

**TOWN OF ESSEX
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES
JUNE 26, 2025**

FULL MEETING VIDEO CAN BE VIEWED AT:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjX7ONty0VQ&list=PL6J-DqAq2zEMJgai7p2exGadu3SRosNS3&index=6>

Note: This meeting was held in person and on Zoom.

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

DRB ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT IN ROOM: Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director; Sharon Kelley, Zoning Administrator; Kent Johnson, Planner; ? Ruehsen; Brian Clifford; Allison Millar Barlow; Ethan; Gina Barrett; Audi (illegible); Colin Palmer; Claudia Wolfgang; Joanna Grossman; Alison Levy; Max Levy; Katie DeSanto; Orior; Missie Thurston; Kristina Marcussen; Betsy Dunn; Ken Signorello; James Dumont; Anne Miller; Bruce S. Post; Paula Duke; Nancy Williams; David & Colleen Lee; Tracey Delphia; Lisa Goodrich; David Goodrich; Alexi Grandall; David Skopin; Joh (illegible); David Gagnon; Al Senecal; Mary Post; Lois Whitmore; David Whitmore; Robert Lolancette; Linda Merchant; Tom Wood; Lynn & Art Johnson; Patty & Sam Davis; Natalee Braun; Leo Leighton; Daniel Clancy; Jeff Polubinski; Duane Millar Barlow; Julze (illegible); Su Ughetti; Logen Allen; Lorraine Zaloom; Lily Kellys; David Minkoff; Cheryl Van Epps; Irene Wrenner; Jeff Sprelitr; Julian Ughetti; Rev. J. Baker; Reagan Murphy; Renee Reiner; Jason Dean; and Steve, Community T.V.

OTHERS VIRTUALLY: IphoneLynette Reep; Phoenix; Shore's iPad(2); NBC5; Suzanne Schmidt(she/her); Chris McLean|Langan; chris; rogerdodge; Andrea(she.her)VT; Matt M; Nick Ovitt; Jackie; Ashley Jablonski; Taylor and Nick Wagner; Lisa Allen; Resa (she/her); R(Resa(she/her)); Pam's iPhone; morri; Patrick; Dave's iphone 13; R: Jon Z; Julie (she/they); ppnneunited@gmail.com; Dee Graham they/them); Flo; Patrick S.; Elizabeth Coleman; Syn Graham; WCAX; sharon illenye; bcurrier; jimwaite; Don Van Nostrand; Shannon's Iphone(3); Kristi; KD; Francine's iPhone; Matt M; Cassandra Rico-Madrado; Lisa Wartenberg Velez; Gil Allen; Alex; Jenna Danyew; mike murphy; Logan; Destinee Pierce; Tim Onderko Langan; Pll; Christina Tubbs; 12016753443; Gina Halpin Barrett; iceyvt; Alliston Millar Barlow; Logan; Izaloom; Jenna Danyew;

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

AGENDA ITEM 2. ADDITIONS/ CHANGES TO AGENDA: The DRB added 'Other Business' to the Agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVE AGENDA: DRB Member Brusco Moved and DRB Member

**Bixby Seconded a Motion to approve the agenda as amended.
The MOTION passed 7-0.**

Chairman Carroll provided the oath to the public and explained the public participation process.

AGENDA ITEM 4: OTHER BUSINESS: Katherine Sonnick reported that she received a letter from two residents to request a Motion to Reconsider the recent approval granted to 56 Tanglewood Drive for a simple-parcel subdivision. Sonnick reported that she is working with the Town Attorney on this request and expects it to be placed on the 7/17/25 Agenda. Sonnick reported that the packet will have further information.

AGENDA ITEM 5: PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED FROM 5/29/2025: Site Plan - Scannell Properties, LLC - Site plan application for the proposed construction of an approximately 107,000 square foot distribution facility with associated parking located at 637 Kimo Drive (FKA Saxon Hill Industrial Park, Parcel B, Lot 13) Parcel ID 2-074-004-013 in the Resource Preservation District-Industrial (RPD). Included in the application is a waiver request for the RPD-I 50' buffer (ZR Table 2.14(9)(c)).

Chairman Carroll reminded the audience that the Public Hearing remained open.

A question arose from Duane Millar Barlow about the date of the hearing. Board Member Brusco stated that the previous motion was to schedule for the “next available meeting.”

Kent Johnson of Town staff recapped the staff report, noting new materials had been provided. He explained that due to concerns raised at the May 29th meeting the Public Works Department commissioned Stantec Consulting Service to provide a peer review of the applicants traffic study. Mr. Johnson stated that Public Works Department supported Stantec’s recommendation. Johnson added two new conditions based on the Stantec Report.

Board Member Sharon Zukowski asked for clarification that the Town would not know the traffic impact until after the project was approved. Mr. Johnson confirmed that was the case.

Board Member Trevor Williams questioned the methodology use by the traffic report. He thought that Stantec really has some problems with the traffic study and it would be better to use data from actual facilities rather than ITE estimates as there is a lot of uncertainty about traffic generation. Chair Ian Carroll asked what would compel the applicant to perform mitigation and Kent Johnson said he did not know other than it being a requirement of the permit.

Applicants in attendance: Leo Leighton, Dave Gagon, Civil Engineer, Jeff Polubinski, Esq. (Gravel & Shea), Jonathan Greeley, Head of Economic Development for Amazon in New England, and Traffic Engineer represented this application.

Leo Leighton for the applicant, stated that they had submitted new materials including a 50-foot buffer exhibit and a letter from the applicant's attorney. He stated that Vtrans approved the traffic study.

David Gagnon, Langan engineer for the applicant presented detailed justification for the buffer, including high ground water and site drainage, street requirements, DPW sight distance requirements and access drives and sidewalks.

Chairman Carroll reported how the hearing would be run and when public comment would be taken, noting that each person would be allowed 2 minutes for comments.

The following people who were opposed to the application, citing truck traffic, dislike of the owner, Mr. Bezos, and the poor treatment of Amazon's employees poorly:

Attorney Jim Dumont stated that he sent in a letter "today" and wanted to discuss same. He expressed his anger on the 2-minute rule and stated that "residents have a constitutional right can't be constrained by a 2-minute rule."

Taylor Wagner, 244 River Road, reported that she had no time to submit her letter. She urged the DRB to reject the application as it does not conform to the Town Plan.

Al Senecal, 60 Upper Main Street, stated he was the landowner of the property. He provided the history of his land and the land swap he did with the Town. He stated that he purchased the land, and an existing lawsuit, from Hector Leclair and negotiation were lengthy, along with legal costs. He stated that he acquired over 400 acres of land and gave 270 acres to the Town of Essex. He noted that the lands he kept were a part of the 40% lands which are buildable. He noted that the state recognizes this land as a state designated industrial park. His time was up and he stated he would turn in written comments.

Duane Barlow, 12 Rosewood Trail, Essex, VT, stated that he called several places to review the traffic study, that he was willing to pay for himself, however he was turned down by all. He stated that the study was done without the knowledge of the tenant being Amazon. He felt the process was unfair. He believed that staff did not post the agenda properly. He handed out his comments dated June 24, 2025.

Julie Wolfgang, 148B Sand Hill Road, Essex, VT, stated that she sees multiple people and animals using this land and it all seems "surreal" to her. She believed that people will get hurt and this business was not safe to put in this area.

Linda Merchant, 15 Alderbrook Road, Essex, VT, stated that both she and her husband were truck drivers, and she felt there needed to be a more realistic traffic study. She reported that truck drivers will park in the fields to sleep, truck headlights will be coming down the road and stated that the trucks will need to fuel up to get back to MA.

Thomas Wood, 15 Alderbrook Road, Essex, VT, stated he has been a truck driver for 25 years and he has smashed up during that time. He asked what would happen if a fuel tank ruptured, if the truck went into a field or into water. He stated that truck drivers throw trash out their windows and “they are hogs, plain and simple.” He concluded that they only have one entrance and need an emergency route.

Max Levy, Bashaw Drive, Essex, VT, referred to the zoning regulations, which must be consistent with the Town Plan and referenced 24 VSA11(C). Regarding the Town Plan Goals, he made the following points:

- Maintain safe and efficient traffic flow.
- Protect residential areas from high-volume traffic.
- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- Promote sustainable transportation systems aligned with thoughtful land use.

Other points made:

- The project would generate over 200 delivery vans and over 150 employee vehicles per day, thereby would negatively affect road safety, congestion and long-term infrastructure integrity.
- The volume of traffic is not designed for long term infrastructure.
- Congestion on roads, bottlenecks, commute delays, and emergency response times.
- Noise and air pollution.
- Zoning alone does not override the Town Plan’s broader vision.

He encouraged the DRB to reject the project if it cannot demonstrate clear conformance with Essex’s adopted transportation objectives.

Jason Dean, 4 Skyline Drive, Essex, VT, stated that he moved from Seattle to “get away from all this.” He referred to “the great wall of Bezio” and the traffic study means nothing to Amazon. He said, “Bezio runs roughshod” to have his way. He encouraged the Board to “not allow this to happen.”

David Mintcox, 94 Bixby Hill Road, Essex, VT, stated that if the facility were smaller, they would not need a waiver for the buffer. He stated that people wanted to talk for longer than 2 minutes and told the DRB that this project will change a lot of lives.

