

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
JUNE 4, 2026
APPROVED JULY 2, 2026**

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Elijah Massey, Chair; Finn Hamilton (non-voting) Elena Juodisius, Scott McCormick; Kirstie Paschall

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Diane Clemens

ADMINISTRATION: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director;

OTHERS PRESENT: Darren Schibler

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

None.

4. MINUTES

a. May 7th, 2026

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUODISIUS, to approve the minutes of May 7th, 2026, as presented. Motion passed 4-0.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion of the 2027 Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Schibler, of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), presented an overview of the CCRPC's recent work on the Comprehensive Plan and outstanding topics to be addressed. Public engagement is still in process, but significant work has been completed. A focus group relating to housing was held on April 21st, 2026. Key themes from the focus group included support for housing development opportunities, improving rental housing quality, enhancing the village feel, affordability and diversity of housing types, and the importance of integrating green spaces in housing developments. The energy & climate focus group, consisting mostly of residents with professional experience, discussed the balance between regulatory and incentive approaches for implementing energy codes. Also discussed was the need for more oversight of large building construction and better enforcement and education regarding energy codes. The creation of a revolving loan fund for energy upgrades in rental properties was discussed with Mr. McCormick suggesting that local options tax revenue could be utilized to fund this. The discussion also touched on the City's role as a potential connector and educator between state incentives and community members, and the potential for multi-municipality collaboration on loan funds.

Mr. Schibler discussed business outreach efforts, noting that there is support from business owners of the City's efforts. He discussed the themes around balancing walkability and parking needs, business visibility challenges related to signage, support for the police department, an interest in better City

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communication and a desire for business owner collaboration groups. Mr. Schibler said some businesses on Pearl Street feel they cannot expand due to space or zoning concerns. He said a business owner focus group will occur at Boxcar Bakery on June 15th, 2026, at 3:30 PM. Ms. Mahoney, City Manager, will be present at this focus group. Mr. Schibler will be meeting with Jeetan Khadka, of PeopleFirst Workforce Solutions to discuss the City's role in assisting minority businesses owners.

Mr. Schibler introduced future land use mapping, explaining its purpose in promoting community health, safety, and welfare while supporting plan implementation through zoning regulations and compatibility with state and regional planning, particularly regarding Tier 1A and 1B designations. He outlined several approaches for creating future land use maps, including grouping existing areas together, starting with the regional plan, or developing a new neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach. The discussion also touched on maintaining, transforming, or evolving specific areas. Mr. Massey expressed preference for grouping existing areas together rather than a neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach. Mr. Hamilton expressed a desire to make maps more user-friendly by potentially displaying them publicly with interactive elements like sticky notes for community feedback. Answering a question from Mr. Massey, Mr. Yuen said changing the future land use map does not necessarily impact the zoning map, so long as existing areas are grouped together. It would simply create broader categories that could still allow for adjustments within those groupings. Mr. McCormick said a bottom-up approach that would allow for flexibility and community input on potential changes. He also identified several areas, such as CVE, which could be identified for future housing development. Ms. Paschall encouraged regular check-ins during the process.

Mr. Schibler reviewed zoning plans from Essex Town, Winooski and Williston with particular attention to how to handle transitions between different zones and maintain consistency at community boundaries. Mr. Yuen said transit mapping can be helpful for building cities around public transport. Mr. Schibler described Winooski as having "use-agnostic zoning" where a larger number of uses are allowed in specific areas. Unlike Winooski, Mr. Yuen said parts of Essex Junction lacks walkable commercial areas, especially in residential neighborhoods. The PC discussed challenges and opportunities related to land use categories, particularly around integrating small-scale commercial and retail development with residential neighborhoods. Walkability and maintaining the family-friendly nature of residential neighborhoods was discussed. Mr. Schibler will identify specific areas, such as the Residential 1 and 2 districts, which could be consolidated.

All agreed to name future land use categories such that the Village Center area can be renamed as the City Center or downtown area in the future for consistent nomenclature. Mr. Yuen discussed how to map agricultural zones, with the PC deciding to separate existing residential developments from agricultural land. Mr. Schibler discussed mapping and categorization approaches for future land use planning, focusing on how to, and if it is necessary to, differentiate between parks, conserved land, open spaces, and residential areas. The PC decided to consider combining multi-family residential areas with regular residential zones since the distinction may diminish over time. Mr. McCormick said that floodplain designations should be included in mapping. Mr. Schibler suggested creating an interactive map viewer to help visualize the proposed zoning categories. He displayed the South Burlington Future Land Use Map and the Westford Future Zoning Transects & Designation Map for comparison purposes. Mr. Schibler discussed the plan for reviewing and consolidating zoning districts, starting with existing purpose statements and language.

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The PC will discuss several chapters for the Comprehensive Plan at each monthly meeting, with the goal of finalizing the plan by the end of the year. The adoption deadline by the City Council is August 11, 2027. Prior to approval by the City Council, the CCRPC must also approve the document.

b. Discussion and consideration of Land Development Code amendments, including Form-Based Code Proposal

Mr. Yuen provided an update on the LDC draft, noting that it remains a living document with ongoing revisions expected within the next month ahead of the July PC meeting. At this time, the PC could request additional changes or consider warning a public hearing. The draft includes a new exemption for design review if pre-approved 802 Homes templates are used. Mr. Yuen requested all PC members send feedback on the draft. Mr. McCormick encouraged less technical jargon to be included in the document to make it more accessible. Ms. Juodisius brought up regulations around mobile tiny homes used as accessory dwelling units, with Mr. Yuen agreeing to review existing regulations to ensure they allow for appropriate sewer hookups and compliance with zoning requirements.

6. MEMBERS UPDATES

Mr. Massey discussed a recent housing workshop. Mr. Yuen discussed an infill housing workshop on June 22nd in South Burlington. The City received the Notable Project Award for the Connect the Junction Plan at the 2026 Vermont Walk/Bike Summit.

7. STAFF UPDATES

Mr. Yuen said the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Spring Planning and Zoning Forum will be held on June 10th.

8. ADJOURNMENT

SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELENA JUOSIDIUS, to adjourn. Motion passed 4-0. Meeting adjourned 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville