

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 4, 2025
DRAFT**

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Elijah Massey, Chair; Diane Clemens, Vice-Chair; Finn Hamilton (non-voting member); Elena Juodisius; Kirstie Paschall

ADMINISTRATION: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Eve Benen, Bob Braren, Luke Brockmeier, Dorothy Bergendahl, Jeff Frolik, John Gaworecki, Greg Morgan, Lori Watson, Alison Wermer

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Massey called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

None.

4. MINUTES

a. August 7, 2025

DIANE CLEMENS made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUODISIUS, to approve the minutes of minutes of August 7, 2025. Motion passed 5-0.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Amtrak Station Improvements Public Open House and Discussion

Mr. Yuen said that this evening is the public open house on the Amtrak Station Improvements project, and the time for members of the public and the Planning Commission (PC) to share their thoughts on the project. This project began in 2012 and Mr. Yuen provided information on the project history and public outreach. The City received a three million dollar grant from the federal government for this project. He explained the complexities of ownership of the train station. Mr. Braren, of Michael Baker International (MBI) Consultants, introduced himself as the local project manager. He described the project design and noted that protected covered access is located around the building, which is as close to what was previously modeled as possible. Mr. Yuen said that the crosswalks are located as close as possible to the bus stops. Additional lighting will be installed; however a lighting plan is not yet available.

Ms. Watson, of MBI Consultants, said that she is looking for input regarding the canopy and covered areas, crosswalk location, parking changes and bike rack/shelter locations. She said that a survey is available to provide input. She requested that the public categorize improvements as being more for safety or more for comfort/ease of use. Ms. Bergendahl discussed concerns about busses blocking the lane of travel, and asked if this design would take care of this problem. Mr. Braren answered affirmatively. Mr. Gaworecki said that he is the station caretaker, and asked if work would be conducted inside of the station. He said that this is a very busy station and that recent changes in other parts of the building have made it

so that the waiting area could be expanded. Mr. Gaworecki detailed the space constraints of the current waiting area. Mr. Morgan said that he hopes that the station is being designed for higher potential use (futureproofing) in anticipation of the Montreal connection returning. Answering a question from Mr. Yuen, Mr. Braren said that nothing with this proposed design will prevent future changes to the building. Ms. Juodisius said that she wants to ensure that there is access to the accessible spaces from the sidewalk and an appropriate setup for drop offs and pickups of passengers. Ms. Wermer asked for clarification on the ownership structure of the building, which was given. The appearance of the former ATM vestibule may be changed with this project if funding permits but changes are not include in the current plans. Ms. Wermer asked if ordinances are in place to ensure that no loitering will occur around the station. Mr. Yuen said that all City ordinances will apply to the area. Ms. Paschall asked if there is overlap between the Connect the Junction Project. Mr. Yuen said that the plan suggests using Railroad Avenue as an events space which could be done after the station is renovated. Potential additional projects were discussed, which include removal of the vestibule, improvements to the interior waiting space, lighting improvements and expanding the sidewalk to accommodate both accessible parking spaces. Mr. Yuen said that the City has installed two bike racks across the street from the station and said that the City also owns ten bike lockers on the Crescent Connector. Ms. Juodisius spoke of the need for sheltered and secured bike parking.

Ms. Baker said that the survey will be live until October 4th. Paper copies will also be available. A tabling event will be held during the Meet Me on Main event. The Environmental Review and Historic Preservation Report will be conducted this fall. Access to the site will be restricted during construction.

b. Continued discussion of Revised Design Alternative for Pearl Street between Susie Wilson Rd and West St Extension

Mr. Yuen said that he has heard comments from nearby residents many of whom are ambivalent about the existing median. He said that transit passengers were happy with the new proposed bus stop and able to access better service. Mr. Massey asked if the project team considered narrowing the eastbound lanes to be able to add additional bus stops. He said that the current proposal can be confusing for bike traffic. Mr. Yuen said that further narrowing of the eastbound lanes would have cost implications and may impact transit management during CVE events. He also that while adding one eastbound bus stop would improve transit access, adding too many may result in slower service for all.

Mr. Yuen said that an additional design alternative could be requested from consultant Stantec. This was not desired by the PC. As the project is currently drawn, the busses would temporarily occupy the bike lane when stopping. Mr. Yuen said that the largest improvement for cyclists is the shared use path. He will share all comments with Stantec. The scoping study will be finalized later this year and will need to be adopted by the City Council. Capital funds are allocated for this project.

c. Update on Connect the Junction Project Public Engagement

Mr. Yuen said that staff has been publicizing Connect the Junction at a variety of public events, as well as targeted ice-cream socials. The online open house is up and running, and he said that the previous technical difficulties have been worked out. The in-person open house will be on September 27th and focus groups will be soon. Developers will be engaged throughout the project. Ms. Clemens described technical difficulties she encountered while taking the survey. Future public engagement is planned for this project. The report is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

6. MEMBERS UPDATES

Ms. Clemens said that she will be sending a link to the Great Energy Times magazine to all members. She suggested that future collaborative work with the Essex Energy Committee occur. She signed up for Municipal Day on October 17 and encouraged others to do the same.

7. STAFF UPDATES

Mr. Yuen said that Essex Junction recently received a design grant from the Vermont Arts Council. The design grant often leads to further funds for project implementation.

8. ADJOURNMENT

ELENA JUODISIUS made a motion, seconded by DIANE CLEMENS, to adjourn. Meeting adjourned 8:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville