current proposal to take a unified approach to stormwater policy and management will translate into significant savings for the Village with minimal additional expense to the Town. More importantly, it means the entire Essex community will be able to comply with new state and federally mandated stormwater management requirements more efficiently in the coming decades.

### **Shared Public Works**

In 2015, we will also be seeking to enter a three-year trial period for a shared public works model. The departments will retain their separate identities and responsibilities, and the Trustees and Essex Junction staff will maintain oversight of the Village Public Works Department, including its budget. However, the cost of the Village public works

budget will be integrated into the Town's general fund budget, which is funded by all Village and Town taxpayers. The net financial effect is that the cost of providing public works services in the Village and Town will now be shared equally throughout the Essex community, in contrast to the traditional arrangement of Village taxpayers funding part of the Town's costs while bearing 100% of the Village's costs.

After three years, both governments will evaluate the service delivery and cost efficacy of the arrangement and jointly decide whether to continue, modify, or cancel it.

### **Budget Impacts of Shared Services**

**Changes to the Village Budget** – The proposed FYE 2016 Village General Fund budget of \$3,799,390 presented in this report represents a 7.4% increase over last year's budget. About 3% of the increase is due to contracted salary and operational increases, as seen in previous years. The remaining 4.4% represents the first payment on the \$3.3 million capital improvement bond voters approved last year.

However, the overall impact of these increases on Village taxpayers will be substantially reduced by combining the Village's public works budget with the Town's public works budget. The actual dollars to be collected from Village taxpayers into the Village budget will be \$2,564,285 which represents a -14.85% reduction from last year's budget, resulting in a -15.6% reduction in this year's tax rate. Those reductions will be offset somewhat for Village taxpayers by increases in their Essex Town taxes. The net effect for Village taxpayers will be about a \$63 increase in their combined Village/Town municipal taxes (for a median home value of \$280,000) representing about a +3.3% overall increase in their combined Village/Town municipal tax rate.

**What This Means for Town Taxpayers** – If the cost of providing public works services throughout the community is now redistributed equally among all Essex Junction and Essex Town taxpayers, does that mean Town taxpayers outside the Village will see a significant increase in their tax rate to offset the reduction in the Village tax rate? No. Town taxpayers who live outside the Village traditionally pay a highway tax that Village taxpayers don't pay. The highway tax funds a portion of the Town's road maintenance. Under the shared services proposal, the Essex Selectboard has reduced the highway tax rate. The lost funds will be made up by an increase in the Town's general fund tax which is distributed equally throughout the Town and Village. The net effect of reducing the highway tax while increasing the general fund tax is that Town taxpayers outside the Village will see an overall increase in their municipal tax rate similar to their Village neighbors. The Village Trustees and the Town Selectboard worked together to formulate a tax equity plan to redistribute the cost of providing public works services throughout the community that's fair to everyone. A “solution” that benefits one segment of the population by penalizing another is no solution at all.

### **A Heartfelt Goodbye**

Another important transition that occurred in 2014 was the retirement of Library Director Penny Pillsbury, under whose thoughtful guidance and energetic leadership the Brownell became the second busiest municipal library in Vermont (topped only by Burlington's Fletcher Free Library), and certainly among the state's most innovative in terms of customer service and programming. Penny loved her library and the thousands of patrons who benefited from her passion and talent loved her back. We wish her all the best, and hope that in her retirement she finds great comfort in knowing that she contributed to the cultural and intellectual enlightenment of many, many people and that her good work will resonate for many years to come.

