

**SELECTBOARD & TRUSTEES
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
DRAFT JOINT MEETING MINUTES
Monday, March 22, 2021**

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Vince Franco; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Patrick Murray; Andy Watts

TRUSTEES: Andrew Brown, President; Raj Chawla; Dan Kerin; Amber Thibeault; George Tyler

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Jill Evans, Director of the Essex Community Justice Center; Ron Hoague, Chief of Police; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Brad Luck, Essex Junction Recreation and Parks (EJRP) Director; Sarah Macy, Finance Director; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director; Allyson Vile, Parks & Recreation Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Wayne Beebe; Bob Burrows; Alise Certa; Heidi Clark; Diane Clemens; Annie Cooper; Tracey Delphia; Erin Dickinson; Betsy Dunn; Natalie Feilchenfeld; Rosy Gallo; Maureen Gillard; Rachael Lizotte; Erin Maguire; Edward Malina; Susan McCormack, Creative Discourse; Timothy Miller; Scott Moore; Sarah Nosek; Betty Poulin; Roseanne Prestipino; Ta-Tanisha Redditta; Rep. Marybeth Redmond; Brian Shelden; Ken Signorello; Margaret Smith; Gabrielle Smith; Saramichelle Stultz; Liz Subin; Mike Thorne; Ann Wadsworth; Phyllis Willey; Irene Wrenner; Tom Yandow; Johnson; Nicole; RM; Rob

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees to order for the Joint meeting with the Essex Selectboard at 6:32 PM.

Ms. Haney called the Town of Essex Selectboard to order for the Joint meeting with the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees at 6:32 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

There were no additions or changes to the agenda. Mr. Franco read "An Invitation to Civility" from the book *All Those in Favor* by Susan Clark and Frank Bryan.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

With no changes to the agenda, approval was not required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Mr. Signorello asked about the status of the Memorial Day parade. Mr. Teich said the parade will not take place in 2021, due to COVID restrictions.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Presentation of racial equity work in Essex from Creative Discourse

Ms. McCormack, founder of Creative Discourse, set context for Essex's Racial Equity efforts, including the pandemic, national racial violence and protests, and inequalities experienced by black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). She presented a slide deck of Essex's Safety, Policing & Racial Justice engagement process with Creative Discourse, which included data collected from surveys and listening sessions; outcomes of their process; and suggested next steps. She said they aimed to answer the following questions: How do people envision public safety? What are people's experiences with public safety and policing in Essex? How do people want to make Essex a safer place to live and work? Ms. McCormack provided information about the demographics of participants and described a shared vision for safety in Essex. She

54 illustrated people’s different experiences in Essex, based on the identities they hold, and
55 displayed rates and comparisons about how safe people feel living in Essex: if people have
56 experienced or observed racism in Essex; people’s overall experience with police anywhere; and
57 people’s experience with the Essex Police Department. She shared ideas they gathered from the
58 process, including representative leadership; police reforms; and building community
59 commitment to equity, inclusion, and racial justice. She provided an overview of action ideas for
60 Essex, including community policing, and collaborative planning. She described the work of the
61 Collaborative Planning Team, a multi-racial/ethnic group of youth and adults and community
62 members. Ms. McCormack talked about current and emerging, equity, action-planning efforts
63 with the Essex Westford School District (EWSD), the municipality of Essex, the Community
64 Justice Center, and the Police Department. She provided an outline of recommendations from
65 Creative Discourse for moving forward with the work, including new priorities, action plans, and
66 collaborations.
67

68 Mr. Chawla spoke positively about his experience on the Safety, Policing, and Racial Justice
69 collaborative-planning team, calling it a good start to a longer process. He said greater diversity
70 on staff and boards is a priority and that he appreciates the municipalities and schools working
71 together.
72

73 Ms. Maguire also spoke positively about the process with Creative Discourse and the
74 collaborative-planning team. As a school leader she appreciated Creative Discourse’s process of
75 involving school boards and leadership to trainings at the onset. She said diversifying the
76 workforce and leadership in Essex is a priority.
77

78 Ms. Dunn said these efforts are moving in the right direction and talked about the work ahead,
79 given the centuries of belief systems involved. She said it is essential to involve the Asian
80 community, considering recent racist attacks. She thanked Ms. McCormack for her help.
81

