



**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
for ESSEX TOWN CENTER PLAN**

Online
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Thursday, February 25, 2021
6:30 PM

E-mail: manager@essex.org

www.essexvt.org

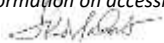
Phone: (802) 878-1341

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, **this meeting will be held remotely**. Available options to watch or join the meeting:

- **WATCH:** the meeting will be live-streamed on [Town Meeting TV](#).
- **JOIN ONLINE:** [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#). Depending on your browser, you may need to call in for audio (below).
- **JOIN CALLING:** Join via conference call (*audio only*): (802) 377-3784 | Conference ID: 590 879 654#
- **PROVIDE FULL NAME:** For minutes, please provide your full name whenever prompted.
- **CHAT DURING MEETING:** Please use "Chat" to request to speak, only. **Please do not use for comments.**
- **RAISE YOUR HAND:** Click on the hand in Teams to speak or use the "Chat" feature to request to speak.
- **MUTE YOUR MIC:** When not speaking, please mute your microphone on your computer/phone.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [6:30 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
 - a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Discussion with Planning Commission: Essex Town Center (ETC) Next plan (Update to 1991 Town Center Master Plan)
 - b. *Discuss the evaluation of a public official
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve minutes: February 1, 2021; February 16, 2021
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board member comments
 - b. Email Charles Cole re: Family
 - c. Upcoming meeting schedule
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. *An executive session is anticipated to discuss the evaluation of a public official
9. **ADJOURN**

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the Chair. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the Selectboard, like all programs and activities of the Town of Essex, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Town Manager's office at 878-1341.

Certification:  2/19/2021

Memorandum

To: Selectboard; Planning Commission; Evan Teich, Unified Manager
Cc: Owiso Makuku, Community Development Director; Darren Schibler, Town Planner; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator
From: Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager
Re: Discussion of Essex Town Center ETC|NEXT Plan
Date: February 19, 2021

Issue

The issue is for the Selectboard, Planning Commission, and staff to discuss the ETC|NEXT (Essex Town Center) Plan.

Discussion

At the Dec. 21, 2020 Selectboard meeting, the board reviewed the updated master plan for the Essex Town Center, called the ETC|NEXT Plan. The Planning Commission has approved the plan, which was created by the Planning Commission, Community Development staff, and the consultant the SE Group. Following the presentation and discussion on Dec. 21, the Selectboard agreed to have a follow-up meeting with the Planning Commission to review the plan in more depth.

Video of the Dec. 21 presentation and discussion is available at

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18GXweAO9mCt59esBSfY5rMvEsdxz_d-i?usp=sharing

Staff recommends the Selectboard and Planning Commission review the video before Thursday's meeting for a refresher on the ETC|NEXT Plan and discussion that has already happened.

Discussion topics on Feb. 25 may include, but are not limited to, housing density, projected growth, building heights, sewer core, transportation, economic development implications, and environmental implications.

Information about some of the topics that came up on Dec. 21, including detailed memos on infrastructure, can be found in the ETC|NEXT appendices.

The ETC|NEXT Plan was included in the Dec. 21, 2020 Selectboard packet, and is also available online at the following locations:

- Main ETC|NEXT Master Plan document: <https://www.essexvt.org/DocumentCenter/View/6067/ETC-Master-Plan-December-2020---web-PDF>
- Appendices: <https://www.essexvt.org/DocumentCenter/View/164/Essex-Town-Center-Next---Master-Plan-Appendices-PDF>
- Supplemental Design Guide: <https://www.essexvt.org/DocumentCenter/View/3580/ETC-NEXT--Master-Plan-Design-Guide---January-2020>

All of these and more are on the ETC|NEXT webpage under Community Development, linked here:

<https://www.essexvt.org/173/Essex-Town-Center-ETC-NEXT>

The Selectboard will be asked to approve the plan at a future Selectboard meeting.

Cost
N/A

Recommendation
This memo is for discussion.

