

**TOWN OF ESSEX
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES
APRIL 3, 2025**

Full meeting recording available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDkl7gVwxrA&list=PL6J-DqAq2zEMJgai7p2exGadu3SRosNS3&index=10&pp=iAQB>

Note: This meeting was held on Zoom and at 81 Main St Conference Room, Essex, VT.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD (DRB) PRESENT IN ROOM: Ian Carroll, Chair; Sharon Zukowski, Vice-Chair; Stephanie Bixby, Clerk; Hubert Norton; Nick Martin; and Trefor Williams.

DRB ABSENT: Dustin Bruso

OTHERS PRESENT IN ROOM: Kent Johnson, Planner; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; John Stuart; Ken Heco; Bryan Currier; David Skopin; Paula Duke; Art Loeffler; Pam Schriener; Scott Lee; David Lee; Lorraine Zaloom; Elsy Rivera; George Leo; Irene Wrenner; Issac Dauloff; Betsy McGavish; ? Hier; Meg Smith; Jimmy Keese; Lois Whitmore; JH Stuart; Ken Heco; Colin Flanders, Seven Days; Chris S. Amont; Phillip Murdock; Ian & Linda Wheeler; Jane Piper; D. Buseiqlio; Betsy Dunn; Bran Currier; Ella Tabonk; Molly Huss; Brian Clifford; Megan Zimmerman; Adam Zimmerman; and Community T.V.

OTHERS VIRTUALLY: Taylor Wagner; Thomas Titus; Thomas Titus; Nick Ovitt; Tegan Pollak; Mike Provost; Eli Scheer; Ryan D; and Susans

AGENDA ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Carroll called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 2. ADDITIONS/ CHANGES: None.

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVE AGENDA: DRB Member Norton Moved and DRB Member Martin Seconded a Motion to approve the Agenda as warned. The Motion passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PUBLIC TO BE HEARD: Chairman Carroll explained how a Quasi-Judicial hearing is held.

Chairman Carroll stated that he believed most of the public in attendance was present to speak on the Amazon application. He explained that the Amazon application was not under review at this meeting. However, he would allow 30 minutes for the public to speak and asked that the public limit their comments to 1 minute so that as many people in attendance would have a chance to speak.

Lorraine Zaloom, Route 15, Essex, VT, made the following points:

- The purpose of a site plan was to review that it was following compliance with the

Approved 8/21/2025

Town Plan.

- She read the purpose section of the RPD-I Zoning Regulations.
- She asked that the Board look at the RPD-I Zone.
- She spoke on the 50' buffer requirement, noting that it should be maintained unless waived and the former PC has waived many trees away.
- She drove down Corporate Drive and does not believe it looks aesthetically pleasing.
- She noted that when IBM was on the Blodgett lot, it was heavily treed.
- She pointed out that there is flooding that occurs along the Winooski River.

Chairman Carroll reminded Ms. Zaloom that she has been speaking close to 15-minutes, and he would like to have time for the others in the room to provide comments.

Ms. Zaloom stated what she had to say was important and continued:

- She was concerned that the road connection would never be completed.
- She stated that the corridor would be lit up.
- She stated a recent culvert was installed on VT 117.
- She asked where Amazon was going to get workers and where they would live.
- She was concerned with property tax increases.

Brian Clifford, Tanglewood Drive, Essex, VT, stated that he heard Amazon would be a great economic business, but he did not feel it would be for Essex as it would simply be another foothold. He felt there would be zero co-existence and he does not want competition from what Essex has already.

Betsy Dunn, Essex, VT, did not believe Amazon would be good for Essex as they did not have fair salaries and zero insurance.

David Skopin, 11 Skyline Drive, Essex, VT, stated the DRB keeps saying they are just following the Regulations as a quasi-judicial board. He asked the DRB to make its decision on what is right and just and to give "humanity" back as the regulations are just words on paper. He asked the DRB to look for "loopholes to make sure the worst corporation does not come here."

Issac, Burlington, VT, stated that the Amazon facility is so large that it demands Essex to obtain a whole new fire truck to be able to reach the building and this brings a big tax burden to taxpayers. He felt the retention pond could be placed outside the 50' buffer.

Kenzie, Bristol, VT, considers Essex neighbors, she has concerns about the number of trucks proposed to arrive during the am and afternoon. She noted there are "pinch points" from the interstate to the site that are difficult on a good day. She felt that trucks affect health due to exhaust and noise pollution. She felt it was a bad deal to allow Amazon on this site due to more truck traffic; impervious surface and it was not climate friendly.

Chairman Carroll thanked the audience for its comments.

AGENDA ITEM 5a: CONTINUED FROM MARCH 6, 2025 -FINAL PLAN-KENAN HECO- proposed 4-lot minor subdivision located at 9 Colonel Page Road (Parcel ID 2-014-036-000) in the Agricultural Residential (AR), Floodplain Overlay (O2) and Scenic Resource Preservation Overlay (SRPO) districts.

