

SELECTBOARD & TRUSTEES

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION TRUSTEES
JOINT MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

SELECTBOARD: Andy Watts, Chair; Sue Cook; Tracey Delphia; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Patrick Murray

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Marguerite Ladd, Assistant Manager; Brad Luck, Interim Village Co-Manager; Ron Hoague, Police Chief; Jess Morris, Village Finance Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeff Benjamin, Kevin Collins, Annie Cooper, Bella D., Patty Davis, Erin Dickinson, Betsy Dunn; Maureen Gillard, Gina Halpin Barrett, Jody Kamon, Erin Maguire, Timothy Miller, Mary Post, Ken Signorello, Gillian Smith, Margaret Smith, Michael Thome, Giles Willey, Sr Doug Wilson, Lorraine Zaloom, Bob, Jake, Jill, Mike, Patrick

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 6:30 PM.

Mr. Watts called the Town of Essex Selectboard to order for the Joint meeting with the Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Mr. Chawla requested that the most recent version of the Shared Services MOU be added to Business Item d, "Discussion and potential action on tentative agreements about shared services between Town of Essex and Village/City of Essex Junction." Mr. Brown requested that a resolution in appreciation of Evan Teich be added to the agenda as item 5c. Ms. Delphia requested that item 6b, "Consider approval of the extension agreement of the current Tree Farm Management Group lease to 12/31/2022" be removed from the consent agenda and be included as item 5d. The business items following will subsequently be renumbered.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by AMBER THIBEAULT, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by SUE COOK, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Ms. Dunn said that, as a Board of Civil Authority member, she is concerned that several ballot envelopes have been reported as having incorrect names on them, which could result in the vote not being counted. Mr. Signorello reported similar concerns and asked how the signatures would be verified against the name on the ballot envelope. Mr. Teich asked that anyone with an incorrect ballot call the Clerk's office for guidance. Ms. Post said she was frustrated about perceived rudeness in Mr. Teich's response to Mr. Signorello.

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5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Equity Update from Essex Westford School District

Ms. Maguire provided an update of EWSD’s equity policies and procedures, policy review, and activities and actions related to equity. She explained that policy is the direction of the school board, and procedure is what enacted to put the policy in action. EWSD has been working to include anti-racist education, to affirm all identities, and to support all types of family engagement. This work is an ongoing journey, and not simply an item on a checklist. EWSD has also increased focus around restorative practices as well as implicit bias training. Ms. Maguire said that EWSD is working to increase the diversity of celebrations and foods in the schools. The goal is for all members of the community to feel that the schools are accessible and welcoming to them.

Mr. Chawla asked about the biggest challenges to the equity work. Ms. Maguire said recognizing impact rather than intent, and to acknowledge when harm has been done. Mr. Murray praised EWSD for the inclusion work and asked if the free school lunch program will continue. Ms. Maguire said that conversations are still happening about this. Ms. Hill-Fleury asked for more information about book selection review. Ms. McGuire responded that teachers and librarians across all age groups are looking to review their materials from an equity perspective. Ms. Delphia asked if any type of peer mentoring was done. Ms. Maguire responded that it is not done directly but that the high school has a bias response committee with student members. The Boards thanked Ms. Maguire for her hard work on equity initiatives.

b. Consider accepting the report and recommendations from Essex BEST (Building Equity, Solidarity and Trust)

Ms. Kamon said Essex BEST formed to address municipal investments in equity, representative leadership and public safety. The committee is working on drafting a three-year strategic plan to build administrative, racial, and economic equity in the community. The BEST committee has been working to develop relationships with people from underrepresented groups for them to potentially step forward to serve in leadership roles. The Essex community has defined public safety as a broad-based community promise that people’s basic needs, including housing, food, transportation, childcare, etc. are being met. This became a guiding factor, that the most vulnerable must be cared for first. The committee has also been working with dispatch and the Essex Police to develop standards to improve equity and better utilize resources for Essex citizens. Ms. Kamon said that accepting this report would show that the Boards back this work and support to goals of the committee. Mr. Brown asked about the interaction between Essex BEST and the Essex Police. Ms. Kamon responded that the Police Department is engaged and supportive. Mr. Tyler asked for clarification on Ms. Kamon’s statement about the police being “weaponized” against the community. Ms. Kamon said that this often occurs when citizens call the police to report ordinary activities of other citizens but their personal biases inflate the situation. The Boards thanked the volunteers of Essex BEST for their hard work.