**Join Front Porch Forum at [www.frontporchforum.com](http://www.frontporchforum.com). There are five neighborhoods in Essex Junction that have their own forums: Five Corners North, Five Corners South, Fairview Farms, Countryside and Essex West.**

***Water quality and stormwater info is available at [smartwaterways.org](http://smartwaterways.org) and [ccstreamteam.org](http://ccstreamteam.org).***

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
2 Lincoln Street  
Essex Junction, VT 05452-3154

PRST STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Burlington, VT  
05401  
Permit #675

ECRWSS

## POSTAL PATRON

### IMPORTANT DATES FOR VILLAGE RESIDENTS

<u>March 16, 2015</u>	Second installment of property taxes due
<u>April 1, 2015</u>	Community Supper, 6 pm, Essex High School Cafeteria <b>Annual Meeting</b> , 7 pm, Essex High School Auditorium
<u>April 14, 2015</u>	Village Annual Meeting ballot voting 7 am-7 pm, EHS
<u>May 23, 2015</u>	Memorial Day Parade, 10 am
<u>May 29, 2015</u>	Five Corners Farmers Market opens
<u>June 1, 2015</u>	Water/sewer bills due
<u>July 4, 2015</u>	4 <sup>th</sup> of July Celebration with fireworks at Maple St. Park
<u>July 18, 2015</u>	14 <sup>th</sup> Annual Block Party, Railroad Avenue, 5-10 pm
<u>Aug. 31, 2015</u>	Water/sewer bills due
<u>Sept. 15, 2015</u>	First installment of property taxes due
<u>Nov. 30, 2015</u>	Water/sewer bills due

#### *Community Supper Before Annual Meeting, April 1 at 6:00 PM*

Join your friends and neighbors for the Community Supper on Wednesday, April 1, 2015 at 6 PM in the Essex High School cafeteria. The supper is free and dessert will be provided. The supper is followed by the Village Annual Meeting in the auditorium at 7 PM. **Free on-site child care is provided during the meeting.**

#### 2014 Annual Report

The 2014 Village Annual Report will be available at the Annual Meeting or may be picked up at the Village office or the Brownell Library by March 20. It will be also online at [www.essexjunction.org](http://www.essexjunction.org). The FYE 14 Audit Report is also available on the Village website or at the Village office.

**WARNING**  
**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION ANNUAL MEETING**  
**APRIL 1 & 14, 2015**

The legal voters of the Village of Essex Junction are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Essex Community Educational Center on Educational Drive in the Village of Essex Junction on Wednesday, April 1, 2015 at 7:00 PM to act upon any of the following articles not involving voting by Australian ballot, said meeting to be adjourned to reconvene at the Essex Community Educational Center, on Tuesday, April 14, 2015 to vote for Village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot, said voting by Australian ballot to begin at 7:00 AM and close at 7:00 PM.

**ARTICLE 1.** Shall the voters act upon the report of the auditor?

**ARTICLE 2.** Shall the voters approve an annual General Fund Budget in the amount of \$3,799,390 for fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, \$2,564,285 of which is to be levied in taxes against the Village Grand List?

**ARTICLE 3.** Shall the voters approve the transfer of \$75,000 from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Reserve Fund for future capital projects?

**ARTICLE 4.** Shall the voters approve holding the 2016 Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 6, 2016 to act upon any articles not involving voting by Australian ballot and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 12, 2016 to vote for the Village officers and transact any business involving voting by Australian ballot?

**ARTICLE 5.** To transact any other business that may lawfully come before the meeting?

**BALLOT QUESTIONS**

**ARTICLE 6.** To elect Village officers required by law including: Moderator (one year term); two Village Trustees (three year terms); one Library Trustee (five year term)?

Dated this 24th day of February, 2015

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

By: George A. Tyler, President  
Dan Kerin, Vice President  
Lori Houghton, Trustee  
Andrew Brown, Trustee  
Elaine Sopchak, Trustee

ATTEST:  
Susan McNamara-Hill, Village Clerk

## VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION GENERAL FUND REVENUES

Account	FYE13 Actual	FYE14 Budget	FYE14 Actual	FYE15 Budget	FYE15 Estimated Revenues	FYE16 Proposed Budget
1 Unrestricted Fund Balance	0	35,000	0	35,000	27,265	35,000
2 Property Taxes	2,652,852	2,806,463	2,811,738	3,011,526	3,035,037	2,564,285
3 State for Pilot & Current Use	4,079	2,500	2,891	2,500	3,529	2,500
4 Whitcomb Farm Solar Pilot	0	0	0	0	3,300	5,524
5 IBM Subsidy	60,578	0	0	0	0	0
6 Penalties/Interest Delinq. Taxes	10,855	7,000	8,049	8,000	383	0
7 License & Zoning Fees	60,199	35,000	89,513	35,000	65,000	50,000
8 Service Fee - Water	110,169	111,336	111,336	106,840	106,840	108,760
9 Service Fee - WWTP	55,085	55,668	55,668	53,420	53,420	54,380
10 Service Fee - Sanitation	110,169	111,336	111,336	106,840	106,840	108,760
11 State District Court Fines	3,709	2,000	2,195	2,000	1,500	2,000
12 State Highway Aid	113,128	100,000	113,461	100,000	106,512	0
13 Town Payment for Stormwater	0	0	0	0	0	59,500
14 Town Payment for Street Dept.	0	0	0	0	0	780,070
15 EJSJ Tax Collection Fee	47,956	47,000	49,896	48,000	0	0
16 Lincoln Hall Rentals	1	0	0	1	1	1
17 Parking Space Fees	4,400	4,800	5,200	4,800	4,800	4,800
18 Miscellaneous Fire Receipts	1,231	10	0	10	10	10
19 Block Party Donations	1,550	1,500	1,504	1,500	1,500	1,500
20 Miscellaneous Street Receipts	2,850	3,500	5,073	3,000	3,000	3,000
21 Miscellaneous Library Receipts	708	600	286	500	500	300
22 Lost Book Revenue	3,855	0	4,451	0	4,500	0
23 Essex Town Contribution to Library	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
24 Interest Earnings	1,644	1,000	2,017	1,500	1,500	2,000
25 Miscellaneous Grants	52,590	0	148,028	0	15,140	0
26 Misc. Receipts	2,343	5,000	4,930	2,000	1,500	2,000
27 Sale of Asset	500	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>3,315,451</b>	<b>3,344,713</b>	<b>3,542,572</b>	<b>3,537,437</b>	<b>3,557,077</b>	<b>3,799,390</b>

## GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY

	FYE13 Actual	FYE14 Budget	FYE14 Actual	FYE15 Budget	FYE15 Estimated Expenditures	FYE16 Proposed Budget
<b>GENERAL GOVERNMENT:</b>						
28 Administration	558,524	598,797	529,832	561,784	563,412	588,773
29 Transfers & Misc Expenditures	596,412	620,051	620,051	649,623	649,623	690,448
30 Grant & Non-Budgetary Expenditures	109,288	0	185,022	0	16,140	0
31 Seniors Support	0	0	0	7,960	5,918	8,223
32 Fire Department	280,668	287,208	281,793	298,075	298,075	304,184
33 Library	647,061	684,479	674,880	736,207	706,268	762,775
34 Lincoln Hall	52,136	38,452	51,291	55,057	59,868	44,604
35 Community Development	207,210	244,740	210,712	250,678	243,576	249,937
36 Economic Development/Community Even	75,283	79,628	76,150	94,838	94,923	87,450
37 Street Department	740,425	791,358	832,124	814,603	842,183	839,570
<b>Subtotal General Fund</b>	<b>3,267,007</b>	<b>3,344,713</b>	<b>3,461,855</b>	<b>3,468,825</b>	<b>3,479,986</b>	<b>3,575,964</b>
38 Debt Service	0	0	0	68,612	68,612	223,426
<b>GENERAL FUND TOTAL</b>	<b>3,267,007</b>	<b>3,344,713</b>	<b>3,461,855</b>	<b>3,537,437</b>	<b>3,548,598</b>	<b>3,799,390</b>