TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
June 2, 2025

SELECTBOARD: Tracey Delphia, Chair; Kendall Chamberlin, Vice Chair; Shannon Jackson, Clerk; Ethan Lawrence, Andy Watts.
ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Greg Duggan, Town Manager; Karen Adams, Deputy Town Manager; Charles Cole, Fire Chief;
OTHERS PRESENT: Brian Clifford, Annie Cooper, Erin DeVries, Elizabeth Dunn, Vera Dusek, Sally Fleury, Gina Halpin Barrett, Gabriela Heemans, Ellen Knowles, Fernando Kuck, Robert Lalancette, Alison Levy, Max Levy, Duane Millar Barlow, Jeremiah Pace, Ken Signorello, David Skopin, Julian Ughetti, Su Ughetti, Cheryl Van Epps, Irene Wrenner, Dee, Michelle.

1. <u>CALL TO ORDER</u>
Chair Delphia called the meeting of the Town of Essex Selectboard to order at 6:30 P.M.

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

3. <u>AGENDA APPROVAL</u>
None needed.

4. <u>PUBLIC TO BE HEARD</u>
a. Comments from Public on Items not on Deliberative Agenda

Annie Cooper spoke about water safety and the need for more aquatic instruction in Vermont, suggesting that each municipality form a Water Safety Committee to increase water safety among the public. Su Ughetti asked that the Selectboard consider passing a free speech resolution at a future Selectboard meeting, a draft of which she passed out to Selectboard members. Brian Clifford voiced support for the free speech resolution noted by Su Ughetti and urged the Selectboard to consider adoption of it at a future meeting. Robert Lalancette urged the Development Review Board (DRB) and Planning Commission to adhere to the Town Plan's development requirements, particularly related to development in the Saxon Hill Industrial Park area. David Skopin expressed concern about the actions of Dustin Bruso, a member of the Planning Commission and the DRB. He also expressed grave concern about the environmental impacts of too much development. Sally Fleury and Fernando Kuck spoke about problems with excessive speed and aggressive driving on Towers Road. Betsy Dunn expressed support for the resolution brought forth by Ms. Ughetti and also expressed concern for the actions of members on the Town's DRB and Planning Commission. Julian Ughetti expressed support for the free speech resolution and more pedestrian bicycle-safety infrastructure. Duanne Barlow voiced support for the free speech resolution, and spoke about the importance of the Town Plan in site review for the DRB, recommending that DRB members receive training on what legal standards they should be applying when considering development applications.

5. <u>CONSENT ITEMS</u>
a. Approve minutes: May 19, 2025
b. Approve check warrants: #18277 – 5/16/2025; #18278 – 5/23/2025

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to approve the consent agenda as corrected. The motion passed 5-0.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. *Interview of a volunteer to serve on the Essex Free Library Board of Trustees – Ellen Knowles

The Selectboard interviewed Ellen Knowles for a seat on the Essex Free Library Board of Trustees. The candidate introduced herself and spoke about her background and relevant experience as well as her interest in serving on the Board. The Selectboard asked her whether she is familiar with Essex Boards and Commissions, how she could bring her professional experience into her work as a Trustee, and what public service means to her. The candidate was given the opportunity to ask questions of the Selectboard, and expressed interest in receiving training about participation on Town Boards and Committees.

b. *Interview of a volunteer to serve on the Conservation & Trails Committee – Erin De Vries

The Selectboard interviewed Erin De Vries for a seat on the Conservation & Trails Committee. The candidate introduced herself and spoke about her background and relevant experience in previously serving on the Committee as well as her interest in serving on the Committee again. The Selectboard asked her about her vision for Committee activities in the future, how the Committee could operate more efficiently, if she is aware of and how she would prioritize current Committee priorities, and what public service means to her. The candidate was given the opportunity to ask questions of the Selectboard, and expressed interest in receiving training about participation on Town Boards and Committees.

c. Discussion about fee schedule for fire and recreation impact fees

Deputy Manager Adams and Chief Cole spoke to this agenda item, which is a continued discussion of ordinance amendments and the fee schedule (Schedule A) related to impact fees related to fire and recreation. She briefly summarized the proposed amendments, including the creation of a fire impact fee and details around its implementation, and incorporating the fee schedule by reference (rather than embedding it into ordinance). She said the Selectboard should recommend whether to pursue Option A or Option B in the fee schedule, noting that Option B's fees are higher due to the inclusion of construction of a new fire station at the Upper Main Street parcel. Selectboard members asked a number of clarifying questions on how the fees would be structured and calculated for each option. Chief Cole spoke in more detail about Option B, and that it incorporates the best estimates for the eligible costs (up to one third of the costs) of a new fire station. He also said a decision should be made about incorporating fees now, prior to receiving approval for a new facility, or wait and incorporate those fees once a construction project begins. Deputy Manager Adams said that staff will put together scenarios showing examples of impact fees, including for an Accessory Dwelling Unit, comparison between a multi-family apartment versus a multi-family facility, and how the fees would be applied in a conversion situation from a single-family to multi-family dwelling.

