

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
DECEMBER 4, 2025
APPROVED JANUARY 15, 2026**

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Elijah Massey, Chair; Diane Clemens, Vice-Chair; Elena Juodisius; Finn Hamilton (non-voting); Scott McCormick; Kirstie Paschall
ADMINISTRATION: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director
OTHERS PRESENT: Steve Eustis, Theresa Gookin, Raechel McLeod

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Massey called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

None.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

Mr. Eustis said that building heights and traffic patterns are the most impactful aspects of planning to the community, and he encouraged the Planning Commission (PC) to carefully consider changing these with community feedback. Mr. McCormick said that the PC has worked hard to engage the community, and that he welcomes any suggestions on engagement. Mr. Eustis spoke about clarifying agendas titles to ensure that residents knew what was being approved and discussed. Ms. Clemens said that the PC has had success with visiting the public where they are but has been working on creating this plan for a year and have not had luck in bringing more residents to meetings to provide concrete feedback.

4. MINUTES

a. November 6th, 2025

ELENA JUODISIUS made a motion, seconded by SCOTT MCCORMICK, to approve the minutes of November 6th, 20205, with corrections. Motion passed 5-0.

Corrections:

-The date included in the minutes is incorrectly listed as November 7th.

b. November 18th, 2025

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion to approve the minutes of November 18th, 2025. Motion passed 5-0.

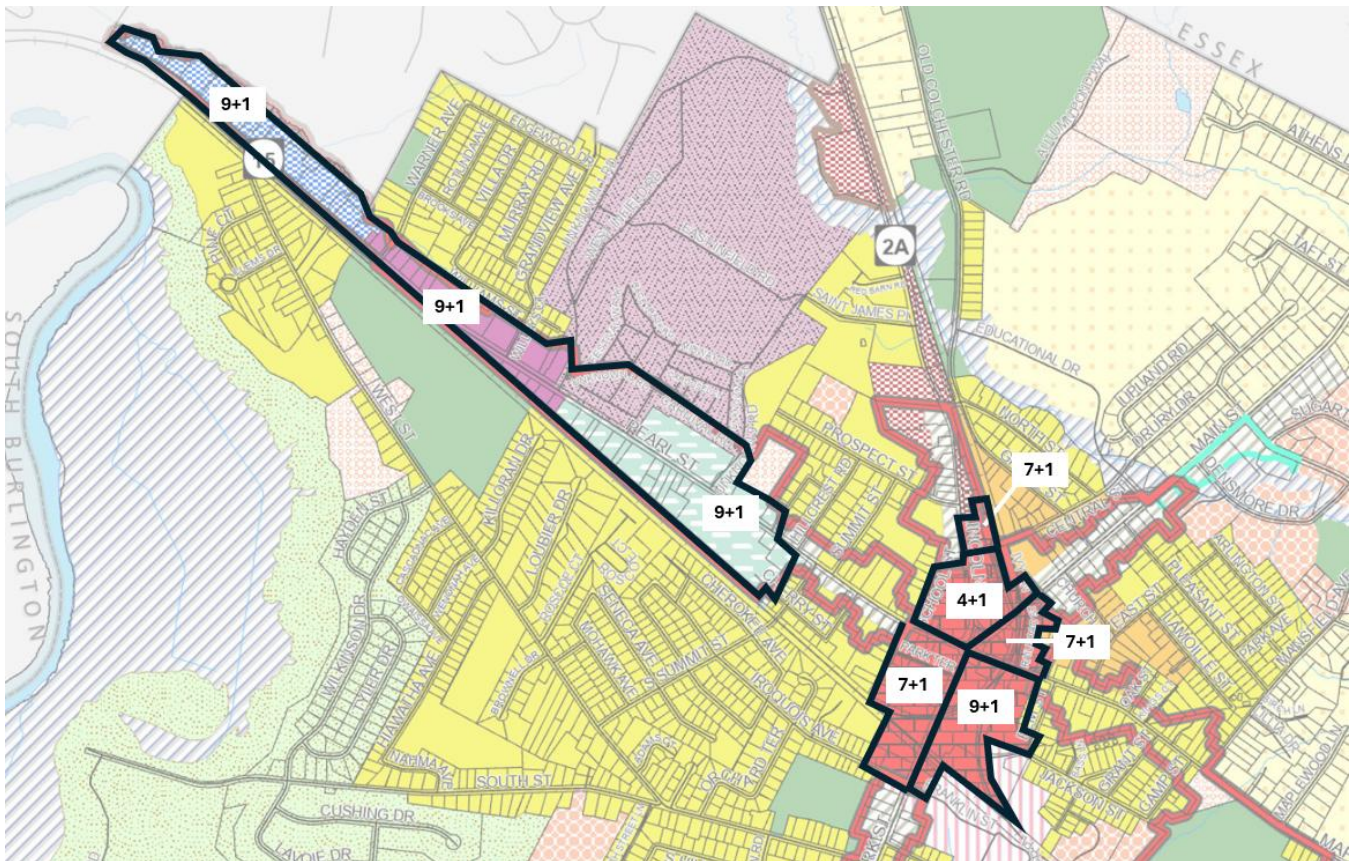
5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion and Consideration of Connect the Junction Transit Oriented Development Master Plan.

