

**TOWN OF ESSEX
PLANNING COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
JUNE 12, 2025**

*Note: These minutes may be amended prior to the meeting.

PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) PRESENT IN ROOM: Joshua Knox, Chair; Georgia Lavigne, Vice-Chair; Jonathan Schumacher; Trefor Williams and Paula Duke.

PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDING VIRTUALLY: Dustin Bruso.

PC ABSENT: Ian Carroll (due to daughter's 8th grade graduation).

STAFF PRESENT IN ROOM: Katherine Sonnick, Community Development; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator.

OTHERS PRESENT IN ROOM: Maya Balassa (CCRPC); Chuck Vile; Ken Signorello; Cheryl Van Epps; Duane Millar Barlow; Anne Miller; Mary Post; Bruce S. Post; David Skopin; Irene Wrenner; Lorraine Zaloom; and Leah Pastel.

OTHERS VIRTUALLY: Betsy Dunn; Fldworx@sover.netis; Gina Halpin Barrett; Patty Davis; Maya Balassa; Sharon Zukowski; J. Percy; Leonora's iphone; David Skopin; and Duane Barlow.

AGENDA ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Knox called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ADDITIONS/ CHANGES: None.

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVE AGENDA: Board Member Duke Moved and Board Member Schumacher Seconded a Motion to approve the agenda. The Motion passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PUBLIC TO BE HEARD FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

David Skopin, 11 Skyline Drive, Essex, VT, stated that he brought up his issue with the Selectboard and they directed him to address the issue with the DRB. Skopin looked at the Zoom screen and told Commissioner Dustin Bruso to "stand down from the DRB and the PC". Skopin wanted him to resign. Skopin understands that the Selectboard can remove him, but if he is willing to stand down it would be better.

Commissioner Bruso stated that he will refrain from responding based on the conduct being displayed towards him. He said, "No comment."

Skopin stated that Bruso has generated power over the years and it is time for him to retire. Skopin will start working with the Selectboard on this matter. Skopin felt they should be looking for seven (7) individuals with their own attitude and lens. He said, "This gentleman makes corrections to staff about technical things." He reported that he spoke with the PC years ago about a "Ted Talk" and only Commissioner Williams responded,

while Bruso shut him down. He had hoped that questions and engagement would work together. He concluded with a remark that Al Senecal will bring him (Bruso) a gold watch.

Bruce Post, 1 Cindy Lane, Essex, VT made the following points:

- He was on the Charter Committee and chair on the second iteration of dissolving and forming a DRB and PC, while noting the intent was to separate power of the two. Unfortunately, the Selectboard chose to populate members on both boards, resulting in “members walking on both sides of the street.”
- His recommendation to the SB at the time was to have a 5-member DRB and PC.
- He referenced the 504 American Disabilities Act and stated that the meeting room should have a sound system that all can hear what is being said in meetings.

Mary Post, 1 Cindy Lane, Essex, VT, voiced her complaints about the sound system in the room and was told at a Selectboard hearing, to sit by the speaker. She said it made zero sense to only have one speaker in the room, and that people can’t hear what is being said during the hearings.

Lorraine Zaloom, 74 Center Road, Essex, VT, asked where the town was with a traffic study. She reported that she lives on Route 15, down from Market 32, and spoke on the difficulties it is for her to get out of her lot in the morning as well as traffic at the end of the work day. She noted that the data in 2018 showed the population just over 17,000 and now the threshold is closer to 18,400. She spoke of the number of crashes on Upper Main Street to Jericho Road, idling and filters in cars and how carcinogenic it is for the public.

Katherine Sonnick replied that the town recently applied for a UPWD grant with the Regional Planning Commission and asked Mia (CCRPC) where the state was on this grant.

Patty Davis, Hillside Circle, asked when the plan to connect Route 15 to VT 117 was abandoned. She mentioned another 2020 roadway study done by the UVM research department which showed the following symptoms, cancer, sleep deprivation, and high blood pressure.

Ken Signorello, 166 Brigham Hill Road, Essex, stated he was speaking as a citizen. He stated there is pressure for Essex and its neighbors as the state is imposing statistics to increase the population by .8%. He stated there are 19 municipalities in Chittenden County and he would like to see sharing the growth with other municipalities.

Betsy Dunn, Cindy Lane, Essex, VT, stated that the DRB has been very bad in following the regulations. She spoke on street lengths and a lot of new builds on roads with only 1 access. She asked the DRB to think about the need for a second access on roads. She referenced international codes.

Irene Wrenner, 15 Thrush Lane, Essex, VT, spoke on the proposed Women’s Correctional Facility. She stated that facility in South Burlington is in very bad condition.

Cheryl Van Epps, 8 Rustic Drive, said “Ditto to all except for the prison” remarks. She noted that the Selectboard discussed values and her priority is to keep kids safe. She asked if the PC is

listening to the public and do they base their decisions on these comments. She is concerned with noise pollution and the elimination of wildlife. She stated the public is looking to the PC for protection and to show the public how they are valued.

AGENDA ITEM 5. BUSINESS ITEMS:

- Recommendation for Tier 1B status. view Comments from Public Works (PW) on the Women's Correctional Facility (WCF)–Town Services Input (Reference PW Memo dated April 24, 2025).
Katherine Sonnick reminded the PC that at a prior meeting, questions were gathered, asked and not answered from the representatives regarding the WCF. Sonnick reported that PW provided answers on the impact to infrastructure, traffic, water/sewer, etc, in a Memo dated April 24, 2025, as follows:
 1. What are the specific carrots that the Town would/could get from the state.
 2. Can you provide your feedback about the sewer impact.
 3. What are your thoughts about the peak trip traffic numbers.
 4. Do you have any other thoughts or questions for them.

Sonnick stated the hope is to review the questions and determine if the answers are okay or if it creates more questions for the State.

Other topics for discussion included:

- Update from Steet Slopes working group on regulations and best practiced for steep slope development.
- RPD-I Buffer; and
- Other Amendments.

AGENDA ITEM 6: MINUTES: MAY 8: Approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

By: _____

Joshua Knox, Chair