The Public Hearing remained open.

Kent Johnson, Planner reminded the DRB that the applicant is proposing to build 2 new homes. He reminded the DRB that the hearing was continued so that they could do a site inspection to observe the view as the lot was located in the Scenic Overlay District.

John Stuart and Ken Heco spoke on this application. Stuart noted that he provided cross-sections easterly from Old Stage Road and northerly from Colonel Page Road and noted the differences. Stuart reported that the existing landscape is in place so the houses will not be visible. He believes they met the standards of the Scenic Resource Protection Overlay District and there will be no impact on the view. DRB Member Norton asked if a state permit would be required for this project. Stuart responded that if the impervious surface went over 0.5 acres, they would need a state permit. Stuart verified that the application is under the threshold requirement.

Board Member Zukowski asked for confirmation that the houses would be limited to a 26' height limit and one-story – as proposed.

Board Member Martin asked the applicants for confirmation on the culvert size. The applicant replied, "Yes."

Lois Whitmore, 178 Old Stage Road, stated that she lived on the corner and asked, due to the increase of traffic and accidents in front of her house, that the applicant consider requiring tenant to use a different approach to gain access to the lots.

Charles Tabone, 222B Foster Road, asked what the procedure would be if they built a higher house and how to confirm it was built to the correct height. The Zoning Administrator replied that this would need to be checked at the time of inspection and before they moved onto the premises.

Betsy Dunn, 2 Cindy Lane, Essex, VT, felt the proposed buildings are too tall and noted it has happened before on the corner of Old Stage Road and Route 15.

Vice Chair Zukowski Moved and Board Member Martin Seconded a Motion to close the Public Hearing. The Motion passed 6-0.

A discussion ensued on colors and height. Kelley informed the DRB the lot was not located in a design control area. Ken Heco noted the balloon in place for the site inspection was located 35-feet high. DRB Member Bixby felt the height should be 40', which is the requirement for the district, but she could "live with 28 feet".

Board Member Norton Moved and Board Member Williams Seconded a Motion to

139 **approve the aforesaid application, with changes as follows:**

140
141 **Line 255: Lots 2 and 3 building envelopes shall be measured from the highest ground**
142 **point. The applicant provided cross sections for house sites of 28' referencing visual**
143 **impacts on both locations.**

144
145 **Line 274: Delete “and water application.**

146 **Line 300, After “submitted” add “to”.**

147
148 **The MOTION passed 6-0.**

149
150 **AGENDA ITEM 6: CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION: DOUSEVICZ INC. 21 UPPER MAIN**
151 **STREET: PROPOSED TWO 4-PLEX RESIDENTIAL UNITS IN THE MXD-PUD AND B-DC**
152 **ZONING DISTRICTS.**

153
154 Kent Johnson, Planner reported that the reason for the conceptual discussion was because
155 the proposal was “far outside the zoning regulations for this area.” He stated the applicant
156 can explain the proposal versus what the regulations allow in the Business-Design Control
157 (B-DC) District. Johnson noted that there is an existing 15' easement in front of the lot for a
158 bike/pedestrian trail. As such, the existing tree scape would need to be removed to
159 accommodate the trail.

160
161 DRB Member Norton asked if the proposal followed the recently passed law by the
162 Legislature regarding housing units that are connected to public water and sewer. Johnson
163 confirmed.

164
165 Bryan Currier, P.E., O'Leary-Burke Civil Associates, stated that the review would be for a site
166 plan, a one-step process. The goal of the conceptual discussion was to address all elements
167 before submitting a formal application. He noted that no footprint lots are being proposed
168 which is why the application is proceeding as a site plan. He was surprised that there were
169 some issues for the planner as he received all comments from departments, except for
170 Community Development. He cleared up the discrepancy of the zoning district, noting that
171 the correct district for this parcel is MXD-PUD, and follows the regulations for the B1 District.
172 He reported that the applicant was taking advantage of Act 47, a Vermont housing bill that
173 the Legislature approved last year that allows density increases with lots served by public
174 water and sewer. The Bill also eliminated an Act 250 review. The proposal includes 2 four-
175 plex buildings.

176
177 A large part of the discussion involved the number of parking spaces and the location of
178 parking spaces. A discussion ensued on whether the lot was considered a parking lot.
179 Currier stated they are not proposing a parking lot and each townhouse would have a
180 driveway and a garage, no other parking area was proposed. Currier explained that the
181 building was shown in the proposed location so that they could use all the allowable space as
182 it was a smaller lot.

183
184 Kent Johnson stated that a major issue was that the units needed to be flipped on the parcel
185 so that they were pushed to the front of the parcel. He noted that the applicant may not be

able to propose as many units in this location. He stated that the lot was in the MXD-PUD (R2) subzone. Carrier corrected him and showed on the zoning map that the subzone was B1, which allows for 25 units on a parcel. He stated that they could come in with one building serving 25 units but felt that the proposal better fits with the abutting development.

