

VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
February 9, 2021

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Town Manager; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Sarah Macy, Finance Director; Robin Pierce, Community Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Annie Cooper; Marcus Certa; Seth Cronin; Micah Hagan; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Ramon Mantanzo; Scott Moore; Roseanne Prestipino; Mike Sullivan; Mike Thorne; Ken Signorello; Irene Wrenner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brown called the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

With no changes to the agenda, no motion to approve was required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda

There were no comments from the public at this time.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

The public hearing was warned for 6:35 PM, but the meeting was running ahead of time, so Mr. Brown suggested that agenda item 6a be addressed first. The Trustees agreed.

6a. Consider approval of Bike/Walk Advisory Committee grant application.

Mr. Hagan, Chair of the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee (BWAC) described the grant opportunity to purchase and install LED beacon (RRFB) lights at Lincoln/ Central and one for Main/ Pleasant. He said the grant requires a 50% local match so two lights would require a local match of up to \$7,000, which is the balance of the current BWAC's FY2021 budget. He said there were no other projects planned for these funds.

The Trustees discussed the grant opportunity with Mr. Hagan. Ms. Thibeault, Mr. Teich, and Ms. Macy spoke about whether any planned Capital Projects could use the grant funds, but they did not identify an appropriate project. Mr. Chawla wondered if additional lights could be included in the grant application if they are needed locally. Ms. Macy confirmed an additional \$20,000 in the budget for matching grants, if more lights or signs were needed.

Ms. Cooper said she presented a petition of 114 names to the BWAC to place a crosswalk light at a crosswalk on Main Street near Church Street. She said there have been near-misses with pedestrians at this location and she was aware of at least one injury resulting. She also suggested a light be placed at the crosswalk near the preschool on Park Street. The Trustees discussed Ms. Cooper's suggestions and agreed to add these two lights to the grant application. They confirmed with Ms. Macy that the additional matching funds could come from the matching grants fund, not the BWAC budget, and they talked about which fiscal year's funds would be used depending on grant and project timelines.

54 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by ANDREW BROWN, that the Trustees approve**
55 **the grant application and funding request for the project match, if the Village receives the**
56 **grant. The motion passed 5-0.**
57

58 **5a. Public hearing on Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budgets and Capital Programs**

59 Mr. Brown opened the Public Hearing at 6:55 PM and Ms. Macy gave an overview of the
60 FY2022 Proposed Budgets and Capital Programs. She said the General Fund is similar to the
61 previous year’s budget, except for a formatting change to move the Highway and Rolling Stock.
62 She summarized the General Fund FY2021 budget and proposed FY2022 budget changes,
63 along with contributing factors in: Salaries and Benefits; Capital Transfer; R&M Buildings;
64 Board Stipends; Professional Services; Salary Study; Paving; Salt costs; and Other (Net
65 decreases). She presented the Estimated Tax Impact:

	FY2021 Budget	FY2022 Proposed Budget	\$ Change	% Change
Tax Levy	\$3,670,039	\$3,745,866	\$75,827	2.1%
Tax Rate	\$0.3302	\$0.3334	\$0.0032	0.97%

66
67 Ms. Macy said the estimated tax increase to a \$280,000 Village property is \$8.96. She
68 explained how increases to other revenue sources including the estimated grand list increase
69 of 0.84% impacted the budget. Ms. Macy explained how the Village of Essex Junction
70 Homestead Tax Rates are used (65% on Schools, 21% on Town of Essex services and 14%
71 on Village of Essex Junction services). Ms. Macy provided a Summary of Capital Funds
72 including: proposed spending and notes for the Capital Reserve; Rolling Stock; EJRP Capital;
73 Water Capital; WWTF Capital; and Sanitation Capital. She summarized Enterprise funds for
74 FY2021 and FY2022, to illustrate changes from FY2021 to FY2022 in the EJRP Program Fund;
75 Water Fund; WWTF Fund and Sanitation Fund. Ms. Macy said Enterprise funds are user fee
76 funds, not tax-driven funds. She talked about WWTF flow increase costs, increased
77 regulations, bond payments, and the meter replacement program. She summarized Estimated
78 Utility Rate Changes in Water, WWTF, and Sanitation from FY2021 to FY2022.
79

80 Mr. Certa wondered whether the goal for putting together the FY2022 budget was to maintain
81 current services, grow them or pull back from last year. Mr. Brown said the goal was to
82 maintain services.
83

84 Mr. Chawla wondered if staff knew the expected Densmore Drive FEMA reimbursement
85 amount yet. Mr. Teich said they do not expect 100% reimbursement and discussed some of the
86 challenges related to the project. He said he will tell the Trustees the reimbursement amount
87 when they know this number.
88

89 Mr. Tyler pointed out that eliminating the Town Highway Tax on the Town Outside the Village,
90 resulted in distributing this cost through the community.
91

92 Mr. Brown closed the Public Hearing at 7:16 PM.
93

94 **6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

95 ~~a. Consider approval of Bike/Walk Advisory Committee grant application.~~

96 This agenda item took place prior to item 5a (see above).
97

98 **b. Consider approval of April 2021 ballot question for increase of Village Trustees stipend**

