TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
July 14, 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; Stephen Gragg, Police Corporal.
OTHERS PRESENT: Walter Adams, Toni Baitz, Patty Davis, Gina Halpin Barrett, Allison Levy, Stephanie Mack, Ken Signorello, Su Ughetti, Dave Skopin, L. Whitmore, Sharon Zukowski, M.J.S.S (Margaret Smith).

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

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES
None.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL
None needed.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
a. Comments from Public on Items not on Deliberative Agenda

Ken Signorello said the Economic Development Committee will visit the Tree Farm on July 17 at 8:00 A.M. to learn about the impact the Tree Farm has on the community. Walter Adams asked where he can find information regarding the fee changes in the recently passed impact fee ordinance, and T. Delphia provided him with this information. W. Adams asked if budget surpluses will be returned to residents in the form of tax reductions. W. Adams also spoke about the Selectboard's significant focus on the Upper Main Street project, spoke about the unfinished condition of a section of Carmichael Street, suggested that the Development Review Board not approve applications that include poorly-designed parking lots, and expressed concern about Town spending and its impact on his taxes. Su Ughetti expressed concern about Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) activity in Vermont, asking the Selectboard to take a public stance against racial profiling and against civil immigration enforcement without judicial warrants, and asking the Selectboard to enact protections to ensure that residents' personal data is not shared with ICE or CBP. David Skopin and Gina Halpin Barrett expressed support for S. Ughetti's suggestions and asked that the Selectboard take action.

5. CONSENT ITEMS
a. Approve minutes: June 16, 2025
b. Approve check warrants: #18281 – 6/13/25; #18262 – 6/20/25; #18283 – 6/27/25; #18284 – 7/3/25
c. Consider approval of BerryDunn to perform Recreation Needs Assessment
d. Consider approval of additional sewer allocation for 110 Center Road
e. Consider approval of the purchase of a tow behind generator

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.

6. <u>BUSINESS ITEMS</u>

a. Consider approval of Resolution in Appreciation of Travis Sabataso

S. Jackson read the resolution under consideration, expressing appreciation of Travis Sabataso and his work for the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction, into the record.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, to adopt the Resolution in Appreciation of Travis Sabataso. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Discussion about prioritization of Selectboard work items for Fiscal Year 2026

Town Manager Duggan began by noting that the Selectboard identified 47 work plan items at its strategic planning retreat and that he and staff narrowed that list down to 20 items based on what is feasible. He further noted four items for which additional information or guidance is needed from the Selectboard to determine expectations and staff resources. The Selectboard reviewed the 20 work plan items that were identified by staff as feasible to implement for 2026. E. Lawrence expressed concern that many of the Selectboard-identified high priority items are not on the list of 20 items. A majority of the Selectboard agreed with the priority categorizations for items #1, #2, and #3. For item #4, Town Manager Duggan noted that this is a carryover item from FY24 and FY25 as the work is still ongoing; the Selectboard agreed with the priority categorization for work item #4. E. Lawrence expressed concern with added language referencing public-private partnerships for work item #5, and asked that language be added to the item around contracting out work related to snowplowing and mowing. The Selectboard combined #6 and #8 and maintain it as high priority. The Selectboard combined work items #7 and #20 and agreed to maintain it as medium priority. K. Signorello provided public comment expressing support for use of Conservation Fund monies for work item #9 and support for making work item #14 higher priority for the Parks & Recreation Department. The Selectboard agreed that work item #9 should be medium priority and that it should be modified to reflect that the Conservation Fund is a "potential" fund source. The Selectboard agreed that item #10 should be medium priority. The Selectboard agreed that item #11 should be medium priority. E. Lawrence asked that work item #12 be moved from medium priority to high priority, given concerns about climate change and wildfires. The majority of the Selectboard agreed and re-categorized it as high priority. The Selectboard agreed to combine work item #13 and work item #15. Sharon Zukowski provided public comment regarding whether state statute delineates a difference in authority between commissions and committees, saying that a commission has the ability to apply for grants without the Selectboard's permission. T. Delphia replied that the Town's legal counsel will need to look into this further. E. Lawrence advocated for making item #14 a higher priority item, while A. Watts cautioned that this item has not been budgeted for and will incur costs to the Town before it can be completed. The Selectboard agreed to move item #14 to medium and use FY26 to explore feasibility for this item. The Selectboard discussed work items #16 and #21 in conjunction, agreeing to combine them and maintain language to mention exploring the local option tax mechanism specifically, as well as maintain them as low priority items in the work plan. The Selectboard agreed to modify work item #17 to reflect creating a liquor license approval policy to clarify conditions of approval and denial. The Selectboard agreed to keep work item #18 as a low priority. A majority of the Selectboard recommended modifying work item #19's priority to be medium (rather than low). The Selectboard agreed to remove work item #22 from the plan. The Selectboard agreed to modify the language for work item #23 from "pursue" to "explore." The Selectboard agreed to remove work item #24 and make it an ad hoc item.

