

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 4th, 2025, 11:00AM
Meeting Held at 81 Main Street, Essex Junction VT 05452
Draft Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, June 8, 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

Staff: Katherine Sonnick

Public: Dianne Percy

Katie DeSanto

Joanna Grossman

Irene Wrenner

Partners: Sam Andersen – GBIC

Lindsay Bloos – TPMA

Erin Brown – TPMA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 AM by the chair.

2. Agenda Additions/Changes

- Two additions were made to the agenda:
 1. A report on the economic impact of prisons, including a research article from MIT published in 2024.
- Motion to approve the changes to the agenda:
***Signorello** made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by **Dunbar**.*
Vote passed unanimously 3-0.

3. Public to be Heard

- **Dianne Percy:**

Dianne discussed issues with the handling of her letter from February 6th, 2025, which had been altered and sent to the Planning Commission without her consent. She expressed concern over the process, citing potential issues of targeting and silencing her contributions. She emphasized the need for clearer procedures to ensure fair treatment for public participants.

 - Response: The Commission acknowledged the mistakes and apologized for any confusion caused. No malicious intent was noted, and it was suggested that future correspondence be submitted for approval before being forwarded.

- **Joanna Grossman (Phoenix Books):**

Joanna expressed support for the EDC's initiatives and raised concerns about the potential negative impact of Amazon on local businesses. She emphasized the importance of supporting local retailers, noting the significance of the Explore Essex program and its positive effects on businesses like Phoenix Books.

4. Approval of Minutes

- Approval of the Minutes from May 15, 2025

*Motion: **Signorello** made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2025, meeting, seconded by **Polenov**.*

Vote: Unanimous approval 3-0.

5. Partner Updates

- **Sam Andersen:**

Sam provided updates on the Vermont legislative session, particularly focusing on the CHIP Act and H.266 (a bill capping prescription drug costs). The CHIP Act allows municipalities and developers to use project-based TIF for infrastructure development. Sam also highlighted the ongoing concerns with the education bill.

6. Business Items

- **Remote meeting with Lindsay Bloos, TPMA:**

Lindsay presented on the economic development strategic plan for Essex and outlined the schedule for in-person sessions. The TPMA team is focused on gathering input from local businesses and facilitating highly interactive design sprint sessions.

- Action: Commission members were encouraged to attend the sessions on June 9th (9:00-11:00 AM) and June 10th.
- Tour Planning: Lindsay sought recommendations for businesses and areas to include in the tour on June 10th. Notable suggestions included the Essex Experience, Saxon Hill, Phoenix Books, LaFountain Family Maple, and several industrial locations.

- **Discussion on Research Regarding Economic Impact of Prisons:**

A report from MIT (2024) was shared by **Polenov**, which discussed the economic effects of prisons, particularly highlighting declines in property values and demographic shifts in nearby areas. The Commission agreed to review and finalize the report before forwarding it to the Selectboard.

- Action: The report will be included in the agenda for the next meeting for further discussion and approval.

7. Presentation of the EDC Workplan for 2025

- The Commission discussed the draft EDC Workplan for 2025. Some changes were suggested, particularly regarding the Explore Essex program.

*Motion: **Signorello** made a motion to approve the work plan with the amendment to develop*

*a volunteer committee to continue the Explore Essex program, seconded by **Polenov**.*

Vote: Unanimous approval 3-0.

8. Next Meeting

- The next business outreach meeting on June 19th, 2025 at 8:00AM will be (tentatively) at the Tree Farm Recreational Facility in Essex VT, the commission will provide further details in the coming days. If the Tree Farm cannot participate, other businesses will be considered.

9. Adjournment

- *Motion: **Polenov** made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:07 PM, seconded by **Signorello**.*

Vote: Unanimous approval 3-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 PM.

Meeting recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGb39-x2g60>