Memorandum

To: Selectboard; Evan Teich, Unified Manager
Cc: Travis Sabatasso, HR Director
From: Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager
Re: Executive Session for evaluation of public official
Date: February 19, 2021

Issue

The issue is whether the Selectboard will enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official.

Discussion

In order to have a complete and thorough discussion, it would appear that an executive session may be necessary. The evaluation of a public official can be a protected discussion.

Cost

N/A

Recommendation

If the Selectboard wishes to enter executive session, the following motion is recommended:

“I move that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the evaluation of a public official in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the HR Director.”

**SELECTBOARD
(DRAFT)**

February 1, 2021

**TOWN OF ESSEX
SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, February 1, 2021**

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Patrick Murray, Vice Chair; Vince Franco; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Andy Watts.

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Tammy Getchell, Assistant to the Manager; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director; Sarah Macy, Finance Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Gilman Allen, Marcus Certa, Raj Chawla, Kevin Collins, Annie Cooper, Dirk D., Renee Dall, Patty Davis, Tracey Delphia, Erin Dickinson, Karen Dolan, Betsy Dunn, Matt Gilbert, Lori Houghton, Daniel Kerin, Toni M., Susan McCormack, Timothy Miller, Scott Moore, Roseanne Prestipino, Marybeth Redmond, Brian Sheldon, Ken Signorello, Harlan Smith, Gabrielle Smith, Margaret Smith, Michael Smith, Andrew Snyder, Sara Stultz, Liz Subin, Mike Sullivan, Mike Thorne, Bethany Wolfson, Irene Wrenner, Sharon Zukowski, LJ _____, Margaret _____, Matt _____ Phyllis _____, Rose _____.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Elaine Haney called the meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:31 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

Ms. Haney requested an additional item for 3a: *Invocation of Civility*.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

a. Invocation of Civility

Vince Franco read the following Invocation of Civility: "We are gathered together in civil assembly. We gather as a community, in the oldest sense of the word. We gather to come together and try to make decisions; about what is right, about what is wrong. Let us advocate for our positions, but not at the expense of others. Let us remember that there is an immense gap between saying, 'I am right' and saying, 'I believe I am right.' And that our neighbors with whom we might disagree are good people 'with hopes and dreams as true and high as ours.' And let us always remember that, in the end, caring for each other, in this community, is far greater than any difference of opinion we might have. Thank you for being here this evening."

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Ms. Haney outlined the rules for public participation this evening, namely that each participant can only speak once and for a two-minute time period. Microphones and cameras must be off when not speaking.

Annie Cooper noted her support for the Selectboard and said that she feels that they are morally sound. Margaret Smith said that she continues to have difficulty navigating the Town website and finding links to access the meeting. Patty Davis expressed her thanks for Public Works Director Dennis Lutz and his hard work.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Fiscal Year 2022 – 2026 Capital Budget and Five-Year Plan

Ms. Haney opened the Public Hearing on Fiscal Year 2022 – 2026 Capital Budget and Five-Year Plan at 6:40 pm. Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director, began with a presentation. Mr. Lutz said that the Capital

Fund is a way for the Town to save for large projects while preventing large changes in the General Fund budget. The Town also supplements this fund with grant money. Some examples of Capital Projects include: paving, stormwater, and building repairs. The public is encouraged to submit project ideas as well. Mr. Lutz described state mandated stormwater projects and said that the Town needs to complete a flow restoration project in the Essex Way/Sydney Drive area.