82 **b. Presentation from Economic Development Commission about ongoing work**

83 Ms. Cooper, the Economic Development Commission (EDC) chair, discussed the EDC’s ongoing
84 work, including the 2021 work plan, strengthening business contacts, and coordinating online
85 media. She described alignment of efforts between the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation
86 (GBIC), the Energy Committee, the Bike Walk Advisory Committee, the Tree Advisory
87 Committee, and the Essex Junction Village Planning Commission. She said the EDC will also
88 reach out to the Housing Commission and the Town of Essex Planning Commission. Ms. Cooper
89 discussed the EDC’s effort to build its contact list from 40 businesses last year to 1,500
90 businesses now. She said the EDC has been looking into a local option tax, building on
91 conversations with the Selectboard and Trustees. She said the EDC will survey businesses,
92 invite board members to share their thoughts, and gather feedback from the community on the
93 possibility of the local option tax. She said the EDC will give the information they gather to the
94 Selectboard and Trustees to determine whether to put a local option tax on a future ballot. She
95 clarified that, at this time, nobody is deciding on the tax and that the public must vote before
96 anything could be incorporated.
97

98 Mr. Teich and Mr. Brown said they looked forward to hosting more events like Out & About. Mr.
99 Franco, Ms. Makuku, and Mr. Pierce commended staff, board members and the EDC team for
100 the event’s success. Mr. Brown suggested Board members email their thoughts on the local
101 option tax to the EDC. Mr. Watts said he forwarded his comments about the local option tax to
102 the EDC, because his change in jobs means he is no longer restricted by his former employer
103 about commenting on the topic. Ms. Haney commended the EDC for bringing committees
104 together to focus on shared work. She said the 1500 businesses listserv represents a strong
105 business at foundation in Essex and she is looking forward to continued momentum.

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Rep. Redmond expressed appreciation of the EDC’s work and shared relevant news from the legislature. She described Friday’s Senate-approved Covid recovery package, which could benefit Essex businesses.

Ms. Wrenner suggested that the boards consider only holding an advisory vote about whether the community wants to pursue a local option tax again, since it has failed in the past.

Ms. Dunn asked if the EDC would be working on Essex’s plans for the marijuana legislation. Mr. Duggan said that staff will work on outreach to help boards make an informed decision.

c. Presentation of changes at Indian Brook Park – Ally Vile

Ms. Vile summarized the memo she provided regarding changes to Indian Brook Park access. She described the honor system previously in place and the costs incurred for park maintenance and upkeep. She described the new Indian Brook access process which requires new passes at the gate. She said the system is similar to what other parks do and described the differences between season and day passes. She explained vehicle passes, for individual vehicles; flex passes, used on multiple vehicles; and pedestrian passes, for bikers or pedestrians; and the option for a dog endorsement. She explained that the new changes will allow Essex Parks and Rec to better quantify park use by people and dogs. Ms. Vile said revising the park access was a collaborative process focused on customer service.

The board members asked questions about the changes. Ms. Thibeault asked for clarification on the transition of people with current passes and whether people could pay for passes at the park. Ms. Vile explained that everyone with a current pass will get a new pass for the season and then could buy new passes for the next season. She said people can buy the passes at the park, or at the Parks and Rec office during business hours. Mr. Watts wondered whether Parks and Rec connected with the Police Department about enforcing the new parking ordinance on Indian Brook Road. Ms. Vile said she would connect about this and said changes to the gatehouse may also help with parking. Mr. Chawla asked Ms. Vile how they justified the 60% increase for a two-year pass. Ms. Vile shared examples of how the previous structure was unrealistic to be able to keep up with management of the 700-acre park. Mr. Chawla talked with Ms. Vile about the lack of current data on park use which could be rectified by this new pass structure. Ms. Haney and Ms. Vile discussed a future goal for the park to become self-sustaining enterprise fund.

Ms. Margaret Smith hoped that the new dog passes could allow only a limited number of dogs per person and described her concerns about safety and waste when big packs of dogs access the park. She also wondered if Parks and Rec will verify residency for pass holders. She talked about the high usage of the park and asked if they would consider re-establishing senior rates.

Ms. Dunn asked for clarification on pass pricing and Mr. Duggan shared the flyer of rates.

Ms. Feilchenfeld, a former resident of Essex and 20-year, non-resident, park pass-holder, expressed concerns with the proposed changes that will affect non-resident passes. She said the cost increase to non-residents may also cause other communities to put up this type of barrier to people who want to use other parks.

Ms. Delphia wondered if it would be possible to purchase a dog endorsement with just the daily rate or if it is only offered with a flex pass. She also wanted to know if the changes would eliminate the current senior discount.

