

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, October 5, 2021**

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

**ADMINISTRATION and STAFF:** Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Kendall Chamberlin; Kevin Collins; Susan Cook; Annie Cooper; Maureen Gillard; Timothy LaBombard; Rachael Lizotte; Gabrielle Smith; Margaret Smith; Mike Sullivan; Irene Wrenner; Sharon Zukowski

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Watts called the Essex Selectboard to order at 6:30 PM.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES**

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

**3. AGENDA APPROVAL**

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

**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. \*Interview and potential appointment: Kenneth Willetts, Selectboard**

This candidate was no longer running for the appointment and was not interviewed.

**b. \*Interview and potential appointment: Timothy LaBombard, Selectboard**

The Selectboard members interviewed Mr. LaBombard for the vacant Selectboard seat. Regarding Mr. Watts' request to make an opening statement (question 1), Mr. LaBombard talked about his upbringing in the region, his experience as an electrician and his role with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Regarding Ms. Delphia's request to explain what it means to be a public servant (question 2), Mr. LaBombard said this was about governing with people's interests in mind. Regarding Mr. Murray's request to describe what diversity, equity and inclusion means to him, as it relates to representation in local government (question 3), Mr. LaBombard said these ideas should be considered throughout the process of governing. He talked about equal opportunities and understanding the interests of constituents. In response to Mr. Watts' request for three suggestions of things that can be done in Essex to welcome people of various backgrounds and nationalities (question 4), Mr. LaBombard suggested hosting diverse entertainment; welcoming and including people; and retaining people by showing what Essex has to offer. Regarding Ms. Delphia's request to share how he thinks the Selectboard should proceed when discussing separation of the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Essex (question 5), Mr. LaBombard said he wanted them to find common ground in disagreements and guide the way forward with level emotions. In response to Ms. Hill-Fleury's request that he talk about a time when he changed his mind on an issue, and to share what the issue was and how the change came about (question 6), Mr. LaBombard described his experience of pre-judging someone then recognizing his error and moving forward with greater insight. In response to Ms. Delphia's question about whether he would run for the Selectboard at Town Meeting (question 7), Mr. LaBombard said he would run. In response to Mr. Watts' request that Mr. Bombard make a

53 closing statement or ask questions (question 8), Mr. LaBombard thanked the Selectboard for  
54 considering his interest and said he would like to use his unique talents to help find solutions.  
55

56 **c. \*Interview and potential appointment: Susan Cook, Selectboard**

57 The Selectboard members asked Ms. Cook the same questions, in the same order as the  
58 previous candidate, to interview her for the vacant Selectboard seat. Regarding question 1, Ms.  
59 Cook talked about her life and leadership experiences in Essex; experience as a project manager;  
60 service on the energy committee; and previous experience on the Selectboard. Regarding  
61 question 2, Ms. Cook said a public servant is someone who respectfully responds and is available  
62 while representing the public interests. Regarding question 3, Ms. Cook talked about bringing  
63 forward diversity of races, religion, sexual orientation, experiences and thinking in the community;  
64 creating opportunities for community engagement; and valuing diverse perspectives in leadership.  
65 In response to question 4, she suggested up-to-date trainings; setting up a mentoring program for  
66 diversity in leadership; and hosting community-wide culture-sharing and awareness events.  
67 Regarding question 5, Ms. Cook discussed the importance of slowing down to clarify a vision for  
68 how the Essex communities would thrive in either scenario, of separation or not separating. She  
69 suggested that alleviating urgency could encourage solution-based planning. In response to  
70 question 6, Ms. Cook talked about her decision-making experience in team leadership, where the  
71 preferred directions of a group may not have been her first preferences. In response to question 7,  
72 Ms. Cook said she would determine whether or not to run for the Selectboard seat during the  
73 same timeline as others. In response to question 8, Ms. Cook asked what the Selectboard 's  
74 budget building focus would be this fall. Mr. Watts talked about focusing on climate change,  
75 diversity, equity and inclusion, and the potential of separation, while not anticipating cuts this year.  
76

77 **d. \*Interview and potential appointment: Kendell Chamberlin, Selectboard**

78 The Selectboard members asked the same questions to Mr. Chamberlin, in the same order as the  
79 previous candidates, to interview him for the vacant Selectboard seat. Regarding question 1, Mr.  
80 Chamberlin said he is a lifelong resident of Essex with 30 years of experience working in  
81 municipal government. He said he had no hidden agenda going onto the Selectboard and he  
82 wanted to share his perspectives. Regarding question 2, Mr. Chamberlin talked about how public  
83 servants may overrule their own interests and values to meet the needs of citizens and to set a  
84 course forward. Regarding question 3, Mr. Chamberlin talked about how diversity, equity and  
85 inclusion are important in order to reinforce acceptance and appreciation of people's backgrounds  
86 and experiences. He said diverse perspectives can lead to better decision-making. In response to  
87 question 4, Mr. Chamberlin described himself as neighborly and welcoming. He said Essex could  
88 acknowledge diverse religious holidays; provide public opportunities that highlight specific  
89 cultures; and decide to do some of the things listed on the Welcoming America website.  
90 Regarding question 5, Mr. Chamberlin said that the Selectboard should move ahead with  
91 separation planning and his experience working for Richmond during their merger could help with  
92 the process. He said he understands the unique needs and perspectives between urban and rural  
93 residents. Regarding question 6, Mr. Chamberlin talked changing his point of view from supporting  
94 a merger in Essex to now supporting the idea of separation. In response to question 7, Mr.  
95 Chamberlin said he would run for a seat on the Selectboard at Town Meeting. In response to  
96 question 8, Mr. Chamberlin described himself as an ordinary guy who loves Essex and his  
97 neighbors. He said the opportunity attracted a good pool of candidates to choose from.  
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99 **6. READING FILE**

100 a. Board member comments

- Ms. Delphia said she attended the Vermont League of Cities and Towns' Town Fair and found it valuable. She said it would be worthwhile for others to attend. Mr. Teich agreed and talked about topics covered and how people can participate virtually.

- b. List of Boards/Committees/Commissions vacancies
- c. Upcoming meeting schedule

**7. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. **\*An executive session may be requested to discuss the appointments of public officials**

**PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the proposed public official appointment in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3) and to include the Unified Manager and Deputy Manager.**

Ms. Wrenner requested that the Selectboard return from executive session to state what the decision for this appointment would be.

Ms. Cooper requested that the Selectboard also return to the Microsoft Team link to share the decision with virtual attendees.

**The motion passed 4-0 at 7:28 PM.**

**DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, to exit executive session.**

**The motion passed 4-0 at 8:15 PM.**

**DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, to appoint Susan Cook to fill the Selectboard opening until the vacancy is filled at annual Town Meeting in March. The motion passed 4-0.**

**8. ADJOURN**

**DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, to adjourn. The motion passed 4-0 at 8:22 PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Cathy Ainsworth  
Recording Secretary

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021  
(See minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

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Tracey Delphia, Clerk, Selectboard