Ms. Haney said that she had received a text message from a member of the public asking if structural issues at Memorial Hall have been looked at yet. Mr. Lutz said that they have not and that a structural engineer would need to be contacted to do so.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, to close the public hearing on the Fiscal Year 2022 – 2026 Capital Budget and Five-Year Plan at 6:57 pm. The motion passed 5-0.

b. First of two public hearings to consider the Plan of Merger of the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction dated January 11, 2021 and the proposed Charter for the merged communities

Ms. Haney, Mr. Franco, and Mr. Murray began with a presentation that included a history of merger and the reasons for looking at merger. Reasons included: more organized and consistent planning, a reduction in the number of elections, and equitable distribution of costs. Merger would generally result in a decrease in taxes for those in the Town Inside the Village (TIV), and an increase for those in the Town Outside the Village (TOV.) The change in taxation would be phased in over a twelve-year period, after which the TIV and TOV would pay the same rate. The Village would be responsible for repaying all of the debt that it incurred prior to merger. This plan is intended to honor current community identity and high quality of service. There would be five separate districts within the community. The community would be divided into two wards, which would reflect the current TIV/TOV boundaries, although these could be changed later. The new Selectboard would contain three members from each ward.

Ms. Haney said that another public hearing will be held on February 16th. Ballots will be mailed to all active voters in early February. Town Meeting on Monday March 1st is for informational purposes only.

Public Comments:

- Ms. Gabrielle Smith said that the status quo is untenable and that a “no” vote keeps the community in an unresolved situation. She expressed a desire to move forward and work together.
- Mr. Snyder asked if grant money will be lost in the case of a merger and, if so, what the cost of this would be. He suggested holding a debate on the issue of merger.
- Ms. Delphia expressed concern about the two-minute public comment limit instituted by the Selectboard, as she believes it stifles discussion. She suggested advertising phone numbers for staff and Selectboard members as a way for those who do not have internet access to learn about the issue.
- Ms. Margaret Smith asked why numbers from FY2020 were used in this document. She asked if limiting public comment was allowable under Robert’s Rules of Order.
- Ms. Cooper said that the board chose to limit discussion to two minutes so that they can allow more people to speak.
- Ms. Davis said that the TOV has always been good at saving for capital expenses but that she is concerned that the TIV is not as good at saving. She is concerned that the TOV would have an increased liability in case of a merger.
- Mr. Signorello questioned the math in taxation calculations.
- Mr. Shelden expressed support for the charter as written. He said that the political will for separation is growing in the Village and that he would rather have a slow tax increase from merger than the large increase that separation would cause.

- Mr. Harlan Smith expressed concern that a future Selectboard could cancel all the districts created in the charter. He also suggested advertising the time limit on public input in future meeting notifications.
- Mr. Allen said that a merger would bring forth equity and fairness and get rid of the ongoing debate about the issue.
- Ms. Dunn asked what would be done about the two conflicting charters from the TIV and TOV and said that she is concerned about the equitable distribution of representatives on the ten-person transitional Selectboard for the merged community.
- Ms. Wrenner suggested that the PowerPoint document be updated with current financial figures. She expressed concern that the TIV is not taking proper care of its infrastructure.
- Mr. Michael Smith said that, as a resident of the TIV, he has been paying a financial penalty since merger was defeated in 2006.
- Ms. Stultz said that she is looking forward to being one community, but that concerns expressed by members of the public should be addressed going forward.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, to close the public hearing on merger at 7:58 pm. The motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Haney thanked everyone for questions and comments. Selectboard and staff answered the questions that were brought up in the public hearing.

- Regarding the loss of grant funds in a merger, Mr. Teich said that the amount the communities receive each year varies. He is unsure how the state will handle grant funding should the communities merge.
- Ms. Haney said that she does not plan to engage in a debate.
- Ms. Haney said that phone numbers for staff and Selectboard members would be advertised and thanked Ms. Delphia for her suggestion.
- Ms. Haney said that time limits are put on public input when many people are expected to want to speak. It will be advertised in future meeting materials.
- Mr. Teich said that updated financial numbers will be presented at the next meeting.
- Mr. Teich said that debt districts cannot be canceled based on the advice of a neutral attorney hired for advice on mergers.
- Ms. Haney said that she understands concerns about the transitional board but that it is intended for this board to only last a few months until the next election cycle.
- Mr. Teich said that the Village also budgets for Capital Projects. Roughly \$400,000 per year is put away for this purpose. Mr. Murray noted that TIV residents also pay into the Town Capital Fund as well.

