SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Patrick Murray; Andrew Watts; Annie Cooper; Vince Franco.

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Sarah Macy, Finance Director/Assistant Manager; Rick Garey, Chief of Police.

OTHERS PRESENT: Lisa LaBerge; Max Levy; Ken Signorello; Irene Wrenner.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG
Andrew Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Trustees to order and Elaine Haney called the Town of Essex Selectboard back from recess, to enter into the Joint Meeting of the Village of Essex Trustees and the Town of Essex Selectboard at 8:03 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES
There were no agenda additions or changes at this time.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL
There were no changes to the agenda so approval is not needed at this time.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
a. Comments from public on items not on agenda
There were no comments from the public at this time.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS
a. Update on COVID-19 impacts:
Mr. Teich began the update by noting the key actions that the Town and Village have taken to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, including enacting the Essex Emergency Operations Plan with Police Chief Garey as the designated emergency operations coordinator, asking the boards to declare a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 crisis, unifying Town and Village actions and operations during the crisis where possible, and ensuring consistent messaging from the joint communities through the appointment of a public information officer (Mr. Duggan) and assistant public information officer (Tammy Getchell). He added that departmental continuity plans were developed, non-essential board and committee meetings have been cancelled, all essential board meetings are held remotely, public meeting spaces have been closed, and essential roles and functions in Town and Village administration are either working remotely or in staggered shifts. He further noted that the Champlain Valley Expo is now a COVID-19 test site, the Fire Department is now treating all calls as hazardous, the Police Department is
working split shifts, park amenities are closed, and parks and paths are not closed but social
distancing is being very strongly encouraged. He finally noted that two new expense accounts
have been created for Town and Village COVID-19-related expenses, in anticipation of FEMA-
reimbursement in future.

Ms. Haney thanked municipal staff for their hard work, and noted that different communities
are experiencing different levels of intensity in terms of police enforcement of Stay Home, Stay
Safe orders. Mr. Teich noted that the Essex Police Department has been approaching the order
with a light touch to start.

Mr. Chawla noted that signage for social distancing was put into place in the Pearl Street Park,
but that many are ignoring them and he has heard concern from elderly constituents. He
emphasized the importance of ramping up stronger messaging. Ms. Cooper stressed that Essex
should try and get ahead of the curve to enact preventive measures, not reactive measures.

Mr. Kerin asked whether school grounds were included in the social distancing/trespass order
and suggested reaching out to the school boards to post signage on school playgrounds.

Mr. Brown asked if the next step would be for the parks and recreation departments to remove
basketball hoops, tennis nets, and other equipment from parks to discourage gatherings and
encourage social distancing. Mr. Teich replied in the affirmative, if signs are not adhered-to. He
added that park crews are on a split shift and are also tasked with disinfecting buildings, so they
may not have the bandwidth to do comprehensive enforcement.

b. Discuss how to assist residents and businesses during COVID-19 pandemic:
Mr. Teich said the Town has 1% of the current fiscal year’s budget set aside for Health & Human
Services funding, which amounts to $148,000, and that the Town received more first-time grant
applications than the prior year, for a total amount of $186,000. He proposed to expedite the
approval process for grants, bringing them before the Selectboard in early May instead of June
to get funding distributed as quickly as possible. He also noted that the Town and Village are
actively reaching out to senior citizens, sending them letters with a list of resources and
contacts.

Selectboard and Trustee members discussed various ways to get food to families in need,
update citizens on available resources, and distribute donations. Mr. Teich mentioned that the
human services funds utilize partnerships with local entities, who have the knowledge and
infrastructure to better distribute funding than the administration could. He also suggested that
more money could be taken out of surplus funding to cover the gap between existing human
services grant funding and the amount of funding requested during this round.

The Selectboard and Trustees discussed bringing ideas and potential solutions for connecting
citizens to resources to the grant review committee.
Ken Signorello suggested that personal protective equipment (PPE) could be purchased and made available to those that need it like frontline staff, grocery, delivery, healthcare.

Irene Wrenner suggested that United Way is coordinating the receipt and distribution of resources, and can be reached by dialing 2-1-1.

The Selectboard and Trustees then discussed the anticipated financial impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Mr. Teich noted that the state education fund is projected to lose $40 million between now and the beginning of the next state fiscal year. He noted that the Town and Village are able to use their assigned and unassigned fund balances to ensure that essential services are maintained through during the COVID-19 crisis. Sarah Macy noted that the Town had $2.2 million in unassigned fund balance and $1.7 million in assigned fund balance at the end of the last fiscal year.

Ms. Haney stated that the Selectboard and Trustees want to assure residents that there will not be massive tax increases after the crisis is over with, and asked what steps could be taken to ensure that this doesn’t occur. Mr. Teich said the administration is looking at current cash flow and cash availability and will review ways to limit expenses moving forward.

Ms. Haney asked if there are actions that can be taken at the property-tax collection level, should that be needed in future. Mr. Teich replied that less than 20% of the property tax bill is municipal, and that the school district and state receive a large portion of the collected taxes. He added that Essex has a Board of Civil Authority which hears requests for tax abatement and penalty reduction from citizens, and that one of the qualifying reasons for abatement or penalty reduction is provable financial hardship. Ms. Macy added that when the next round of delinquent tax notices is sent out, the Town would include information on property owners’ right to apply for abatement.

Mr. Watts asked whether the state’s decision to postpone the tax filing deadline until July 15th has had an effect on Essex. Ms. Macy noted that this would delay when citizens would receive a revised tax bill with property tax adjustments applied. Ms. Haney suggested reaching out to the Essex delegation of legislators to see if action can be taken at that level.

c. Discuss and approve upcoming meeting schedule:

Mr. Duggan noted that meetings will be remote for the foreseeable future and that the schedule has been adjusted to have the Selectboard and Trustees meet twice per month.

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, VINCE FRANCO seconded, that the Selectboard approve the revised meeting schedule through June 30, 2021, with adjusted start times to 7:00 PM when Selectboard meets first. Motion passed 5-0.

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, VINCE FRANCO seconded, that the Selectboard approve Option A meeting schedule through April 2021. Motion passed 5-0.
RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the Option A meeting schedule through April 2021, with the Trustees start time at 6:30 PM. Motion passed 4-0.

6. **CONSENT ITEMS**

   a. Approve minutes: March 24, 2020 (Trustees and Selectboard)

   ANDY WATTS made a motion, and ANNIE COOPER seconded, that the Selectboard approve the consent agenda for April 6, 2020. Motion passed 5-0.

   AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, and DAN KERIN seconded, that the Trustees approve the consent agenda for April 6, 2020. Motion passed 4-0.

7. **READING FILE:**

   a. Board Member Comments

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

   a. An executive session is not anticipated

9. **ADJOURN:**

   DAN KERIN made a motion, and AMBER THIBEAULT seconded, to adjourn the Trustees meeting. Motion passed 4-0 at 10:10 PM.

   The Selectboard continued with a Selectboard-only portion of the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt
Recording Secretary

Approved this______day of_______, 2020
(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)