d. Consider preliminary approval of Handbook for Boards, Committees, and Commissions and their Staff Representatives

Town Manager Duggan spoke to this agenda item, saying that the goal has been to create a standardized handbook of expectations and guidance on laws, statutes, and requirements that could apply across Boards, Committees, and Commissions. He said the handbook lays out the form of government for the Town, how Selectboard appointment processes applies to volunteer boards and committees, and how the staff representatives support those boards and committees. He said that the goal is to distribute the handbook to new and existing board members and staff, along with the policies or links to the policies that are referenced within the handbook. He said that once the handbook has been preliminarily approved by the Selectboard, the expectation is that the Selectboard would be able to modify the document as needed. Mr. Watts expressed concern about a significant policy change within the document, which is the prohibition that a chairperson of one board cannot serve as the chairperson of another board. Deputy Manager Adams noted that VLCT provided feedback stating that the Town has the authority to limit who can be chairs of boards if it wishes to do so, within the limits of statute. Mr. Watts said that boards should have the authority to select their own leadership. Mr. Lawrence noted that this handbook would set expectations that board election of officers should occur at their organizational meetings, and Town Manager Duggan noted that the handbook's requirements would be enforced differently for certain boards (e.g., the Planning Commission, whose requirements are more explicitly defined in statute) than others. The Selectboard discussed enforcement and the level of prescriptiveness that should be articulated within the handbook. Town Manager Duggan noted that this draft of the handbook has been shared with the boards and commissions for feedback, and that the Town is targeting approval by July 1, 2025. Mr. Chamberlin said he would like to have more discussion about prohibiting individuals from serving as chairs on multiple boards. Mr. Watts asked whether the *ex officio* practice should also be included in the handbook. Others agreed that it should be included.

The following public comments were received:

- Duana Barlow said he hasn't seen instances of individuals being chairs of multiple boards or committees, but he noted that several municipalities explicitly prohibit any member overlap between a DRB and Planning Commission.
- Ken Signorello confirmed that the Planning Commission did not hold officer elections at their last organizational meeting, and said this should be prevented from occurring in the future. He asked that all existing committees and commissions be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the handbook. He expressed concern that current wording could allow the Town Manager to prevent communications being conveyed to the Selectboard from other boards, and suggested that language be modified to limit that possibility. He also asked that language regarding a process for calling special meetings for boards be included in the handbook.
- Irene Wrenner noted that she submitted written comments and asked that they be taken into consideration.

Ms. Delphia said that the Selectboard could consider preliminary approval at tonight's meeting and would then hold further discussion and potential final adoption at the Selectboard's June 16, 2025 meeting. After discussion, the Selectboard agreed to hold further discussion at the June 16, 2025 meeting rather than consider preliminary adoption at this juncture.

e. **Discussion about the future of Assessing and shared assessing agreement

Town Manager Duggan noted that the shared assessing agreement concludes once the Town reappraisal is complete in the next year, and the Selectboard needs to decide whether to end the shared assessing service with Essex Junction. Further discussion was held in executive session.

f. **Discussion about the allocation of costs in Police Services Agreement with City of Essex Junction

Town Manager Duggan said that around July 1, 2025, the Selectboard must decide whether to continue with the per capita sharing of policing services with Essex Junction. Further discussion was held in executive session.

7. <u>READING FILE</u>

a. Board member comments: Mr. Jackson noted that the Conservation & Trails Committee is conducting cleanup activities at Indian Brook this Saturday, June 7, at noon. Mr. Watts said the Library's Book and Plant Sale is on Saturday, June 7, at 3:00 PM at Memorial Hall. He noted several edits to H.516 that he has shared with the Town Attorney. He also thanked Ms. Getchell for her work on the Opioid Use Prevention community dinner event. Mr. Chamberlin thanked staff for the Water & Sewer Fiscal Year End Report. Ms. Delphia noted that she cannot attend Coffee With Committees on June 14 and that Mr. Chamberlin and Mr. Jackson will attend that event. She also noted that there will be a breakfast event with committee chairs and vice chairs on the morning of June 6.

b. Upcoming meeting schedule
c. Update on H.516, Amendments to the Town of Essex Charter
d. Water & Sewer Fund Fiscal Year 2025 Capital Budget and Spending review
e. Update on National Opioid Settlement funding and Community Dinner/Forum on Opioid Use Prevention
f. Construction Update: Essex to Fairfax road work on VT Route 128

8. <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

None held.

b. **An executive session is anticipated to discuss contracts

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, that the Selectboard make the specific finding that general public knowledge of contracts would place the Town at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 5-0.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss contracts, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(A) to include the Town Manager and Deputy Town Manager. The motion passed 5-0.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:24 P.M.

9. <u>ADJOURN</u>

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by KENDALL CHAMBERLIN, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:24 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt,
Recording Secretary

Approved this______day of_______, 2025
(see minutes of this day for corrections, if any)