Mr. Watts registered a concern that minority positions in the Selectboard are not being represented in public informational sessions. Ms. Haney said that Mr. Watts is entitled to participate in conversations using whatever information that he sees fit.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Consider approval of Fiscal Year 2022-2026 Capital Budget and Five-Year Plan

Motion by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, seconded by ANDY WATTS to accept the Fiscal Year 2022-2026 Capital Budget and Five-Year Plan. Mr. Watts clarified that the board is adopting, not accepting this document. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Preparation for Town Annual Meeting – Tammy Getchell

Assistant to the Manager Tammy Getchell said that this year's preparation will be a little different due to COVID. If the board is interested, staff can set up meetings where up to two board members can meet with residents about Town Meeting items. Mr. Teich said that staff considered holding an in-person

**SELECTBOARD
(DRAFT)**

February 1, 2021

Informational Town Meeting, however, due to the ban on inter-household gatherings, this was impossible. A ballot box will be outside of 81 Main Street. Ms. Hill-Fleury said that the Board of Civil Authority would be working to prepare ballots for mailing and encouraged the Selectboard and Trustees to help if they are available.

In public comments, Harlan Smith said that more needs to be done to inform residents that Town Meeting is for informational purposes only. Ms. Cooper said that she is happy with Ms. Getchell's dedication to customer service.

7. CONSENT ITEMS

PATRICK MURRAY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO to approve the Consent Agenda:

a. Check Warrant: #17821 – 1/29/21

The motion passed 5-0.

8. READING FILE

a. Board member comments

- Mr. Murray said that, based on recent news reports, it does not look like there will be a large increase in Vermont school taxes, as was previously predicted.
- Mr. Teich said that the Town Public Works Department is now operating at "yellow" status due to COVID. He said that the Senior Van will be taking residents outside of the normal service area to get COVID vaccinations. The Senior Center has established a vaccination hotline to assist seniors in scheduling these appointments.

b. Email from Andy Watts re: FW: Selectboard Meeting Comments/Questions Part 3, January 19, 2021

c. Upcoming meeting schedule

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. *An executive session is not expected.

An executive session did not take place.

10. ADJOURN

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2021

(See minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

Vince Franco, Clerk, Selectboard

**TOWN OF ESSEX
SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, February 16, 2021**

SELECTBOARD: Elaine Haney, Chair; Patrick Murray, Vice Chair; Vince Franco; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Andy Watts.

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Evan Teich, Unified Manager; Greg Duggan, Deputy Manager; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director; Sarah Macy, Finance Director; Aaron Martin, Town Engineer/Utilities Director, Jenny Willingham, Assistant Clerk.

OTHERS PRESENT: Gil Allen, Lisa Allen, Bob Bates, James Charbonneau, Raj Chawla, Kevin Collins, Annie Cooper, Patty Davis, Tracey Delphia, Erin Dickinson, David Fogle, Eileen Girling, Robert Haggerty, Deb McAdoo, Ross Miller, Scott Moore, Toni Morgan, Roseanne Prestipino, Brian Sheldon, Kayla Silver, Ken Signorello, Gabrielle Smith, Margaret Smith, Richard Smith, L. Starkey, Sara Stultz, Mike Sullivan, Mike Thorne, Doug Wilson, Irene Wrenner, Tom Yandow, Jeanne _____, Karenlee _____, Rick & Chris _____, RM, SN.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Elaine Haney called the meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:30 PM.

2. INVOCATION OF CIVILITY

Vince Franco read the following Invocation of Civility: "We are gathered together in civil assembly. We gather as a community, in the oldest sense of the word. We gather to come together and try to make decisions; about what is right, about what is wrong. Let us advocate for our positions, but not at the expense of others. Let us remember that there is an immense gap between saying, 'I am right' and saying, 'I believe I am right.' And that our neighbors with whom we might disagree are good people 'with hopes and dreams as true and high as ours.' And let us always remember that, in the end, caring for each other, in this community, is far greater than any difference of opinion we might have. Thank you for being here this evening."

3. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

4. APPROVE AGENDA

With no changes to the agenda, no vote for approval was needed.

5. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Margaret Smith said that she was disappointed in the Board's decision to limit public comment to two minutes.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Second of two public hearings to consider the Plan of Merger of the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction dated January 11, 2021 and the proposed Charter for the merged communities. (Residents will be given 2 minutes each to speak.)

Ms. Haney outlined the rules for public participation this evening, namely that each participant can speak once and for a two-minute time period. Microphones and cameras must be off when not speaking.

Ms. Haney, Mr. Franco, and Mr. Murray began with a presentation, which included a history of merger and the reasons for looking at merger. These include: more organized and consistent planning; a reduction in

the number of elections; and equitable distribution of costs. Merger would generally result in a decrease in taxes for those in the Town Inside the Village (TIV), and an increase for those in the Town Outside the Village (TOV). The change in taxation would be phased in over a twelve-year period, after which the TIV and TOV would pay the same rate. The Village would be responsible for repaying the debt that it incurred prior to merger. This plan is intended to honor current community identity and high quality of service. There would be five separate districts within the community. The community would be divided into two wards, which would currently reflect the TIV/TOV boundaries, although these could be changed later. The new Selectboard would contain three members from each ward. Should merger pass, both the charter the Village voters approved and the charter approved town-wide would go to the legislature for consideration and reconciliation. Ms. Haney noted that new slides have been created from the earlier meeting to reflect the FY2021 tax numbers, grand list growth, and special tax districts.

New slides have been created to reflect the FY2021 numbers. The figures have also been recalculated to take into consideration Grand List growth and special tax districts. These numbers show that TOV Town taxes will grow by 12% and be reduced by 10% for Village residents over the course of thirteen years.

Public Comments:

- Mr. Miller asked what the benefits to the TOV would be in this plan.
- Mr. Wilson asked for clarification regarding the yearly vs. compounded tax increase.
- Ms. Margaret Smith said that the charter approved by the TIV has a board with three residents of the TOV, three residents of the TIV, and one at-large seat. How will this be rectified with the charter that the entire community is voting on?
- Ms. Cooper noted her enthusiastic support for merger.
- Ms. Davis asked for clarification regarding the length and board composition during the transition period.
- Mr. Allen expressed concern about insinuations of impropriety on the website nomergernow.org.
- Mr. Sheldon thanked both boards for their hard work and expressed his opinion that if merger is voted down the legislature will also vote down the 3+3 charter change.
- Mr. Signorello said that merger would result in all \$36.8 million in Village assets being transferred to the Town. He asked if this would be worth any potential tax savings.
- Ms. Delphia expressed concern that the process for public input was happening after the merger plan had been finalized.
- Mr. Sullivan said that tax rate is cumulative, not compounded. He expressed support for merger.
- Ms. Allen thanked elected officials for their hard work and expressed concern that some of them are being attacked for their choices.
- Ms. Wrenner said that the merger tax increase is forever and that residents in the TOV will always be paying more as a result. She said that the TOV should not be paying for things that they don't need. She also noted that the Grand List is growing at a faster rate in the TOV and said that separation is not on the ballot so it should not be considered as a factor.
- Mr. Bates said that there is no guarantee that the charter sent to the legislature is the one that will be approved.
- Ms. Stultz said that the status quo is not acceptable as a TIV resident, and that some people will never be in support of a merger. She said that she does not understand why some regard it as a problem that the Selectboard Chair lives in the Village and that she would be curious how much more TIV residents paid in taxes than TOV residents over the years.
- Mr. Charbonneau said that he believes that the Board has been honest and forthright. However, he does not support merger because he feels that the TOV is being asked to support a community whose past financial choices they had no say in.
- Ms. Gabrielle Smith said that division and confusion is holding us back and encouraged a "yes" vote so that the community can move forward.
- Ms. McAdoo echoed Ms. Gabrielle Smith's comments.

