

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 6th, 2025 8:00AM
81 Main St., Essex Junction, and Zoom
Draft Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, February 8th, 2025

Attendees

Commission Members:

Present: Igor Polenov, Chair; Ken Signorello, Vice Chair; Keith Dunbar, Clerk

Remote: N/A

Absent: Nick Fukuda

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan

Public: Irene Wrenner

Partners: Sam Anderson, GBIC

Town Staff: Katherine Sonnick

Meeting called to order by Polenov at 8:09 AM.

First order of Business: Election of New Clerk

Clerk nomination from Signorello for Keith Dunbar, seconded by Polenov, passed 3-0

Updates to the Agenda:

O'Sullivan asked to move business partners up in the agenda to 5b, up from number 6 to accommodate their schedule better. O'Sullivan also made the commission aware that Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director, would be joining to discuss the meeting at 8:30.

Signorello requested to cancel 6a, for time constraint reasons.

Signorello requested to move the reading file EDC Zoning Resolution (7a) and make it part of Business Item Women's Correctional Facility Siting (6b) as these two items go together, and make into an Action Item.

Signorello wanted to add, conversation around the Town Business Directory and the approved Google Drive for the EDC.

Signorello moved to amend the agenda, seconded by Dunbar, passed 3-0.

Public To Be Heard: Irene Wrenner

Approval of Minutes from 1/16/2025

Signorello asked to have spelling of name corrected

Andersen asked to have spelling of name corrected

Brad Lafountain reviewed minutes and asked to have corrections made

Motion to Approve 1/16/2025 Minutes by Signorello, Seconded by Dunbar, Passed (3-0)

Business Partner Updates: GBIC, Sam Andersen

Sam shared GBIC focus has been on changes coming from Washington and what the implications are for Vermont businesses.

NBRC (Northern Borders Regional Commission) program has been put on hold, the webinar for the Catalyst program has been postponed due to changes in funding. RPP projects are posted on the GBIC website

Senator Welch held roundtable to discuss impacts of tariffs. Was told electrical grid will remain reliable. 24% of power comes from Hydro Quebec which could make the cost of power more expensive. There will be additional roundtables as things move forward.

Vermont State Legislature is digging into education funding, health care and housing.

Business Items:

Women's Correctional Facility Siting/EDC Zoning Resolution

Irene Wrenner spoke to need for a new correctional center as the current one is poor at best. Changes in zoning will be necessary to begin this 10-year process. The conditional zoning change is the first step to have this project begin within the Town of Essex.

Wrenner asked to have the EDC consider signing the resolution for the changing in zoning to go before the zoning commission.

Katherine Sonnick brought to the attention of the commission there was incorrect information within the resolution.

There was discussion around the perception of having a correctional facility within the borders of the Town of Essex.

Signorello moved to approve the resolution to the zoning board. Seconded by Polenov. There was discussion around the resolution ending in a vote, resolution passed 3-0.

Temporary Signage

Signorello shared update on temporary signage looking to move from zoning to an ordinance. Will have additional information at next meeting.

Award of RFP for Economic Development Study

Sonnick shared update on RFP being awarded to TPMA. TPMA is looking to meet with EDC once a month. Currently EDC does business outreach the 2nd meeting of each month.

Polenov made a motion to establish an adhoc special meeting to consult with TPMA on the development study. This was seconded by **Signorello**. **Signorello** amended motion to extend first

meeting of the month by one hour, to accommodate TPMA's schedule, this was seconded by **Polenov**. Motion to table, passed 3-0.

Small Business Saturday Update

Discussion around the viability of Small Business Saturday. No action was taken.

Small Business Owner Survey

Polenov brought up previous discussion of small business owner surveys.

Essex Famers Market

Polenov moved to next weeks agenda

Agritourism Marketing Workshops

Polenov shared with the group information on upcoming workshops around agritourism.

Business Directory – Town of Essex Website

Signorello shared with the EDC the business directory on the Town of Essex website. Businesses can be added by a form on the website.

Google Drive for EDC

Signorello created shared folder for EDC and each individual member. There was discussion around violations. **Polenov** is looking to move this to the next meeting as an agenda item.

New Member Recruitment for EDC

Polenov brought up the need to fill the vacancy on the EDC. Advertising for the open position can

Polenov moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:11am, Seconded by Signorello, Passed (3-0).

Meeting adjourned at 9:11am

Meeting Recording available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kQfYwAADhg>