99 Ms. Macy introduced the issue of whether to add a question to the April 2021 ballot, asking
100 whether the voters will increase the Village Trustees stipend from \$500 to \$1000. Mr. Tyler and
101 Mr. Brown said the stipend had not increased since before 2008 and the increase would bring it
102 inline with other public officials.
103

104 Mr. Certa asked for the Trustees' motivation behind the stipend increase. Mr. Brown said they
105 wanted to attract new participation in municipal leadership and offset some of the costs to
106 Trustees. The Trustees agreed that these were their motivations. Mr. Chawla talked about his
107 community conversations about people's challenges with participating, which may be alleviated
108 by this increase. Mr. Kerin contextualized the increase, pointing out that the Selectboard raised
109 their stipend to \$1500. Mr. Tyler said he was originally on the fence but fellow Trustees made a
110 good case so he agrees in solidarity.
111

112 Ms. Cooper noted that the increase would go toward future Trustees out of financial respect.
113 She said she was glad it was moving forward.
114

115 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees approve adding a**
116 **question to the 2021 Village Annual Meeting ballot that reads, "Shall the annual stipend for**
117 **the position of a Trustee of the Village Board of Trustees be raised from \$500 to \$1000?".**
118 **The motion passed 5-0.**
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120 **c. Discussion and possible approval of research for Economic Development Commission**
121 **on potential initiatives like Phoenix Project Events – Robin Pierce**

122 Mr. Pierce began the discussion with the Trustees to see if they would approve staff time to
123 explore ideas to restart economic activity in the Village Center through celebratory community
124 events. He described ideas for Phoenix Project Events including: Essex Master Classes;
125 Courtyard Concerts; and new Signs about Essex as a friendly, welcoming community. He said
126 the events would improve marketing for businesses and help people feel that there is "a light at
127 the end of the tunnel." He said many businesses are encouraged by the ideas and want to be
128 involved.
129

130 The Trustees thought the idea was good. Mr. Brown encouraged the efforts to include EJRP.
131 Mr. Chawla said that pre-COVID, the Trustees requested EJRP engage with populations they
132 do not usually engage with and he hoped they would take advantage of the project to re-up
133 their efforts. Mr. Tyler liked the idea of highlighting the many talents found in Essex with this
134 project idea. He talked about EJRP's history of classes and community efforts.
135

136 Ms. Cooper requested clarification of the project title and offered to help with the events. Mr.
137 Pierce said he came up with the "Phoenix Project Events" name to signify rising from the
138 ashes.
139

140 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, that the Trustees give Staff**
141 **permission to research the potential for each of these initiatives and bring back proposals**
142 **for Trustee approval that would include timeframes and estimated costs, if any. Any costs**
143 **would be paid from the Economic Development Fund. The motion passed 5-0.**
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145 **d. *Discussion about public records requests**

146 This agenda item took place in Executive Session as 9a.
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148 **e. **Discuss the evaluation of a public official**

149 This agenda item took place in Executive Session as 9b.
150

151 **7. CONSENT ITEMS**

152 a. Approve minutes: January 25, 2021 – Joint; January 26, 2021

153 b. Check Warrants: #17236 – 1/29/21
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155 **AMBER THIBEAULT made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, to approve the Consent**
156 **Agenda. The motion passed 5-0.**
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8. READING FILE

- a. Board member comments
 - Mr. Tyler said he recently attended a Planning Commission meeting discussion about a Landscaping Fund: its role in development and how its use is defined. He wondered whether an actual fund exists and if the Trustees should be doing anything about it. Ms. Thibeault said the Landscaping Fund is a requirement for developers to spend a certain amount of their development costs on landscaping and if they do not, funds are supposed to go into a municipal Landscaping fund. She thought that, because developers have been fulfilling their landscaping requirements, the fund does not exist. Mr. Tyler suggested landscaping should be better defined in the Land Development Code. Mr. Chawla suggested that if this code is revised, they should also revisit the issue of impact fees. Ms. Thibeault said it would be helpful for more community members to be engaged at the Planning Commission meetings as they regularly address sections of the Code. Mr. Kerin said the Code should be closely enforced. Mr. Pierce suggested that if the Landscaping Fund had money in it, projects like Pocket Park and the VTrans construction landscaping would benefit.
- b. Memo from Robin Pierce re: Village Center Development update
 - Mr. Chawla requested that future Village Center Development updates include street addresses to clarify locations of development efforts.
- c. Email from Brad Luck re: Questions from Resident regarding merger booklet
 - Mr. Brown pointed out Mr. Luck’s comments about the role of COVID in childcare cost savings.
- d. Upcoming meeting schedule

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. ***An executive session may be necessary to discuss a legal matter.**

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees make the specific finding that general public knowledge of confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the legislative body would place the Village at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 5-0 at 7:58 PM.

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees enter into executive session to discuss confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the legislative body, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(F), to include the Unified Manager, Village Attorney, Assistant Manager, and Deputy Manager. The motion passed 5-0 at 7:58 PM.

- b. ****An executive session is anticipated to discuss the evaluation of a public official.**

ANDREW BROWN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Village Trustees enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3). The motion passed 5-0 at 7:59 PM.

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, to exit executive sessions. The motion passes 5-0 at 9:00 PM.

10. ADJOURN

DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, for the Trustees to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

**VILLAGE TRUSTEES
(DRAFT)**

February 9, 2021

209 Cathy Ainsworth
210 Recording Secretary

DRAFT