- Ms. Cooper asked to speak again since she had been interrupted the last time, which was granted. She said that a lot of work has gone into getting merger on the ballot and that she believes that if the community votes “yes” the state legislature will support it.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, to close the public hearing on merger at 7:47 pm. The motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Haney thanked everyone for questions and comments. Selectboard and staff answered the questions that were brought up in the public hearing.

- The annual vs. cumulative increase in taxes was clarified. For an average home in the TOV, this will be \$330 per year, or \$2,382 over the course of twelve years.
- The state legislature will be the ones to formally approve the charter. The Town of Essex will have no control on when or how it is taken up. Regarding the 3+3 charter change that was approved by voters last year, the legislature has not acted on this either. We hope that this is revisited after the merger vote is completed.
- Regarding assets in liabilities, the merged community will be responsible for both. Liabilities include: employee pension costs, accrued time off, and other day-to-day expenses.

7. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Consider approval of first-class and second-class liquor license Silver Hospitality LLC dba Salt & Bubbles Wine Bar and Market. Selectboard will be acting as Board of Liquor Control Commissioners during this agenda item.

Deputy Manager Greg Duggan introduced Kayla Silver, the applicant. He noted that this application has been reviewed by both the Police Department and Clerk’s Office, both of which had no concerns. Ms. Silver said that Salt & Bubbles has the motto, “Drink wine, break bread, share community.” This will be a small, approachable wine bar with sustainably-sourced wines. Salt & Bubbles is in the Essex Experience, and aims to open in mid-June. Ms. Silver plans to apply for an outdoor consumption permit, as well.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard approve the first/second class liquor license for Silver Hospitality LLC, DBA Salt & Bubbles Wine Bar and Market. The motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Haney read the following admonition, “The Selectboard takes the issuance of liquor licenses very seriously, as should the area establishments who serve alcohol. We expect you not to serve alcohol to minors, nor anyone who is obviously inebriated. We thank you for doing business in Essex and we wish you a very successful year.”

b. Consider request from Andy Watts to post merger information to all Front Porch Forum neighborhoods.

Mr. Watts said that he had posted the answers to a question that a friend of his had asked him on his neighborhood Front Porch Forum (FPF). A variety of other questions came to him in response to this and he posted a total of twelve posts on the issue. These were subsequently reposted on other forums. He posted as an individual member of the Selectboard. He requested the Selectboard’s approval to publish the materials to all nine FPF neighborhoods. He said that he had requested that this material be reviewed by staff, also in accordance with the Communications Policy, but was told that this would not be possible due to time constraints.

Mr. Murray said that Mr. Watts was putting the Selectboard in an uncomfortable position, as he believes that the Communications Policy does not require the Board to approve Mr. Watts’ post. He questioned why Mr. Watts approached the Board for permission after publishing so many posts. He also expressed

concern that members of the public are under the impression that the Board is “muzzling” Mr. Watts’ opinions about merger. Mr. Duggan and Mr. Teich said that requesting staff approval to review the accuracy of this material puts staff in a very difficult position, as it forces them into political issues, especially since some of Mr. Watts’ posts contradict materials approved by the board. Mr. Teich said that it also sets a difficult precedent. Ms. Haney said that she appreciated Mr. Watts’ honesty and hard work on these posts, and that no Selectboard approval would be required for Mr. Watts to post across all community forums. Mr. Watts said that he was still concerned that posting this would appear like an abuse of power, as a private citizen would not be able to access all these forums without paying. He is uncertain if he will ultimately choose to post or not.

In public comment, Ms. Wrenner stated that she enjoyed reading Mr. Watts’ posts. She was contacted by a Village resident who tried to repost Mr. Watts’ post in her neighborhood forum but was limited by a character count. Ms. Wrenner contacted FPF on her behalf and was told that different users are given different character counts. She encouraged the Board to work with FPF to rectify this issue.

