

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 2nd, 2025, 11:00AM
Meeting Held at 81 Main Street, Essex Junction VT 05452
Draft Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, July 6, 2025

Attendees

Commission Members:

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

Remote: N/A

Absent: N/A

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan

Staff: Tammy Getchell

Public: Dianne Percy (virtual)

Joanna Grossman

Irene Wrenner

Cheryl Van Epps (virtual)

Partners: Sam Andersen – GBIC

Lindsay Bloos – TPMA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 AM by Jean O'Sullivan (presiding until the election of the chair).

2. Election of Officials

- **Chair:** Nominations were opened for the position of Chair. **Igor Polenov** was nominated by **Signorello**, and the nomination was seconded by **Dunbar**. There were no further nominations. **Igor Polenov** was elected Chair unanimously.
- **Vice Chair:** Nominations were opened for the position of Vice Chair. **Ken Signorello** was nominated by **Dunbar**, and the nomination was seconded by **Wrenner**. There were no further nominations. **Ken Signorello** was elected Vice Chair unanimously.
- **Clerk:** Nominations were opened for the position of Clerk. **Keith Dunbar** was nominated by **Signorello**, and the nomination was seconded by **Wrenner**. There were no further nominations. **Keith Dunbar** was elected Clerk unanimously.

3. Agenda Additions/Changes

- **O'Sullivan** requested to move the TPMA update from Lindsay Bloos to the first agenda item, as she had a limited window of availability. The agenda was amended to move the TPMA update to the first item.

- Motion to approve the changes to the agenda:
Signorello made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by **Dunbar**.
Vote passed unanimously 4-0.

5. Public to be Heard

- There were no members of the public present to be heard at this time.

6. Approval of Minutes

- Minutes from June 4, 2025 meeting were reviewed. A minor correction was made to the capitalization of "S" in Katie DeSanto's last name and the clarification that La Fountain Family Maple is not a farm but a maple business.
- Approval of the Minutes from June 4, 2025
Motion: **Polenov** made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2025, meeting, seconded by **Signorello**.
Vote: Unanimous approval 4-0.

7. Partner Updates

- Lindsay Bloos from TPMA: Lindsay provided an update on the ongoing economic development study. She reported that TPMA is in the process of drafting strategy recommendations after collecting input from local businesses and community members. The top six issues identified include housing, business retention, infrastructure, workforce, healthcare, and public safety.
- Sam Andersen: Sam provided an update from the Vermont Economic Progress Council, including the introduction of the CHIP program designed to support housing development through tax increment financing. Discussion around CHIP and TIF districts led to an offer by O'Sullivan to do a tutorial on these topics at a future meeting. Sam also mentioned recent legislative updates on workers' compensation and unemployment insurance.

8. BUSINESS ITEMS

- Explore Essex Current Configuration and Proposed New Business Onboarding Web Page: Tammy Getchell presented an update on the "Explore Essex" initiative. She discussed the evolution of the program from a COVID-19 support tool for local businesses to a broader community engagement platform. She highlighted the newly launched website and its features, including a business directory and interactive elements for resident and business engagement.
- Discussion included:
 - The importance of making the website a tool for both new and existing residents to engage with the community.
 - Ideas for expanding business support and communication, including the creation of pamphlets and leveraging social media.

- Recommendations for participating in local events like the Farmers Market to increase business visibility.

9. STUDY OF ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITY IN TOWN

- The commission discussed a study of the local economic impact of prisons in Texas and across the US. The commission discussed the economic impact of a correctional facility in Essex. Members expressed concern over the relevance of the study, given Essex's unique demographic and economic makeup, and the focus on rural communities that differ greatly from Essex.
- Motion: **Wrenner** made a motion that the Economic Development Commission does not stand by the findings in this article and does not recommend using it to guide future decision-making, seconded by **Signorello**.
Vote: Unanimous approval 4-0

10. Reading File

- NWVT Economic Report: The commission reviewed the NWVT Economic Report, which highlighted the region's strong economic performance, despite comprising only 35% of the state's population.

11. Next Meeting

- The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 8:00 AM at the Tree Farm recreational facility.

12. Executive Session

- At 12:46 **Signorello** asked to enter executive session under 1 VSA Section 313(a)(3) to discuss the evaluation of a public officer or employee.
- Recording was accidentally cancelled instead of being paused.
- Commission came out of Executive Session at 12:53 PM.

13. Adjournment

- Motion: **Polenov** made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:57 PM, seconded by ?.
Vote: Unanimous approval 4-0.

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