

**SELECTBOARD & TRUSTEES
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
DRAFT JOINT MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 24, 2021**

SELECTBOARD: Andy Watts, Chair; Patrick Murray, Vice Chair; Tracey Delphia; Vince Franco; Dawn Hill-Fleury

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Brad Luck, Essex Junction Recreation and Parks (EJRP) Director; Travis Sabatano, HR Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeanne Bull, Bob Burrows, Heidi Clark, Kevin Collins, Annie Cooper, Erin Dickinson, Erin Ennis, Maureen Gillard, Mary Lou Hurley, Tamara Jaques, Rachael Lizotte, Deb McAdoo, Sue McCormack, Jillian Niggel, Bruce Post, Mary Post, Brian Sheldon, Ken Signorello, Saramichelle Stultz, Mike Sullivan, Harlan Smith, Gabrielle Smith, Laura Taylor, Irene Wrenner, Lorraine Zaloom, Margaret, RM

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Watts called the Town of Essex Selectboard to order for the Joint meeting with the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees at 6:31 PM.

Mr. Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees to order for the Joint meeting with the Essex Selectboard at 6:31 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

4. MOMENT OF COLLECTIVE SILENCE TO REFLECT ON ANNIVERSARY OF GEORGE FLOYD'S MURDER

A moment of collective silence was held for all those in attendance to reflect on the anniversary of George Floyd's murder.

5. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Mr. Signorello requested that the names and salaries of all employees be printed publicly to ensure transparency. He noted that this is done in Burlington and Rutland. Ms. Zaloom thanked the boards for holding a moment of collective silence. She also encouraged Mr. Watts and the other Selectboard members to consider holding informal community chats to make participation more easily accessible.

Ms. Post said that she is still upset about the contents of Mr. Murray's conversation with former Selectboard Chair Ms. Haney which was conducted via Facebook Messenger during a previous meeting. She said that the Selectboard should at least make a statement that they were sorry that this happened and

49 was disappointed that this did not occur. She said that she did not think that Mr. Murray should be Vice-
50 Chair, and that he should be censured. She also asked why Mr. Teich stayed silent and how he could
51 “serve two masters” in the event of separation. Mr. Watts explained that such discussions were held in
52 Executive Session and that a public censure would require two violations. He said that information on Mr.
53 Murray’s posts came to light after he had been elected Vice-Chair. Mr. Murray said that he had already
54 apologized publicly and that it is not the responsibility of the other members of the Selectboard to chastise
55 him for his behavior.

56
57 Ms. Stultz said that the website the Essex ReTorter and its authors started the culture of disrespect and
58 said that “you get what you give.” She said that former chair Ms. Haney had to deal with disgusting
59 comments in the meeting chat while presiding over meetings. She stated that she opposes the idea of
60 listing employee salaries. Mr. Post said that it is important to publicly list employee pay and suggested
61 disabling the chat feature during meetings. Mr. Franco encouraged the audience to remain civil when
62 explaining their points of view.

63
64 **6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

65 **a. Update on work of Committee on Equity in Essex and Task Force on Racial Equity, Policing, and**
66 **Public Safety**

67 The Committee on Equity for Essex is dedicated to redistributing decision-making, resources, and power
68 into our community to ensure the voices of those who have been historically marginalized are heard. The
69 task force has been meeting twice a month since mid-April. The primary work thus far has been to decide
70 on priorities and to create the following subcommittees: Community/Municipal; Safety, Policing,
71 Communications, and Racial Justice and Police. Mr. Chawla and Mr. Murray are the Trustee and
72 Selectboard representatives, respectively.

73
74 Mr. Chawla said that the Community/Municipal group has been working to see how Essex can recruit
75 more diverse board members and employees. They are also working to map our municipal budget to these
76 topics. Mr. Murray said that the Policing subcommittee has been working to ensure that BIPOC residents
77 feel safe with the police. He said that Chief Hoague has been very supportive and amazing to work with.
78 Mr. Murray also said that early discussions on community oversight in policing have been occurring. Ms.
79 Ladd encouraged all interested community members to sign up for e-mail updates. Mr. Teich said that
80 stipends will help to ensure more diverse representation on committees.

81
82 **Public Comment:**

- 83 • Mr. Signorello said that a recent vacancy on the Selectboard had ten applicants, and that a current
84 vacancy on the school board also had many applicants. He encouraged the Selectboard to consider
85 if campaigning is a barrier to participation. He also suggested the use of nominating committees to
86 encourage others to run for office.
- 87 • Mr. Post said that Brattleboro has a representative town meeting and voted last year to increase the
88 Selectboard salary.

89
90 **b. Consider approval of Joint Resolution between the Town of Essex Selectboard and Village of**
91 **Essex Junction Trustees to investigate amicable Separation**

92 Mr. Watts began the conversation by stating that this is just an investigation, not any type of commitment.
93 He hopes that this will help to begin the healing in the community. Mr. Brown echoed these statements
94 and said that Board members can help to set a tone of civility. He encouraged other Board members to
95 hold him accountable if he says or does something that is not in line with this.

96

97 The document was drafted by Mr. Brown, Mr. Chawla, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Murray and was presented to
98 both Boards for their review. Mr. Tyler noted that he would prefer to have the phrase “duplication”
99 removed from this document, as he believes that it is misleading. The Boards agreed to do so.