Mr. Signorello asked about the costs associated with the Indian Brook Dam’s upkeep.

159 Ms. Wrenner said her family has expressed concern about dog waste at the park. She said she
160 hopes the park staff will revoke passes when people do not abide by the waste rule for dogs.
161

162 In response to questions from the public, Ms. Vile said:

- 163 • Parks & Rec can consider dog number limits and the possibility of reinstating senior rates.
- 164 • Moving to daily pass purchases for non-residents is going in the right direction for Parks & Rec.
- 165 • A dog pass can be purchased with a day pass or a season pass.
- 166 • Indian Brook’s municipal dam is considered a high priority for the state and makes it eligible for
167 grants. She said it is inspected each year to determine repair requirements.
- 168 • Dog waste and behavior is a constant issue and when people have been identified, passes
169 were, and will continue to be, revoked. However, there is not enough staff for constant
170 enforcement of dog behaviors or people’s behaviors related to dogs.
- 171 • When the fee structure was developed, the subgroup of non-residents who are dedicated to
172 using the park, were not provided more privilege than any other non-residents.
173

174 **d. Discussion about potential merger and other scenarios for Village of Essex Junction and**
175 **Town of Essex**

176 Ms. Haney talked about next steps for the petition-led ballot question in the Town. Mr. Brown
177 talked about preparations for the Village Annual Meeting and talked about the petition-led, non-
178 binding resolution which advises the Trustees to take steps toward separation if the revote does
179 not pass. He clarified that Village residents will vote on both ballot questions. Ms. Haney said the
180 Informational Hearing with the Selectboard about the reconsideration vote is scheduled for
181 Thursday, March 25. Mr. Tyler explained what a non-binding resolution is and Mr. Brown said this
182 resolution was presented to the Trustees with signatures from more than 400 residents. There
183 were no public comments at this time.
184

185 **e. Consider approval of FAQs and postcard mailing about upcoming vote on reconsideration**
186 **of merger**

187 Ms. Haney invited the Selectboard to consider approval of the FAQs and a postcard mailing
188 about the upcoming vote on reconsideration of merger. Mr. Duggan clarified that the postcard
189 and ballots are being mailed to all active, registered voters. Ms. Hill-Fleury suggested including
190 wording on the postcard for people to look at both sides of the ballot. Mr. Watts said he would
191 prefer to not put out new information generated for the FAQ without going through an entire
192 drafting and revision process. He said he wanted to avoid any confusion that may be generated
193 by including information about separation. Mr. Duggan and Mr. Teich said the information was
194 included because staff are being asked the questions on a daily basis and people are posing the
195 questions on social media. Mr. Murray said he supports including separation information on the
196 FAQ document because people want to know the consequences of voting down the merger. He
197 said it is important to give residents information as the Village considers the non-binding
198 resolution ballot question.
199

200 Ms. Evans agreed with Mr. Murray. She said the merger is confusing so adding the information
201 about separation helps people consider what may happen if there is no merger.
202

203 Ms. Wrenner said it is inappropriate for the Selectboard to put out information about separation
204 on the web or on a postcard.
205

206 Mr. Signorello said he did not see information anywhere on the postcard about tax savings or
207 increases with the merger and said this information is important and should be included.
208

209 Ms. Clemens said she feels represented when the Town provides objective information on the
210 issues. She said it is offensive to say that something happening within the Town, even though it
211 may be happening currently only in the Village, should not be communicated.
212

213 Mr. Shelden agreed with Ms. Clemens that neutral information about a common question people
214 want to understand should be included: What are half of the Town residents voting on?
215

216 Ms. Stultz said she is concerned that if information does not go out to people in the Town,
217 including the Village, people could criticize the board for not being transparent.
218

219 Ms. Smith said people are in various places of readiness to vote and are not sure where to go for
220 accurate information because it is hard to weed out perspectives from residents who are
221 entrenched in their opinions. She said information about the Village vote is important to include.
222