. Ms. Cooper, Ms. Gabrielle Smith, and Ms. Delphia expressed support for Mr. Watts’ post.

8. CONSENT ITEMS

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by VINCE FRANCO, to approve the Consent

Agenda:

- a. Consider approval of Questions and Answers: Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget
- b. Consider approval of Form PVR-4155 – Certificate – No Appeals or Suit Pending to Grand List
- c. Consider approval of Town Highway Certification and reclassification approval for portion of West Sleepy Hollow Road
- d. Approve minutes: January 25, 2021 – Joint; January 28, 2021
- e. Check warrant: #17823 – 2/5/21; #17826 – 2/12/2

Public Works Director Dennis Lutz was asked to speak regarding 8c, Town Highway Certification and reclassification approval for portion of West Sleepy Hollow Road. The Town of Essex had made a commitment to the residents of West Sleepy Hollow Road to take over this roadway as a Town highway. The developers for this project contributed money to pave and improve this road, as the Town has a policy to not accept any more gravel roads.

The motion passed 5-0.

9. READING FILE

a. Board member comments:

- Mr. Teich said that he would like to address a question that was missed during the public hearing regarding the relationship between voted upon debt and annual budgets. He said that he would need to get legal council for clarification but that he thought that the state would create a tax reconciliation district. He also said that ballots and annual reports have been mailed out.
- Mr. Murray said, to combat misinformation on social media, that he wanted it to be known that the Selectboard is made up of five members, three who currently live in the Town Outside the Village and two who live in the Town Inside the Village.

b. Email from Brad Luck re: Questions from Resident regarding merger booklet

c. Email from Elaine Haney re: Town concerns re: H.124, Vermont Employment Growth Incentive

d. Email from Matt and Margaret Gilbert re: Brief statement in support of merger

e. Email from Madeline Orsini re: Senior Center

f. Email from James Jutras re: Legislative priorities

g. Email from Peter Gustafson re: Planting trees this spring

h. Memo from Dennis Lutz re: Status of Winter Operations through 24 January 2021 (INFORMATION)

i. Upcoming meeting schedule

208
209 **10. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 210 **a. *An executive session is not expected.**
211 An executive session did not take place.
212

213 **11. ADJOURN**

214 **DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by PATRICK MURRAY, to adjourn the meeting. The**
215 **motion passed 5-0 at 9:08 p.m.**
216

217 Respectfully Submitted,
218 Darby Mayville
219 Recording Secretary
220

221 **Approved this _____ day of _____, 2021**
222

223 **(See minutes of this day for corrections, if any)**
224
225

226 _____
227 **Vince Franco, Clerk, Selectboard**
228
229
230
231

From: Charles Cole
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2021 8:30 AM
To: Evan Teich <eteich@essex.org>
Subject: FW: Family
Importance: High

Hi Evan,
Sharing the following email with you. I could not be more proud of our team.

From: Charles Cole
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2021 8:29 AM
To: EFD Members <department@essexfire.com>
Subject: Family
Importance: High

Team,
I want to share the following email with you that I received after our call to Old Stage Road in Westford. As you read it, you'll quickly understand that it is from one of our fellow first responders who runs with both Essex Rescue and UJFD. If you've ever wondered if you make a difference, you'll only need to read below to find the answer. What you do absolutely makes a difference and I appreciate you. It is difficult to stay positive during this pandemic when we cannot gather as a group, can't train as a group, have to decon frequently and more completely than before, worry about whether or not we're jeopardizing our families when we return home, and more. Please know that your work matters and I am so proud to be able to serve alongside each of you.

Good evening Chief,

I am writing tonight to share with you the things I see when I am on scene with your folks. I believe it is important to know what I feel when I hear Essex Town Fire is being dispatched. There have been many times your dept. has responded to mutual aid calls for structure fires in Underhill and Jericho and many more calls to aid Essex Rescue in town. It is an overwhelming sense of comfort and gratitude to know your people are coming. Sure, you have to answer the tones and anyone can show up to a call. But your crews are so much more than that.

