Town of Essex Selectboard
Phone: (802) 878-1341
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Regular Meeting Agenda

Monday, April 4, 2022 − 6:30 PM
81 Main St., Essex Junction, VT 05452

This meeting will be in person and online. Available options to watch or join the meeting:
- **VISIT www.essex.org/zoomselectboard** for direct meeting links and options to participate.
- **JOIN ONLINE:** https://zoom.us/join | Meeting ID: 987 8569 1140; Passcode: 032060
- **JOIN CALLING:** (*toll free audio only*): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 987 8569 1140; Passcode: 032060

1. **CALL TO ORDER** 6:30 PM
2. **REORGANIZATION**
   a. Election of Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk
3. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
4. **APPROVE AGENDA**
5. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
   a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
6. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
   a. Consider approval of Rules and Regulations for Orderly Conduct of Business
   b. Consider approval of Conflict of Interest Policy
   c. Consider approval of Communications Policy
   d. Introduction of Proposed fiscal year 2023 Water and sewer budget
   e. Capital Water and Sewer Plan fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2027
   f. Consider appointing representatives to Tri-Town Sewer Committee
   g. Discussion and potential action about re-appointment process for boards, commissions, and committees
   h. Consider approval of Selectboard meeting schedule for 2022-2023
   i. Discussion about Selectboard representative on Essex BEST (Building equity, solidarity and trust)
7. **CONSENT ITEMS**
   a. Approve minutes: March 21, 2022
   b. Approve check warrants: #17964 - 03/25/2022
   c. Consider approval of liquor license renewals
8. **READING FILE**
   a. Board member comments
   b. Join a Board or Committee - Opportunities listing
   c. Letter from Vermont Agency of Transportation re: Engineering Speed and Safety Study - VT Route 128
9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

a. An executive session is not anticipated

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: ______________________ 04/01/2022

TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2022

SELECTBOARD: Andy Watts, Chair; Kendall Chamberlin; Tracey Delphia; Dawn Hill-Fleury; Ethan Lawrence

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Greg Duggan, Town Manager; Courtney Bushey, Finance Director; Marguerite Ladd, Deputy Manager; Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director; Aaron Martin, Director of Public Works Operations

OTHERS PRESENT: Gina Halpin Barret, Kevin Collins, Patty Davis, Erin Dickinson, Erin Ennis, Brad Kennison, Timothy Miller, Greg Morgan, Hugh Mungus, Bruce Post, Mary Post, Betty Poulin, Roseanne Prestipino, David Skopin, Ken Signorello, Gabrielle Smith, Harlan Smith, Margaret Smith, Laura Taylor, Sr Doug Wilson, Irene Wrenner, Lorraine Zaloom, Sharon Zukowski, Jean

1. <u>CALL TO ORDER</u>
In lieu of a chair, Mr. Duggan called the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:30 PM.

2. <u>REORGANIZATION</u>
a. Election of Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk
Mr. Duggan requested nominations for the position of Chair.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to nominate ANDY WATTS as Chair. DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, that the nominations for Chair be closed. Both motions passed 5-0.

Mr. Watts requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by KENDALL CHAMBERLIN, to nominate TRACEY DELPHIA as Vice-Chair. DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that nominations for Vice-Chair be closed. Both motions passed 5-0.

Mr. Watts requested nominations for the position of Clerk, gave an overview of the position, and said that it is typically one of the newest members who serves in this function.

TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to nominate ETHAN LAWRENCE as Clerk. DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, that nominations for Clerk be closed. Both motions passed 5-0.

3. <u>AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES</u>
None.

4. <u>APPROVE AGENDA</u>
No changes, approval not required.

5. <u>PUBLIC TO BE HEARD</u>
a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
Ms. Wrenner and Ms. Davis said the Town Meeting TV camera is not working properly.

Mr. Kennison asked when the Selectboard plans to meet fully in-person. Mr. Watts said that participation in hybrid meetings is significantly greater and that the Board has no plans to stop doing holding hybrid meetings. Mr. Kennison requested that the Board begin reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of each meeting. Mr. Watts said there were some equity concerns about the Pledge, and that the Board was looking at an alternate statement to be read at the start of meetings.

Ms. Davis and Ms. Post expressed concerns about the safety in the Saxon Hill area.

6. <u>BUSINESS ITEMS</u>

a. Consider approval of Rules and Regulations for Orderly Conduct of Business

Mr. Watts explained the process and timeline behind setting the agenda for each meeting. He said the only person who is allowed to interrupt a speaker is the Chair, and that side conversations are not allowed. Mr. Watts said that members of the Board should not be using social media or sending e-mails during meetings. Mr. Watts requested public input; none was given.

TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard approve the Rules and Regulations for Orderly Conduct of Business. Motion passed 5-0.

b. Consider approval of Conflict of Interest Policy

Mr. Watts said that each member has the choice to recuse themselves on an issue, should they have a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest. Mr. Watts requested public input; none was given.

TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, that the Selectboard approve the Town of Essex Conflict of Interest Policy. Motion passed 5-0.

c. Consider approval of Communications Policy

Mr. Watts said that if an individual member Board wants to speak as an individual, they should state such, and said that no discussions of the Board should take place through social media or e-mail. Criticisms of elected officials are protected speech.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, to approve the Communications Policy as written. Motion passed 5-0.

d. Introduction of Proposed fiscal year 2023 Water and sewer budget

Mr. Lutz said this budget would be reviewed in more detail at the next meeting. He said the FY2023 proposed water budget has an overall cost increase of 5.6% in budget line items, however the resulting rate percentage increase is only 2.1%. The water initiation fee is also proposed to increase by 2%.

The FY2023 proposed sewer budget has an overall 6.7 % increase in budgeted line items and a 3.4% corresponding increase in rates. Mr. Martin said that purchasing water and/or wastewater treatment, appreciation of assets, and monitoring for leaks are the major drivers of the budget.

Ms. Hill-Fleury asked how meter replacement was going, Mr. Martin said there are less than 100 homes that need to have meters replaced. Mr. Lawrence asked if the surplus in the budget covers emergency repairs. Mr. Lutz said that Public Works attempts to budget for emergency repairs yearly. Mr. Lutz also explained how the funds are separated and allocated within the budget. Mr. Chamberlin asked how water/sewer delinquencies are looking. Mr. Lutz said that they have been steady, and that new state programs to assist with delinquent bills have been helpful to many. Mr. Chamberlin said that, due to fee structures, those who are on the water/sewer system are essentially subsidizing the fire-related water costs for those who are not. Mr. Lutz said that most residents are on the water system and said this would be better addressed once taxes have stabilized after the Village of Essex Junction separates from the Town.

In public comment, Ms. Poulin asked why Essex had a minimum usage, if it was a based on a yearly or trimester figure and asked how many households fall below this minimum. Mr. Martin said that 1,100 connections are below the minimum usage, which is billed per trimester. Ms. Bushey said there is no year-end reconciliation. Mr. Lutz explained that the minimum payment covers the basic needs of the system, which are there regardless of water usage. Ms. Davis thanked Mr. Lutz and the Public Works Department for their hard work maintaining the system. Ms. Margaret Smith asked who she should contact for a question about her water bill, Mr. Lutz said she could call Public Works.

e. Capital Water and Sewer Plan fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2027

Mr. Lutz said this will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting. The Capital Plan shows that ratepayers, impact fees, and grants are funding capital projects, not the general tax base. He said the Town has been working to ensure that all COVID-related grant funds are being utilized. Mr. Chamberlin expressed support for the Town pursuing grants.

In public comment, Ms. Davis asked if the federal SRF funds will be available in subsequent years, Mr. Lutz said these will be available for a number of years. Mr. Duggan said that upcoming elections will provide opportunities for the community to vote on these projects, as they will require a bond. The bond will then be forgiven by the SRF program. Mr. Lawrence suggested offering informational sessions to educate the public on these projects. Mr. Post asked whether a bond would be triggered before or after a vote to approve the funds. Mr. Lutz said that, in order to receive funds, the bond vote must be approved. Mr. Post asked if the Town would be obligated to bond should it be voted on, if the federal aid does not come through. Mr. Martin said he expects to receive further clarification from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns regarding this issue.

f. Consider appointing representatives to Tri-Town Sewer Committee

Mr. Duggan said that this committee provides oversight on the Wastewater Treatment Facility, with the Village of Essex Junction and the Town of Williston. The Selectboard has two representatives on the committee. Mr. Duggan said that he could serve on the committee should only one Board member want to serve.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to appoint Town Manager Greg Duggan and Selectboard member Kendall Chamberlin as the Town Representatives to the Tri-Town Sewer Committee. Motion passed 5-0.

g. Discussion and potential action about re-appointment process for boards, commissions, and committees

Ms. Delphia said she met with Mr. Duggan and Ms. Ladd regarding committee and commission re-appointments. She said that, in the past, re-appointments have been placed on the Consent Agenda, however she believes that it would be worthwhile to have all re-appointments interviewed and advertised. She believes that advertising positions would encourage more people to serve. Ms. Hill-Fleury said she liked the idea, and that it would help to get new volunteers in the community. The Board discussed including a set list of questions for each candidate. Ms. Ladd said these interviews could help to gain valuable insight on the committee member’s experiences. Mr. Lawrence asked if committees/commissions provide regular progress reports to the Selectboard. Ms. Delphia said she agreed that this would be a good idea to implement down the line.

In public comment, Ms. Davis said that some residents may be interested but do not feel qualified to serve. Mr. Post said it is important for the Board and residents to have more oversight on municipal committees/commissions. A structured oversight process would help the Board and the general public.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that positions on Boards are not automatically re-appointed, and that everyone will have to interview for any openings. Motion passed 5-0.

h. Consider approval of Selectboard meeting schedule for 2022-2023
Mr. Duggan said the proposed schedule includes meetings that are generally held on the first and third Monday of the month, at 6:30 PM. Exceptions are noted in the memo in the Selectboard packet. Mr. Duggan said a strategic planning session will also be scheduled in the future. Mr. Watts requested public comment; none was given.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to approve the proposed meeting schedule for 2022-2023. Motion passed 5-0.

i. Discussion about Selectboard representative on Essex BEST (Building equity, solidarity and trust)
Ms. Ladd said that Essex BEST meets quarterly and has two subcommittees which meet more often. Mr. Watts noted that this is not a Selectboard-appointed committee, and that Mr. Duggan has the final say in who is appointed. Ms. Hill-Fleury indicated an interest in being appointed.

7. <u>CONSENT AGENDA</u>
DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed 5-0.
In discussion, Mr. Chamberlin asked if the Town had checked if tax and water/sewer payments are current for all liquor license renewals, Mr. Duggan said the applicants are all tenants, and that all payments are up to date at the properties.
a. Approve minutes: March 21, 2022
b. Approve check warrants: #17964 - 03/25/2022
c. Consider approval of liquor license renewals

8. <u>READING FILE</u>
a. Board member comments: Ms. Hill-Fleury asked for clarification on the letter from the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Mr. Duggan clarified that VTRANS is going to do a speed study on a portion of VT Route 128.

Mr. Watts welcomed Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Chamberlin to the Selectboard and thanked them both for running and serving.
b. Join a Board or Committee - Opportunities listing
c. Letter from Vermont Agency of Transportation re: Engineering Speed and Safety Study - VT Route 128

9. <u>EXECUTIVE SESSION</u>
a. An executive session is not anticipated

Not held.

10. <u>ADJOURN</u>

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, for the Selectboard to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary

Approved this_18th_day of_April, 2022
(See minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

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Ethan Lawrence, Selectboard Clerk