SUE COOK made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard accept the report, including its recommendations, and support both staff and Essex BEST in the continuation of their execution of the report's recommendations. Motion passed 5-0.

98 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees accept**
99 **the report, including its recommendations, and support both staff and Essex BEST in the**
100 **continuation of their execution of the report's recommendations. Motion passed 5-0.**

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102 **c. Resolution in Appreciation of Evan Teich**

103 Mr. Brown said this is the last joint meeting with Unified Manager Evan Teich and wanted to
104 show the Board's appreciation for him and his impact on the community. Mr. Tyler read the
105 resolution aloud as presented, and the Boards gave Mr. Teich an ovation.

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107 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, that the Trustees to approve**
108 **the Resolution in Appreciation of Evan Teich. Motion passed 5-0.**

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110 **DAWN HILL FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, that the**
111 **Selectboard approve the Proclamation in Appreciation of Evan Teich. Motion passed 5-0.**

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113 **d. Consider approval of the extension agreement of the current Tree Farm Management**
114 **Group lease to 12/31/2022**

115 Ms. Delphia said that a negotiating committee is working on this project, and that she requested
116 that this item be removed from the Consent Agenda so that this could be publicly stated. Ms.
117 Ladd said that will be brought back to both Boards in March, and that this extension is so that
118 the staff has enough time to develop a business plan.

119
120 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees approve the**
121 **extension agreement between the Tree Farm Group and the Village of Essex Junction and**
122 **Town of Essex as proposed. Motion passed 5-0.**

123
124 **SUE COOK made a motion, seconded TRACEY DELPHIA, that the Selectboard approve**
125 **the extension agreement between the Tree Farm Group and the Village of Essex Junction**
126 **and Town of Essex as proposed. Motion passed 5-0.**

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128 **e. Village/City update on charter timeline and state process**

129 Mr. Brown said that the separation bill has passed the House Governance Operations
130 Committee and is currently going to be presented to the House Ways and Means Committee on
131 February 16. If it passes, it will go to the full House for approval, followed by two Senatorial
132 Committees, the full Senate, then the governor for approval. Mr. Brown thanked Mr. Watts and
133 Mr. Murray for their testimony.

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135 **f. Discussion and potential action on tentative agreements about shared services**
136 **between Town of Essex and Village/City of Essex Junction**

137 Mr. Brown said he hopes that the Selectboard can talk the Trustees through the changes
138 requested, and that the Trustees will then enter executive session for 30 minutes to discuss
139 them. Several small changes were reviewed without comment. The Board commented on
140 termination timelines, fees in the Clerk/Treasurer's offices, and funding for separation initiatives.

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142 **8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

143 **a. Discussion and potential action on tentative agreements about shared services**
144 **between Town of Essex and Village/City of Essex Junction**

146 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, that the Trustees make the**
147 **specific finding that general public knowledge of contracts would place the Village at a**
148 **substantial disadvantage. Motion passed 5-0.**
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150 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER that the Trustees enter into**
151 **executive session to discuss contracts, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A), to include the**
152 **interim municipal manager. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:19 PM.**
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154 **RAJ CHAWLA made a motion, seconded by GEORGE TYLER, to exit executive session.**
155 **Motion passed 5-0 at 8:53 PM.**
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157 **5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

158 **f. Discussion and potential action on tentative agreements about shared services** 159 **between Town of Essex and Village/City of Essex Junction**

160 Mr. Brown suggested that the dates listed throughout be changed to 6/30/2023 for ease of
161 understanding. He said the Trustees are opposed to the inclusion of a statement saying that all
162 disputes arising from this agreement be referred the United States District Court, should they not
163 be addressed in mediation. Ms. Hill-Fleury asked why the Village attorney objected to this. Mr.
164 Brown said because it should not start out at this level. Ms. Thibeault said this is a new point that
165 has never come up in any other agreements that the Selectboard and Trustees have reviewed.
166 The Selectboard will approach their legal counsel about this change. The Boards discussed the
167 disentanglement of finance and administration costs. Mr. Brown expressed concern about the
168 recreation agreement and said the Trustees would like to go back to the original agreement for
169 recreation, Indian Brook and Senior Services, or not have any type of recreation agreement at
170 all. He said that the cost-sharing is unfair, and that the Trustees felt that the changes to this
171 document were non-negotiable.
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173 Ms. Delphia asked if the Trustees would be amenable if EJRP and Indian Brook be taken out
174 and offered the suggestion to remove the 3.5% fee from the agreement for senior services, Mr.
175 Brown said this would not work. Ms. Cook asked for more details about why. Mr. Brown said the
176 agreement needs to provide equal access to community amenities without worrying about
177 indirect costs, and that time is running out to make this decision. Mr. Murray said that Senior
178 Services are crucial for the community, and that an agreement is essential. He suggested pulling
179 out the 3.5% figure and move forward. Mr. Brown said the Trustees are committed to providing
180 senior services, whether they work with the Town or not. Mr. Tyler said the Village is not
181 requesting any fees from the Town, and it is not fair for them to request fees from the Village.
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183 In regards to the Clerk Agreement, the Trustees said they felt that the Clerk should be
184 responsible for handling how each fees are distributed, and that further language about this
185 does not need to be included. The Selectboard will discuss these changes further at their next
186 meeting.
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188 **g. Discuss shared boards and commissions**

189 Mr. Luck said that Essex BEST, Committee on Equity Essex, the Essex Housing Commission,
190 the Energy Committee and the Economic Development Commission are the five Boards that are
191 currently shared between the two communities. Mr. Chawla expressed support for continuing to
192 share the Essex BEST committee since the police services will remain shared. He encouraged
193 the Boards to determine which boards they would like to share, how they will be shared, and

194 how they will be funded. Mr. Watts expressed concern about the equitable funding to these
195 boards. Mr. Tyler expressed interest in a Village downtown committee to take advantage of state
196 funding for such. Mr. Brown suggested that the Boards work toward an agreement that would
197 indicate that the two communities have an interest in sharing boards and will work together to
198 iron out the details. Mr. Murray suggested that this is a good opportunity for a subcommittee to
199 work on. The Selectboard will discuss this independently at their next meeting.
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201 **6. CONSENT AGENDA**

202 **ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, to approve the Consent**
203 **Agenda. Motion passed 5-0.**

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205 **GEORGE TYLER made a motion, seconded by DAN KERIN, to approve the Consent**
206 **Agenda. Motion passed 5-0.**

207 **a. Approve minutes - January 24, 2022**

208 **~~b. Consider approval of the extension agreement of the current Tree Farm Management~~**
209 **~~Group lease to 12/31/2022~~**

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211 **7. READING FILE**

212 **a. Board member comments:** Mr. Brown and Mr. Tyler reiterated their appreciation for Mr.
213 Teich's leadership and hard work.

214 **b. Upcoming meeting schedule**

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216 **8. ADJOURN**

217 **DAN KERIN made a motion, seconded by RAJ CHAWLA, for the Trustees to adjourn.**
218 **Motion passed 5-0 at 10:03 PM.**

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220 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PAT MURRAY, for the Selectboard to**
221 **adjourn. Motion passed 5-0 at 10:05 PM.**

222
223 Respectfully Submitted,
224 Darby Mayville
225 Recording Secretary

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227 Approved this 23rd day of February, 2022
228 (See minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

229
230 *Tracey Delphia*
231 Tracey Delphia, Clerk, Selectboard
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