On Wednesday, your dept. responded with us to a cardiac arrest. I knew you were coming and I knew I had the best help anyone could ask for. I had a minimal 3 man ambulance crew, but I knew you would help out as soon as you were on scene. I would have competent, clinical EMS providers and exceptional fire support. Whatever the call needed, Essex Fire would get the job done. I rushed to the pts. aid with one other crew member and when I turned to look for support I saw a line of fire fighters; men, women, EMS, fire, and anything else I could ask for coming up in a line at a hurried pace, arms full of equipment, unhindered by the cold wind, snow, fading light or poor weather. They were ready to get the job done. How can anyone fail with this kind of support? It was an amazing site to see. And then we executed the best possible care we could for our pt. We were a well oiled machine, my requests were being executed as I was voicing them, sometimes even before. There were some things I didn't even need to ask for, they just got done.

When UJFD asks for mutual aid fire support, I am frequently operations. I know you guys are coming and it won't be long, "30 seconds out" as they say. As a matter of fact, a lot of your folks are already responding to the station because they know we're going to call on them. They're listening! What an exceptional show of volunteerism and support. Our brothers and sisters are coming. Our folks are tired from that initial attack and then your crews show up; smiles, energetic, looking for any directive and willing to do any job asked. They are old, younger, eager, knowledgeable and ready. Again, I know this is what mutual aid does. They answer the call. But your team instills confidence, invigorates and reenergizes our dept. We battle the dragon, and we get tired. As soon as your engines roll in, your

crews unload and join us. We fight that dragon together. There isn't anything we can't take on at this point.

Do you remember in 1992 the Olympics' "Dream Team" for basketball? What a team, and essentially unbeatable. That is how I feel when Essex Town fire joins my team; fire or EMS. I stand so proud with your men and women. I frequently feel as if they are my own. I don't feel like there is an "us" or "you." We stand together. If there is strength in numbers, then we are unbeatable. I leave every call feeling better and full of life. Is this the definition of "brotherhood?" It certainly is. And don't get me wrong, I feel exactly the same about my firefighters and EMS first response on the UJFD or Essex Rescue. It's truly all one big family for me. You know; you see us work at these scenes. As a matter of fact, I feel the same about Junction Fire, Richmond, Westford, Cambridge, etc.; really anybody we work with. I just have a special place in my heart for Essex Town Fire. We work as one, one Brother/Sisterhood. I look for that everyday. And I'm glad to say, Essex Town Fire never disappoints. So, thank you. Thank all your men and women. I will always call when I need help. And let them know, I'm always listening too. If you call, I'll be the first in line. I know I'm getting the best help anyone could ask for. I hope Essex and the surrounding towns are aware of the great service you all provide. With a great sense of pride and overwhelming honor I stand with you, your officers, and all your members. Thank you. I'll see you all out there and keep up the good work.

Yours in brother/sisterhood,

Stay well my friends,

Charles J. Cole

Fire Chief & Town Fire Warden



Essex Town Fire Department

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MEETING SCHEDULES

2/19/2021

DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, ALL MEETINGS ARE HELD ONLINE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

TOWN SELECTBOARD MEETINGS		VILLAGE TRUSTEES MEETINGS		JOINT MEETINGS	
				 	
February 23, 2021—6:30 PM		VB Regular			Cathy
February 25, 2021 – 6:30 PM		SB Special			Darby
March 1, 2021—7:30 PM		Town Annual Meeting			Cathy
March 9, 2021—6:30 PM		VB Regular			Cathy
March 15, 2021—6:30 PM		SB Regular			Cathy
March 22, 2021—6:30 PM		JT Special			Cathy
March 23, 2021—6:30 PM		VB Regular			Cathy
April 5, 2021—6:30 PM		SB Regular			Cathy
April 7, 2021—7:00 PM		Village Annual Meeting			Cathy