Mr. Yuen said that he prepared a memo to give the PC an understanding of the issues that need to be further discussed and decided upon regarding the Transit Orientated Development Master Plan. Ms. Clemens suggested that there be a height bonus for developers who build larger units for families, as many of the recently constructed units are studios or one-bedroom units. She also suggested asking developers if they are interested in selling owner-occupied units, rather than just rentals.

The PC discussed building heights that should be allowed in each area of Essex Junction. Mr. Yuen stated that allowing seven-story buildings, with an eighth bonus story, would not bring Essex Junction as close to the mid-range housing targets as expected. Mr. Hamilton said that most residents seem to be supportive of eight to ten story building heights. Mr. McCormick said that he is supportive of higher building heights but unsure if it is appropriate for the Village Center. He said that he would like to further understand the housing strategy for Essex Junction as a whole. Ms. Paschall said that she supports broadly increasing heights in Essex Junction and then looking at other tools to address concerns. Building construction takes time and the market forces may not support taller buildings in all areas of the community. Mr. Massey said that having an eight or ten story building will drastically change the feel of the area. He agrees that taller buildings should be permitted on the Pearl Street corridor but is unsure if this is appropriate for the downtown area. Mr. Yuen said that each property in Essex Junction has been broken down based on its chance of redevelopment. There is more likelihood of buildout in the Village Center than on the Pearl Street Corridor.

Mr. Massey said that the PC is split between those who would like to see nine stories with a one-story bonus allowed in all areas, and those who believe that the standards for the Village Center should be more conservative. He said that he would like to see a compromise between the two viewpoints. Ms. Juodisius suggested working to keep the same character in the more historic block of the Village Center district, Mr. Yuen said that a specific area of the Village Center could have a height limit included. After significant discussion, the PC decided on the following limits:



Mr. Massey said that it would be beneficial to have Pearl Street as a second commercial core to assist residents of the western end of the city. There is additional public support for increasing the height limits on Pearl Street. The PC discussed the impact of large buildings on noise from concerts at CVE, as well as massing and shadowing. Ms. Clemens expressed a desire to not create a “canyon” with very large buildings around CVE.

Mr. Yuen provided an overview of inclusionary zoning, noting that this could be helpful to ensure that there are a wider variety of housing options and mixed-unit developments. Mr. Massey suggested informing the consultant that this is something that the PC is interested in learning more about. Regarding the changes to traffic operations at the Five Corners intersection, Mr. Yeun said that this project would need to be scoped and ensure that accessibility and public engagement is present. Ms. Clemens said that she believes that Memorial Way should not be closed permanently. Mr. McCormick discussed traffic patterns and potential turning issues at the Five Corners. Mr. Hamilton said that he liked the idea of making Main Street two lanes to reduce speeds.

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUODISIUS, that the Planning Commission endorse the Connect the Junction Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan, as discussed and agreed upon in this meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

b. Discussion and Consideration of 2026 ECOS Plan Review Comments

Mr. Yuen said that the City is not required to submit comments, but that it is always appreciated. He said that staff are suggesting that comments regarding the difficulty of achieving the housing targets be included. Ms. Clemens discussed the maps included and said that she believes that not including Global Foundries in the enterprise zone is misleading. She suggested that the map be on a more granular scale.

ELENA JUODISIUS made a motion, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, that the Planning Commission direct City staff to submit the comments on the 2026 ECOS plan as discussed. Motion passed 5-0.

c. Informational Update on FY27 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Yuen said that the UPWP process happens yearly and provides funding to Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) member communities. Essex Junction is requesting funds for continuation of previous year’s projects and one transportation scoping study. Staff will work with the City Council to ensure that these projects are budgeted for. Projects that are of regional significance typically do not have a cost-share. Mr. McCormick said that he is the Essex Junction representative to the CCRPC and suggested that he works with Mr. Yuen to understand the projects in more detail.

6. MEMBERS UPDATES

Ms. Clemens said that she recently read an article about murals being painted on utility boxes and suggested that it may be feasible in Essex Junction. Mr. McCormick discussed a recent news article regarding a public vote on speed reduction failing in a California beach town, leading to a fatality.

7. STAFF UPDATES

None.

8. ADJOURNMENT

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by **DIANE CLEMENS**, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned 9:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville