

**Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)  
Regular Meeting Minutes**

December 18, 2025, 8:00AM

Meeting Held at Police Department Community Room 145 Maple Street, Essex Junction VT 05452  
Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, December 20, 2025

**Attendees**

*Commission Members:*

Present: Irene Wrenner, Chair; Ken Signorello, Vice Chair; Anne Miller

Remote:

Absent: Keith Dunbar, Clerk; Igor Polenov

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan, Tammy Getchell, Karen Mills

Public: N/A

Partners: N/A

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:08 AM by Chair Irene Wrenner

**2. Agenda Additions/Changes**

- A request was made to reorder the agenda.  
Motion to approve the changes to the agenda (Signorello / Miller) passed 3-0

**3. Public to be Heard**

- No members of the public were present in person or online.

**4. Minutes to approve**

- December 11, 2025 - Motion to approve as amended (Signorello / Miller) passed 3-0.

**5. Partner Updates**

- No partners present

**6. Business Items**

**a. Potential Economic Development Grant Program**

Karen Adams provided an overview of a proposed Economic Development Grant Program using FY25 fund balance.

Key points included:

- Fund balance is assigned post-audit by Selectboard vote
- Proposal includes funding for technical assistance to design the program
- Remaining funds would seed the initial grant round
- Existing unspent economic development funds (~\$9,713) could potentially be incorporated

- Program development would likely extend into FY27

**Discussion covered:**

- Timeline for program development
- Use of models from Conservation Fund and Health & Human Services grant programs
- Importance of voter approval if funds are repurposed
- Possibilities for leveraging funds with external partners
- Potential focus on community-wide benefits (e.g., streetscape improvements)
- **Motion:** To recommend that the proposed \$35,000 fund balance allocation be returned to the FY27 budget as tax relief, and that a \$35,000 line item be added to the FY27 economic development budget to fund an Economic Development Grant Program, subject to voter approval.

Motion to approve (Signorello / Miller) passed 3-0.

- Staff will coordinate follow-up communication to the Selectboard.

**b. Finalize Memo to Selectboard – Local Option Tax**

- The Commission reviewed the draft memorandum to the Selectboard regarding the Local Option Tax (LOT), including updated tables and analysis.

**Discussion highlighted:**

- Regressive nature of the tax
- Competitive disadvantage for Essex businesses
- Geographic disadvantages relative to interstate-adjacent communities
- Portion of tax revenue retained by the State
- Risk of low voter turnout
- Resident tax burden versus non-resident contribution
- Amendments were made to improve clarity.

Motion to approve (Signorello / Miller) the Local Option Tax memorandum, as amended, and submit it to the Selectboard, passed 3-0.

**c. Publicizing Business Expansion**

The Commission discussed ways the Town can support and publicize local business expansions.

**Suggestions included:**

- Coordinated press releases
- Inclusion in the Essex Business Bulletin
- Town social media promotion
- Hosting celebratory events or open houses
- Leveraging elected officials and state agencies
- Developing a standard “business expansion support toolkit”

No formal action was taken.

- Tammy Getchell offered to post these ideas on the town website under economic development.

**d. Town Plan Action Plan – Priorities for Planning Commission** the Commission began an in-depth review of Town Plan Action Items to identify priorities appropriate for Planning Commission consideration.

Preliminary priority areas discussed included:

- Defining and zoning **agritourism**
- Strengthening protections for **recreational uses** in mixed-use districts
- Addressing **transportation capacity constraints** tied to new development
- Supporting **workforce and entry-level housing**
- Allowing **childcare uses** more broadly across zoning districts
- Reviewing temporary signage regulations
- Identifying additional appropriate uses within the RPD-I district

The discussion will continue at a future meeting, with a formal memo to be drafted once priorities are finalized.

#### **e. Review of Current Development Applications**

Discussion was deferred to a future meeting.

#### **f. Review of Maps**

Discussion included possible updates to community and business maps. No action taken.

#### **g. Update on TPMA Economic Development Study**

An update was provided regarding the TPMA Economic Development Study:

- A revised draft (Version 8) has been received
- Commissioners were encouraged to review the document thoroughly
- A presentation by TPMA is anticipated at an upcoming meeting

#### **h. Schedule Next Business Outreach Visit(s)**

- Potential future outreach visits were discussed. No dates were finalized.

### **7. New Business – None**

#### **8. Reading File**

- Handbook for Board, Committee & Commission Members and Staff
- Essex Business Bulletin – November 2025

#### **9. Next Meeting**

- Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026, location TBD

#### **10. Adjournment**

- Motion: Adjourn the meeting at 10:30 (Signorello / Miller) passed 3-0

Meeting recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsJDCuT1KpA>