Town of Essex

Selectboard
Phone: (802) 878-1341
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Regular Meeting AGENDA

Monday, February 12, 2024 – 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
• **JOIN CALLING:** (*toll free audio only*): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 987 8569 1140; Passcode: 032060
This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request.

1. CALL TO ORDER 6:30 PM

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

3. APPROVE AGENDA

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments from the public on items not on Agenda

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Presentation and discussion about Town Meeting preview
b. Presentation and discussion about Fire Department Impact Fee Phase I
c. Discussion about future development plans for 80 & 90 Upper Main St.
d. *Discussion about the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee

6. CONSENT ITEMS

a. Approve minutes: January 29, 2024
b. Approve check warrants: # 18191 - 01/24/24; # 18192 - 02/02/24
c. Consider acknowledgement of street name for private driveway
d. Consider approval of 2024 Acceptance of Town Highways
e. Consider approval of Vermont Bond Bank loan for Service Line Inventory
f. *Consider advertising for opening on Police Community Advisory Board
g. Consider approval of Fire Department Car 10 replacement purchase
h. Consider approval of form PVR-4155 Certificate of no Appeal or Suit Pending to Grand List
i. Consider approval of pre-application for Northern Border Regional Commission Catalyst Grant
j. Consider approval to mail ballots to all active, registered voters for Essex Westford School District

7. READING FILE

a. Board member comments
b. Upcoming meeting schedule
c. Status of Winter Operations
d. Email from resident re: sidewalk snow clearing policy
e. Due to City of Essex Junction account to conclude fiscal year 2023 audit
f. Essex News - February
g. Draft Stormwater Management Plan

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. *An executive session is anticipated to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee

Certification: ______________________ ________________

TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY FEBRUARY 12, 2024

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Greg Duggan, Town Manager; Charles Cole, Fire Chief; Tom Richards, Deputy Fire Chief; Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director; Steve Trenholm, Assistant Fire Chief

OTHERS PRESENT: Ken Signorello; Jon Slason, VSD Consulting; Irene Wrenner; M.J.S.S

1. CALL TO ORDER
Mr. Watts called the Town of Essex Selectboard meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES
None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA
No changes, thus no approval required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda
None.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS
a. Presentation and discussion about Town Meeting preview
Mr. Watts said that this is the same presentation that will be shown at Town Meeting. He discussed Selectboard budget goals, stating that the Board had a goal of keeping the projected tax rate increase less than 5%. He noted efforts by the Board and staff to keep costs low, as well as inflationary and supply chain pressures. Pay rates for the fire department have been raised to be consistent with other communities. He explained the purpose of the fund balance and what it would be used for. Staff changes include: an assistant to the manager's office, a trails coordinator, and an assistant library director. The Senior Center Coordinator is no longer needed, and the number of senior van drivers is being reduced. The proposed budget is $16.1 million, a 4.58% change from last year, and an increase in the tax levy of 5.03%. This results in a projected 4.24% tax rate increase, or $80.36 increase for the average home. This does not include the capital tax or local agreement rate. Mr. Watts requested public input, of which there was none.

Mr. Watts reviewed the Town Meeting ballot items, which include adoption of the new Town Plan, as well as two voter-backed petitions. The first petition would require the town to list properties who receive tax stabilization agreements in the Annual Report, and the second is to list the names, salaries, and titles of all town employees in the Annual Report. Both are advisory motions to the Selectboard, and not requirements that they do such. Voters will also vote for moderator and one Selectboard seat. Mr. Watts requested public input, of which there was none.

b. Presentation and discussion about Fire Department Impact Fee Phase I
Mr. Slason, of VHD Consulting, said that he has been working with the Fire Department on what an impact fee would look like for Essex. Impact fees are intended to mitigate the negative effects of growth. As new

users are added to the system, the experience of current users could deteriorate. The Fire Department is seeing an increase in calls, and new equipment and/or staff could be required. He suggested an impact fee study to look at growth, and what future needs could be because of this growth. Mr. Slason said that this study will also investigate what a new station should look like, and the possibility of increasing the services that are available. Essex has grown significantly in recent years and this growth is expected to continue at around 40-80 people per year. The over 65 population is also growing at a larger rate than the population in general. Essex also adds around 120 jobs per year.

Mr. Slason said that the increase of call volumes is focused where the population is denser and said that there has been a dramatic increase in medical and EMS calls. Around 60% of the calls are medical in nature, which is double what it was in 2008. 1700 calls in total were received in 2023. 19 parcels are associated with 10% of the call volume. Commercial land uses are six times more likely to require services than other uses. Answering a question from Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Slason said that the type of call (fire v. medical) can be broken down by the department. Mr. Chamberlin seconded this idea. Residential categories can be broken down by type. Mr. Slason said that Essex should either have an incremental or plan based approach. An incremental approach is increasing current services based on population, and a plan-based approach involves looking at what future desires for services are and building with this plan. Both approaches can work together. If the study is plan-based it will be at least ten years in length and will be dependent and as long as the capital items remain relevant the fee will remain relevant.