Logan Allen, Whitetail Lane, Essex, VT, asked the DRB if they have been to the site as there is a lot of natural cover. He stated the old survey was not adequate. He noted a few hundred feet away was a lot of wildlife that should be protected.

Su Ughetti, 8 Bashaw Drive, Essex, VT, discussed “Hazmat” and how it is defined by Osha, while noting that hazardous materials could explode. She referred to other studies done by towns and that they have had to fix what Amazon has done. She felt it was devastating to give them time to “damage our town and environment.” She stated that Amazon has a history of deaths.

Allison Barlow, 12 Rosewood Trail, Essex, VT, explained that site plan review is the responsibility of the DRB and read from Section 5.6(A) of the Zoning regulations which states that the DRB shall ensure development proposals “Conform to the duly adopted Essex Town Plan” and “Adequately protect public safety and welfare.” She reiterated what others said about needing a more comprehensive traffic study.

Gil Allen, 5 Whitetail Lane, Essex, VT, was provided with the oath. He agreed with the comment made by the attorney earlier in the meeting, that the Board can’t discriminate others with the 2-minute rule. He stated that the landowner, Senecal, has a lot of money. He stated the issues are about the size of the facility and the environment. He believes this site is inappropriate for Amazon.

Missy Thurston, 6 Tanglewood Drive, Essex, VT, stated that she has a rare lung disease and explained how microscopic particles go deep into her lungs, while noting these particles can come from failed emissions caused by traffic. She explained a bit more about her disease.

Robert Lolancette, 295 West Sleepy Hollow Road, Essex, VT, referred to Grandville, NY, which has a 100-van parking facility. They were led to believe trucks leave in the a.m. but private small cars, making frequent stops, also pick up packages and leave the site. He noted that the proposed facility is a 24-hour facility, and the traffic study does not reflect the same.

A brief discussion ensued with the DRB & applicants regarding electric parking spaces and charging stations. The applicant reported that 10 EV parking spaces will have stations, and 50 spaces will be EV ready.

In response to an inquiry about van fires, the applicant stated that all vans will be stored outside.

Chairman Carroll stated that the DRB has had 3 meetings, all with large crowds, and the DRB has not had a chance to discuss the application.

DRB Member suggested closing the Public Hearing with awareness to re-open if necessary. Attorney Dumont objected.

Chairman Carroll stated that the DRB does have the option to go into a deliberative session. Board Member Norton opposed the deliberate session. Board Member Bixby was in favor of a private session as there would otherwise be interruptions. Bixby noted that the DRB has been reviewing this application since last July and the DRB needs to talk to each other about the application. Members Zukowski and Martin agreed.

Board Member Bruso Moved and Board Member Zukowski Seconded a Motion to close the Public Hearing. The Motion passed 5-2 (Board Members Norton and Martin voted no).

At 8:16 p.m., Board Member Bruso Moved and Board Member Bixby Seconded a Motion to go into a private deliberative session. The Motion passed 4-3 (Board Members Norton, Williams and Martin voted no.)

At 10:06 p.m. the DRB came out of the Deliberative Session and re-opened the Public Hearing.

Chairman Carroll stated that the DRB is looking for more information and asked Board Member Bruso to provide the details.

Board Member Dustin Bruso explained that the board needs the applicant to provide post monitoring data from 3 comparable sites (size and population) for Public Works to compare to the current traffic study. After coming out of deliberative session Chair Carroll explained that “one of the most important and vital pieces to us is greater detail about traffic studies. We’d like post monitoring assessments from 3 identified comparable sites, comparable in size and population to compare to the studies we have on file.”

The applicants respectfully stated that they have given a high-level overview, however pushed back on the traffic study. They brought their traffic engineer who was waiting to discuss traffic. The applicant’s traffic engineer, Dan Clarey was allowed time to report to the DRB. Clarey reported that the traffic study was done and reviewed and approved by the Town Engineer, VTrans, and the Town’s Consultant, Stantec. Clarey reported that Amazon has purchased 2 of the 4 approved lots and the review included the operational plan, which also included employees and schedules. He noted that the ITE Land Use was used for review as it best reflected the distribution facility, then they used additional factors and added in 20%. He noted the peak house for the user (not the roadway) were considered. They re-ran analysis, which showed no difference in the level of service.

Attorney Dumont stated his clients have rights and demanded to participate and asked for an opportunity to present their case. Chairman Carroll stated that the Development Review Board was not a court of law.

Chair Carroll stated that the letter from the applicant's engineer to Stantec was received this day and the board and public had not seen it and would need time to review it, which was another reason to continue the hearing. Staff stated that the letter would be posted on the Town website the next morning.

Board Member Bixby Moved and Board Member Zukowski Seconded a MOTION to reschedule to the next available hearing date. The Motion passed 7-0.

The Meeting adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

By: _____
Ian Carroll, Chair

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