The DRB opened the floor for public comment.

Megan Zimmermann, 23 Orleans Road, Essex, VT, had the following concerns:

- Concern that the proposed driveway location would increase traffic into her development.
- When they bought the lot, they were informed that the parcel under discussion would never be developed.
- The existing trees provide as a noise barrier and noise protection.
- If the trees facing Route 15 were removed, would they be replaced.
- Would there be any impact regarding run-off and sewer.
- Asked where overflow parking would be located.
- Asked if any issued with fire or the police.
- Asked where snow storage would be placed.
- Asked if there was sewer capacity available as the City of Essex provides same.
- She noted there has already been an accident leaving the development onto Route 15.

Jimmy Keith, who did not sign in, asked about blasting. He noted that vehicles coming out of the driveway would shine directly into his house. He asked where residents of the development would park boats, trailers and allow for visitors. He asked if a fire truck would not be able to access the site.

Betsy Dunn, 2 Cindy Lane, Essex, VT, is on the Conservation/Trails Committee and they discussed the need for a good barrier along Route 15. She asked about the slope of the parcel and questioned if basements would be flooded. She asked where the garbage dumpster would be located.

Chris St. Amont, 64 Orleans Road, Essex, VT, wanted to be clear and stated, "We don't want it there", noting it would increase traffic on the road and many families live in the existing development.

Tabone, 22B Foster Road, Essex, VT, was concerned that the proposal was close to Route 15. He believes in 10-15 years, Route 15 will be a 4-lane road and asked where the State would get the land to increase the lanes.

Betty Busciglio, 166 Orleans Road, Essex, VT, asked where kids will go to play.

Elsy Rivera, 71 Orleans Road, Essex, VT, asked the following:

- Does the proposal include a parking lot or not. She felt the applicant was being evasive. She asked about the 25 units per acre comment made earlier in the meeting.

- She asked who from the State inspects the units. Sharon Kelley replied that the State Fire Marshall's Department regulates building codes for multi-unit homes.
- She was concerned about the safety of school age children; the increase in emissions and traffic.
- She noted that single-family homes have a higher tax rate and most people in her development don't want to live next to a multi-family project.

Dr. George Go, 71 Orleans Road, Essex, VT, stated that he did a lot of research in Vermont before they chose Essex, and chose this development. He pointed out that the property is in the design control district and felt the proposal was against this district. He stated that if he saw this project he would not have chosen to live in his development. He noted there will only be a path and no sidewalk and that is a safety concern.

Chairman Carroll stated that the DRB cannot design the project and must review a proposal brought forth to the DRB.

Sharon Kelley stated that the intent of Route 15 was to have a path.

Kent Johnson stated that the town was working on a bike plan which includes Upper Main Street.

Adam Zimmerman, 23 Orleans Road, stated that he underscores all comments made. He suggested that if the drive was shared to connect the 8 units, it would then become an intersection. He noted the street has a loop and this proposal would increase traffic by 25 percent. He did not feel the proposal was in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.

The DRB closed the Public Hearing.

In response to DRB inquiries, Bryan Currier offered the following:

- There will be blasting on the lot.
- A state stormwater permit is required if they use ½ acre or more – he is not sure yet where they will land but they will secure a permit if it ends up being over ½ acre.
- He reported that when the pond was designed, it was assured the water would go to the pond. He stated that a wet pond can help the town to upgrade, or they may choose to treat it on-site.

DRB Member Zukowski asked where guests will park. Currier said, "In the driveway." He also noted that the Home Act also reduced parking requirements.

DRB Member Williams asked where large trucks would turn around. Currier replied that if the Fire Chief has an issue, they can create a turn-around. He also stated that they will not be proposing dumpsters, and each house will sign up to have its own garbage removed, like the residents on Orleans Road and Washington Circle.

Chairman Carroll wants to see a retaining wall and robust landscaping plans and also address the site line into existing homes.

DRB Member Norton was concerned with impervious surface and stormwater and would like to see creative ways to address traffic. He also would like to see a wider entrance into the proposed development.

DRB Member Bixby Moved and Vice-Chair Zukowski Seconded a Motion to continue the conceptual discussion to a future meeting. The Motion passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 6: APPROVE JANUARY 16, MARCH 6 & MARCH 20, 2025 MINUTES

Board Member Bixby Moved and Board Member Norton Seconded a Motion to approve January 16, 2025, minutes with changes as noted by the DRB. The MOTION passed 6-0.

Board Member Martin Moved and Board Member Williams Seconded a Motion to approve March 6, 2025, minutes with changes as noted by the DRB. The MOTION passed 6-0.

Board Member Martin Moved and Vice Chair Zukowski Seconded a Motion to approve March 20, 2025, minutes with changes. The MOTION passed 6-0.

AGENDA ITEM 8: OTHER BUSINESS: None.

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

By: _____

Ian Carroll, Chair

G:\commdev\drb\minutes\2025\APR 2025 app