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101 Ms. Delphia expressed concern about the following phrase, “The Selectboard and Trustees agree to
102 allocate the staffing resources necessary to investigate an amicable separation without impacting the
103 progress of other needed municipal projects.” She requested a more in-depth assessment of the resources
104 that would be needed for this project before voting to include it in this document. After some discussion,
105 the Boards decided to remove this phrase from the document.

106
107 Ms. Hill-Fleury said that she felt that the Selectboard should have reviewed this document independently
108 of the Trustees. She said that she would like to see a provision in this document to prevent the Village
109 from annexing neighborhoods. She said that it is important to remember that the entire Town has not
110 voted on separation. Mr. Watts said that it is inappropriate for the Selectboard to prevent a section of the
111 community from joining the Village. Mr. Brown said that the Village intends to vote on separation in
112 November and that there is no way that annexing could be done before this. Mr. Kerin noted that this
113 document was intended to be in effect, “in perpetuity” and was a guiding vision, not a place for specific
114 issues. The Boards also discussed the fact that the legislature would have the final say on any separation,
115 and Mr. Watts noted that recent municipal separations have been approved with the consent of only the
116 part of the community that was separating.

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118 **Public Comment:**

- 119 • Mr. Post expressed concern for Mr. Kerin’s comment that this agreement would be “in perpetuity.”
120 He said that in 1999, the Village voted to separate twice, however the legislature would not allow
121 this request to go through. Mr. Watts said that the legislature recommended mediation since both
122 separation and merger agreements were presented to them in parallel.
- 123 • Mr. Shelden expressed concern for some of the comments made earlier in the meeting and said that
124 the Town Outside the Village (TOV) does not need to vote on or consent to separation. Mr. Watts
125 reminded Mr. Shelden to keep his comments to the document at hand.
- 126 • Mr. Signorello said that, when Winooski voted to form its own municipality, 60% of voters lived
127 in the new community. As a result, a community-wide vote was not needed. This is not the case
128 in Essex.
- 129 • Ms. Hurley indicated her agreement with Ms. Delphia’s comments and said that the Selectboard
130 should have discussed the topic without the Trustees prior to holding a joint meeting. She said that
131 the Village has not voted yet, and that such discussions are premature. Mr. Watts said the Village
132 is currently working on a separation plan and thus discussion is needed now. He said that he and
133 Mr. Murray worked on the document together due to the difficulty of editing in a large group.
- 134 • Ms. Cooper said that Mr. Watts used the wording “Town” when he should have said “TOV.” The
135 Selectboard represents all Town residents, regardless of where they live. She said that the TOV
136 does not exist as its own entity, and no taxes are paid to it. Separation will affect all residents, no
137 matter where they live. Mr. Watts said that he represents all residents of the Town.
- 138 • Ms. Stultz indicated her support for Mr. Shelden’s statements.
- 139 • Ms. Wrenner requested that representation for the TOV be included in this plan and said that she
140 would like to see a companion resolution to keep the community whole. Mr. Watts reminded Ms.
141 Wrenner to keep her comments to the document at hand.
- 142 • Mr. Smith and Mr. Sullivan thanked the Boards for their work putting together this document.

144 **Motion by ANDY WATTS, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, that the Selectboard approve the Joint**
145 **Resolution between the Town of Essex Selectboard and Village of Essex Junction Trustees to**
146 **investigate an amicable separation. The motion passed 5-0.**
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148 **Motion by RAJ CHAWLA, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees approve the Joint**
149 **Resolution between the Town of Essex Selectboard and Village of Essex Junction Trustees to**
150 **investigate an amicable separation. The motion passed 5-0.**
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152 **c. Schedule the next Joint Board meeting**

153 The Boards agreed to have staff schedule the next joint meeting via Doodle. Some potential topics
154 include racial equity work, separation, and the activities of the Cannabis Commission.
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156 **d. *Discussion and potential action on evaluation of public official**

157 Discussion happened in executive session at the end of the meeting.
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159 **7. CONSENT ITEMS**

160 a. ****Consider reappointment of Debbie McAdoo to the Housing Commission**

161 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the Trustees reappoint**
162 **Debbie McAdoo to the Housing Commission. The motion passed 5-0.**
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164 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, that the Selectboard**
165 **reappoint Debbie McAdoo to the Housing Commission. The motion passed 5-0.**
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167 **8. READING FILE**

168 a. Board member comments

169 Mr. Watts informed the Board that he had recently testified on behalf of 3+3 initiative that was voted on
170 by Essex voters last year. Mr. Brown said that he and Mr. Watts are working on including a proposal on
171 conflict resolution for the June 5th strategic planning session agenda. Mr. Teich said that this session will
172 be in-person for Board members, but that audience members are invited to join virtually.

173 b. Memo from Greg Duggan re: Strategic planning session on June 5

174 c. Public Building Reopening process: Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction COVID-19
175 Workplace Protocols; Mask Guidance; and Remote Work Policy

176 d. Update on House Government Operations Committee action regarding 3+3 charter change

177 e. Upcoming meeting schedule
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179 **9. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

180 a. ***An executive session is anticipated for the evaluation of public official**
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182 **TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard**
183 **enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A.**
184 **Section 313(a)(3), to include the Trustees and HR Director. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:35 PM.**
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186 **ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, that the Trustees enter into**
187 **executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section**
188 **313(a)(3), to include the Selectboard and HR Director. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:35 PM.**
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190 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, that the Trustees exit**
191 **executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:45 PM.**

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DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, that the Selectboard exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:45 PM.

10. ADJOURN

DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, that the Trustees adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:45 PM.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, that the Selectboard adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:46 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary