



Town of Essex

Selectboard

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Regular Meeting Agenda

Monday, November 21, 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:

• **JOIN ONLINE:** Zoom Meeting ID: 987 8569 1140; Passcode: 032060 or

<https://zoom.us/j/98785691140?pwd=WENqeFhITGVDS0Q5blROdkhuS3RkZz09>

• **JOIN CALLING:** (toll free audio only): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 987 8569 1140; Passcode: 032060

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. *Interviews and possible appointment of a volunteer to serve as the Town of Essex Moderator - Katherine Jo Nopper and Ken Signorello
 - b. *Interview and possible appointment of a volunteer to serve on the Essex Housing Commission - Deborah Flannery
 - c. *Interview and possible appointment of a volunteer to serve on the Energy Committee - Daniel Parkins
 - d. Presentation from and discussion with Greater Burlington Industrial Council
 - e. Continue Fiscal Year 2024 General Fund Budget work session
 - f. Consider adopting Fiscal Year 2024 Municipal Budget
 - g. Consider approval of warnings for public hearings on Fiscal Year 2024 Municipal Budget
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve minutes: November 4, 2022 - Budget Day; November 7, 2022
 - b. Approve check warrants: #18052 - 11/04/22 : #18055 - 11/10/22
 - c. *Consider approval of Manager's appointment of Cemetery Commissioner
7. **READING FILE**
 - a. Board member comments
 - b. Upcoming meeting schedule
 - c. Letter from Cahill, Gawne, Miller & Manahan, P.C. re: \$50,000 payable to Essex Police Department
 - d. Letter from Essex Rescue re: municipal contribution and Town Report 2021-2022
 - e. Press release: Town of Essex continues to support local nonprofit organizations
 - f. Town Coffee Talks - Budget Discussion on December 7th
8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. *An executive session may be requested to discuss the appointment or evaluation of a public officer or employee

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**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
November 21, 2022**

SELECTBOARD: Andrew Watts, Chair; Tracey Delphia, Vice Chair; Ethan Lawrence, Clerk; Kendall Chamberlin; Dawn Hill-Fleury.

ADMINISTRATION: Greg Duggan, Town Manager; Daniel Roy, Finance Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Sam Andersen, GBIC; Patty Davis; Deb Flannery; Ken Signorello; Katherine Jo Nopper; Daniel Parkins; Gillian Smith; Margaret Smith; Irene Wrenner; Tom Yandow.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Andy Watts called the meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:30 P.M.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Town Manager Duggan noted that in Business Item 5a, Ken Signorello has withdrawn his application from consideration. He also noted that for Consent Agenda Item 6a (Minutes of November 7), they would like to modify them as they are missing a motion made after executive session for that evening.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, to strike Ken Signorello from Business Item 5a, accept the modified memorandum for Business Item 5e, and to move minutes for November 7th from the Consent Agenda to be Business Item 5h.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

None.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. *Interviews and possible appointment of a volunteer to serve as the Town of Essex Moderator – Katherine Jo Nopper

Ms. Nopper spoke briefly about her background and interest in serving as the Town of Essex Moderator. She noted previous experience working with unions but said that she would need more training on Robert's Rules. Ms. Hill-Fleury asked about the Applicant's experience working with large groups of people who are passionate about a topic. Ms. Nopper replied that she has attended conventions during her union work. She said that she would also be able to be an unbiased moderator, given that she is newer to the Town. Mr. Chamberlin asked whether the Applicant is familiar with how town meetings are run and Ms. Nopper replied that she has been attending town meetings since she was much younger and spoke about her interest in becoming more integrated in Essex. Mr. Lawrence asked what skills she could bring to the position, and Ms. Nopper spoke about her strong organizational skills and her ability to serve in an impartial role. Ms. Delphia asked about an instance where the Applicant has changed her mind on an issue, and Ms. Nopper replied that she has changed her approach to how she views political candidates and tries to judge them on a range of characteristics rather than just their position on one issue or soundbite. Ms. Nopper asked whether there are resources or opportunities that she can take advantage of to learn

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more about the town meeting and moderating process, and Mr. Watts replied that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns offers a moderator training opportunity, which will be in a few weeks.

b. *Interview and possible appointment of a volunteer to serve on the Essex Housing Commission – Deb Flannery

Ms. Flannery spoke briefly about her background and interest and serving on the Essex Housing Commission, noting prior experience with Habitat for Humanity in Minnesota. Ms. Hill-Fleury asked how the Applicant would approach decision-making if she were in the minority on an issue. Ms. Flannery replied that she would state the reasons for her position and use decision-making processes to come to a resolution. Mr. Chamberlin asked if there are conflicts of interest with the Applicant's day job. Ms. Flannery replied that she would abstain from decisions being made that could conflict with her current professional role, and believes that her breadth of knowledge of housing finance programs would serve her well in this position. Mr. Lawrence asked what skills and assets the Applicant could bring to the Commission, and Ms. Flannery replied that the cost of building housing and tight supply of housing are major issues for the County and said that she recently launched a fund to subsidize workforce housing in the Upper Valley.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, to appoint Deb Flannery to the Housing Commission for a term expiring in June 2025. The motion passed 5-0.

c. *Interview and possible appointment of a volunteer to serve on the Energy Committee – Daniel Parkins

Mr. Parkins spoke briefly about his background and interest in serving on the Energy Committee. He spoke about his prior volunteer, education, and career experience. He spoke about his interest in sustainability and its role in developing long-term wealth in communities. Ms. Hill-Fleury asked how the Applicant would approach decision-making if he were in the minority on the issue, and Mr. Parkins replied that he relies heavily on his training to use dialogue to seek understanding and build common ground. Mr. Chamberlin asked if there are particular opportunities in Essex right now regarding sustainable energy, and Mr. Parkins replied that there are national funding opportunities around renewable energy which Vermont could tap into. Mr. Lawrence asked about innovations in renewable energy for agriculture, and Mr. Parkins discussed a number of innovative techniques and technology around sustainable agriculture. Mr. Parkins asked about current needs on the Energy Committee. Mr. Yandow, a representative of the Energy Committee, replied that the top items are around installing more solar and weatherizing more homes in Essex.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by KENDALL CHAMBERLIN to appoint Dan Parkins to the Energy Committee for a term expiring in June 2025. The motion passed 5-0.

d. Presentation from and discussion with Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation

Ms. Andersen began by briefly noting GBIC's role as a regional industrial development corporation, of which there are 12 in Vermont. She said that they help businesses with a variety of services, and that they generate the regional priority list for Chittenden County as required by the State. She spoke about GBIC's role in putting together a CEDS (comprehensive economic development strategy) with several other regions in Vermont to become an Economic Development District. She noted that they rely on State of Vermont funding as well as contributions from municipalities, and would be grateful for any funding contributions that municipalities can make.

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Mr. Lawrence asked about the funding requests made to both the Town of Essex and City of Essex Junction, since they had normally given a joint contribution in the past. Town Manager Duggan replied that the \$4,000 proposal for the budget was based on a per capita split between the Town and City of the original \$7,500 request.

Mr. Chamberlin asked if there are more opportunities for GBIC's work in the Town than in the City. Ms. Andersen replied that it depends on the projects' and the businesses' needs.

e. Continue Fiscal Year 2024 General Fund Budget work session

Town Manager Duggan began by noting changes in the proposed budget made since the last discussion, including a \$120,000 decrease in revenue, a decrease in VLCT dues, a reduction in the landfill monitoring line item by \$2,000, a decrease in Winooski Valley Park District dues, and a reduction in GMT due. He noted that they are now projecting a 22.5% property tax increase, which translates to around \$350 per average home.

Ms. Hill-Fleury asked why the Town and City are sharing Health Officers and Deputy Health Officers. Mr. Watts noted that the Town's Health Officer serves as the City's Deputy Health Officer and that the City's Health Officer serves as the Town's Deputy Health Officer. Mr. Duggan noted that the position is not full time but serves as needed. Mr. Chamberlin asked whether this arrangement should be codified formally, and Town Manager Duggan replied that yes, a formal agreement will be drafted.

Mr. Lawrence spoke about the Essex Experience and the Recreation Department. Town Manager Duggan clarified that the Recreation line item was being reduced and the difference transferred to the Community Events and Celebrations line, which includes Essex Experience. Mr. Lawrence asked about the split in costs between the Town and City regarding the Police Department. Finance Director Roy clarified that it hasn't changed and that recent changes are only impacting the revenue.

Mr. Chamberlin suggested that the Town fund Essex Rescue at a certain percentage each year. He strongly suggested upgrading the trucks for the highway department when their warranties run out, as keeping them longer than that could be pricy. He said that he supports an increase in stormwater funding, given that there are opportunities at the state and federal level for matching funds. Mr. Watts noted that the Selectboard is contemplating increasing the capital tax to level fund it, given that they've lost a large portion of the tax base as a result of separation. Town Manager Duggan noted that they will be discussing the capital plan specifically in mid-December.

Ms. Hill-Fleury asked about the impact of decreasing from \$18 to \$15 per capita for Essex Rescue. Town Manager Duggan replied that it would be a decrease of around \$34,500. He noted that other municipalities are being charged \$18 per capita by Essex Rescue as well, and that he would recommend maintaining that level of funding for consistency across municipalities.

The Selectboard then reviewed the list of questions that they had asked during prior discussions, as well as reviewed staff responses to those questions. They discussed whether and how much to fund the Conservation Fund for FY24, and decided to fund it at \$4,000. They discussed funding around Explore Essex and decided to reduce the Community Events and Celebrations line item to \$8,000 and reduce the Parks and Recreation community event line item to \$2,900. They discussed whether to increase the library

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budget by \$15,000 (which was the prior contribution to the Brownell Library), and decided not to make that increase. They agreed with not using fund balance to pay for IT replacements. They decided to leave the remainder of items for future discussion, as they would not be able to make decisions on them tonight.

Patty Davis shared some of the feedback she has heard from the public about difficulty engaging with Selectboard and other events, as well as keeping up with Town events, given that there is no hard copy newspaper.

Mr. Watts noted that the Selectboard will have two meetings in December, at which they will work to finalize the budget further, in anticipation of public hearings on the budget in January.

f. Consider adopting Fiscal Year 2024 Municipal Budget
No discussion at this time.

g. Consider approval of warnings for public hearings on Fiscal Year 2024 Municipal Budget
No discussion at this time.

h. Approve minutes – November 7, 2022

The Selectboard corrected the November 7, 2022 minutes to add the following after the Selectboard exited executive session:

“DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to authorize the Town Manager to execute a lease and management agreement with the City of Essex Junction and Tree Farm Management Group. Motion passed 5-0.”

TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to approve the minutes as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

a. Approve minutes – November 4, 2022 – Budget Day; November 7, 2022

b. Approve check warrants: #18052 – 11/04/22; #18055 – 11/10/22

c. *Consider approval of Town Manager’s appointment of Cemetery Commissioner

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard accept the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.

7. READING FILE

a. Board member comments: Mr. Lawrence asked what business can be voted on from the floor on Town Meeting Day. Town Manager Duggan provided some clarification, but all agreed that this should be put on a future agenda for further discussion. Ms. Hill-Fleury wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

b. Upcoming meeting schedule

c. Letter from Cahill, Gawne, Miller & Manahan, P.C. re: \$50,000 payable to Essex Police Department

d. Letter from Essex Rescue re: municipal contribution and Town Report 2021-2022

e. Press release: Town of Essex continues to support local nonprofit organizations

f. Town Coffee Talks – Budget Discussion on December 7th

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8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. * An executive session may be necessary to discuss the appointment or evaluation of a public official

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, 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 Town Manager. The motion passed 5-0.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:37 P.M.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to appoint John Sonnick as moderator. The motion passed 5-0.

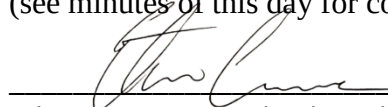
Mr. Lawrence thanked Ms. Nopper for stepping up, and said he hopes she continues to be involved in local government.

9. ADJOURN

TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 9:40 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt,
Recording Secretary

Approved this 5th day of December, 2022
(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)


Ethan Lawrence, Selectboard Clerk