The Selectboard and staff then discussed work items identified at the strategic planning retreat that had been moved to the "parking lot" list of priority items due to feasibility and capacity constraints from Town staff. A. Watts agreed that these items should remain in the parking lot list. The Selectboard discussed the parking lot items and agreed to revisit them at a later date, though E. Lawrence noted several items in the parking lot that should become priorities on the Selectboard's work plan.

c. Consider approval of Selectboard work items for Fiscal Year 2026

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to approve the Fiscal Year 2026 work plan with assigned priority levels for each work item as amended this evening. The motion passed 4-1 (E. Lawrence dissenting).

d. *Discussion and potential action about goals for Town Manager in Fiscal Year 2026

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by KENDALL CHAMBERLIN, that the Selectboard set the Town Manager's goals for FY26 to be coincident with the Selectboard's work plan as approved this evening. The motion passed 4-1 (E. Lawrence dissenting).

e. **Consider approval to continue sharing police costs with City of Essex Junction on a per capita basis

Town Manager Duggan noted that this pertains to whether the Selectboard recommends continuing with the current per capita agreement with the City of Essex Junction related to shared police services. He noted that staff have recommended continuing with the current per capita assessment for these shared services.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, that the Selectboard approve the allocation of costs on a per capita basis under the police agreement that the Town has with the City of Essex Junction. The motion passed 4-1 (E. Lawrence dissenting).

f. ***Consider approval to execute contract with Essex Police Employee Association Lodge #004, Fraternal Orser of Police

This item was discussed in executive session.

g. ****Discussion about pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party

This item was discussed in executive session.

7. <u>READING FILE</u>

a. Board member comments: K. Chamberlin commended staff for work on the capital policy. S. Jackson commended staff for their work.
b. Upcoming meeting schedule
c. Draft Capital Projects Policy for first review
d. FEMA Issuance of Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps; 30 Day Comment Period Underway
e. Update on Community Justice Center transition process
f. Job title changes in Parks and Recreation
g. Investment Update for fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2025

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

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

c. ***An executive session is anticipated to discuss contracts and labor relations with employees

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard make the specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the Town's position concerning ongoing contract negotiations and labor relations agreements with employees would place the Town at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 5-0.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss contracts and labor relations agreements with employees pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A) and 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(B), to include the Town Manager, Deputy Manager, and HR Director. The motion passed 5-0.

d. ****An executive session is anticipated to discuss pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party

SHANNON JACKSON made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, that the Selectboard make the specific finding that general public knowledge of pending or probable civil litigation, to which the public body is or may be a party, would place the Town at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 5-0.

SHANNON JACKSON made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss pending or probable civil litigation, to which the public body is or may be a party, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(E), to include the Town Manager and Deputy Manager. The motion passed 5-0.

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

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract with the Essex Police Employee Association Lodge #004, Fraternal Order of Police for 2025 through 2028. The motion passed 5-0.

9. <u>ADJOURN</u>

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0 at 10:28 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt,
Recording Secretary

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