223 The Selectboard members and staff discussed how to proceed with the FAQ and the postcard.
224 Mr. Duggan clarified that the FAQ would be posted on the GreaterEssex2020 and Town
225 websites, so there could be time for a revision process, but the postcard needed to be addressed
226 during this meeting. He said the FAQ questions and answers were based on questions staff have
227 been hearing for months. Mr. Kerin said if the merger does not pass, even though the question
228 on the Village ballot is a non-binding resolution, it is unlikely that the municipalities will return to
229 status quo. Mr. Chawla said, as a Town resident, it is important for information to be shared
230 because one half of the Town is talking about a serious potential consequence if merger does not
231 pass. Mr. Watts restated that he wanted a drafting process for the FAQ. He wondered if a similar
232 document were on the Village website, so they could make the FAQ comparable. Ms. Haney
233 expressed concern with unintentional consequences that can come up when the Selectboard
234 takes a stance in the majority, with Mr. Watts dissenting. Ms. Hill-Fleury approved of both
235 documents, if the card includes a note saying that people can go to the website to learn more
236 about the tax implications of merger. Mr. Murray said he would not mind splitting the vote to
237 address the two items separately.
238

239 **PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to approve sending**
240 **the postcard to the active voters of the Town of Essex. The motion passed 5-0.**
241

242 **PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, that the Selectboard**
243 **approve the web content to be placed online with the amendments that Ms. Hill-Fleury**
244 **requested. The motion passed 4-1 by roll call, with Mr. Watts dissenting.**
245

246 **f. Discussion on future Strategic Planning Sessions**

247 Mr. Duggan invited the Trustees and Selectboard members to consider conducting a strategic
248 planning session together to prioritize and set goals for the upcoming fiscal year. He suggested
249 the session include planning for how to avoid having meetings multiple times during the weeks.
250 He posed guiding questions for the discussion. Mr. Teich also brought up issues that the board
251 members may want to address together.
252

253 The board members devised a plan to meet together for a strategic planning session. Mr. Brown
254 said it is important for the boards to plan together but, depending on the vote results, the
255 Trustees may need a separate strategic planning meeting as well. Mr. Tyler said the outcome of
256 April vote will determine the strategic planning session's direction, but there will continue to be
257 shared efforts that need to be planned. He said he is in favor of strategic planning with the
258 Selectboard, regardless of the vote, but suggested holding off on hiring a facilitator until the
259 topics are known. Mr. Franco proposed that the strategic planning session focus on what the
260 municipalities need and what can be agreed upon. Ms. Haney thought that having a facilitator at
261 the last strategic planning session contributed to the meeting's success and efficiency. The board

262 members agreed that they would prefer to hold the session in May on a Saturday. Mr. Watts
263 wondered if there should be a “cooling off period” before the strategic planning session so board
264 members and the community can consider how to heal. He liked the idea of hiring a facilitator for
265 the meeting and encouraged everyone to bring positivity to move forward together. Chawla
266 suggested that the strategic planning session could benefit Ms. Delphia as she starts on the
267 Selectboard.
268

269 Mr. Teich suggested May 22 for the Strategic Planning Session but said he would poll the
270 Trustees and Selectboard members. Mr. Tyler suggest the session be in person, socially
271 distanced. Mr. Brown agreed and wondered if it could be held at Indian Brook.
272

- 273 g. ***Discussion and potential action on evaluation of public official**
274 Discussion happened in executive session at the end of the meeting.
275

276 **6. CONSENT ITEMS**

- 277 a. Approve minutes: March 11, 2021 – Selectboard only
278

279 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, and VINCE FRANCO seconded, that the Selectboard**
280 **approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.**
281

282 **7. READING FILE**

- 283 a. Board member comments
284 There were no board member comments at this time.
285 b. Email from Chris Moldovan re: Mitten Money from Senator Sanders fundraiser
286 c. Email from Sharon Zukowski re: Submission to Selectboard re: Petition to Reconsider
287 d. Upcoming meeting schedule
288

289 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 290 a. *An executive session is anticipated for the evaluation of public official
291

292 **ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard enter**
293 **into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1**
294 **V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the Trustees and HR Director. The motion passed 5-0 at**
295 **8:23 PM.**
296

297 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees enter into**
298 **executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A.**
299 **Section 313(a)(3), to include the Selectboard and HR Director. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:25**
300 **PM.**
301

302 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the Trustees exit**
303 **executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:13 PM.**
304

305 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, that the Selectboard exit**
306 **executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:13 PM.**
307

308 **9. ADJOURN**

309
310 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees adjourn the**
311 **meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:14 PM.**
312

313 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, that the Selectboard**
314 **adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:14 PM.**
315

**SELECTBOARD & TRUSTEES
(DRAFT)**

March 22, 2021

316 Respectfully Submitted,
317 Cathy Ainsworth
318 Recording Secretary
319