Answering a question from Ms. Hill-Fleury, Mr. Slason said that the cost of the new capacity divided by number of new units would be the base fee. This would be applicable to new additions to multi-family locations as well. Mr. Slason said that he recommends that this fee be issued per dwelling unit. Mr. Lawrence expressed concern about alarms going off in multi-unit apartments, noting that often the alarms go off and get a large response for relatively small issues (i.e. small kitchen fire). Mr. Chamberlin said that it is important that the fire department can handle EMS calls. Mr. Watts requested public comment. Mr. Signorello suggested that the numbers from the US Census be double-checked, noting that they seemed to be off. Mr. Slason said that these numbers are from the American Community Survey and show the trends over time.

c. Discussion about future development plans for 80 & 90 Upper Main St.

Mr. Duggan said that an RFP has been issued for community engagement and site planning. The Town is working with VTans regarding future site planning for recreation purposes. Ms. Sonnick said that the RFP is due by February 23, 2024. Mr. Duggan said that the Town hopes to pick a consultant by April, conduct the work in the spring and summer, and have it completed by the fall. Mr. Chamberlin asked if access could be provided from Old Stage Road. Ms. Sonnick said that it would be close to the intersection and would be a difficult spot. Mr. Lawrence asked for clarification on the hours of operation, wondering if there was a conflict between town and state regulations. Mr. Duggan said that he would investigate this. Ms. Hill-Fleury asked what would happen if none of the bids were acceptable. Ms. Sonnick said that she does not anticipate this, however if this occurred, she would reach out to some local firms to ask why they did not bid. Mr. Watts requested public comment, of which there was none.

d. Discussion about the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee

Mr. Watts said that this is regarding Mr. Duggan's evaluation, and that it would be discussed further during Executive Session.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by DAWN HILL-FLEURY, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion passed 4-1, with KENDALL CHAMBERLIN dissenting.

a. Approve minutes: January 29, 2024
b. Approve check warrants: # 18191 - 01/24/24; # 18192 - 02/02/24
c. Consider acknowledgement of street name for private driveway
d. Consider approval of 2024 Acceptance of Town Highways: Mr. Chamberlin expressed concern about the Town maintaining roadways that should be the developer's responsibility.
e. Consider approval of Vermont Bond Bank loan for Service Line Inventory: Mr. Chamberlin said that the user fee should be increased to pay for these costs.
f. Consider advertising for opening on Police Community Advisory Board
g. Consider approval of Fire Department Car 10 replacement purchase: Answering a question from Ms. Hill-Fleury, Mr. Richards said that Car 10 is the command vehicle. Mr. Chamberlin suggested that the Town of Essex consider utilizing the state bid system.
h. Consider approval of form PVR-4155 Certificate of no Appeal or Suit Pending to Grand List
i. Consider approval of pre-application for Northern Border Regional Commission Catalyst Grant
j. Consider approval to mail ballots to all active, registered voters for Essex Westford School District: Ms. Hill-Fleury stated that she does not believe that this is a good idea, as the schools are facing a huge increase. Mr. Chamberlin concurred. Ms. Delphia asked if staff time would be covered, Mr. Duggan said that it does not but that the workload for this is not large.

7. <u>READING FILE</u>
a. Board member comments: Ms. Hill-Fleury thanked Mr. Roy for his work on the fiscal year audit. Mr. Lawrence suggested adding in costs for road gravel in winter operations due to the changing nature of weather conditions. Mr. Chamberlin said that many ordinances where residents are required to maintain their own sidewalks are very unpopular. He also said that he does not think that the Town should pay the City until delinquencies are addressed, and that the tax sale policy should be addressed. He also said that there are a lot of additional costs associated with stormwater permitting requirements.
b. Upcoming meeting schedule
c. Status of Winter Operations
d. Email from resident re: sidewalk snow clearing policy
e. Due to City of Essex Junction account to conclude fiscal year 2023 audit
f. Essex News - February
g. Draft Stormwater Management Plan

9. <u>EXECUTIVE SESSION</u>
a. An executive session may be requested to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee

TRACEY DELPHIA made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the Town Manager. Motion passed 5-0.

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, to exit executive session. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:14 p.m.

10. <u>ADJOURN</u>

DAWN HILL-FLEURY made a motion, seconded by TRACEY DELPHIA, for the Selectboard to adjourn. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary

Approved this 26th day of March, 2024
(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)

Kendall Chamberlin, Selectboard Clerk