

**SELECTBOARD
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2026**

SELECTBOARD: Kendall Chamberlin, Vice-Chair; Shannon Jackson, Clerk; Ethan Lawrence; Andy Watts

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Greg Duggan, Town Manager; Karen Adams, Deputy Town Manager; Caitlin Corless, Library Director; Paul Courtois, Police Lieutenant; Shawn McNamara, Buildings Manager; JoAnn Nichols, Animal Control Officer; Nicole Peatman, Detective Corporal

PUBLIC: Gina Halpin Barrett, Janna Campbell, Sam Kinghom, Anne Miller, Reed Nye, Jasmine O'Dea, Margaret Smith, Irene Wrenner, Megan Zimmerman, Sharon Zukowski

Meeting Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-1-YXAqLT0
Times associated with each agenda item are approximate.

1. CALL TO ORDER (00:00:09)

Shannon Jackson called the Town of Essex Selectboard meeting to order at 6:30 PM. He noted that he would be running tonight's meeting as Kendall Chamberlin is remote.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES (00:00:32)

Greg Duggan said that additional materials have been added to Item 6D, however staff is not requesting any changes to the agenda.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

No changes, thus approval not required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD (00:01:12)

a. Comments from the public on Consent items and items not on Agenda

None.

5. CONSENT AGENDA (00:02:34)

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to accept the consent agenda, as presented. Motion passed 4-0.

a. Approve minutes: January 26, 2026

b. Approve check warrants: 18315-1/23/26

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Potentially vicious dog hearing (00:03:08)

S. Jackson opened the hearing by reading the warning and stating that, per section 4.04.060 of the Town Ordinances, because the dog bite happened on the property where the dog lives, it is considered a "potentially vicious dog." He said that, on January 26, 2026, Joseph Haddock submitted a written request to the Town of Essex Selectboard seeking a hearing regarding a dog bite incident that occurred on January 16, 2026 on Brigham Hill Road. J. Haddock was bitten by a dog while delivering Meals on Wheels on private property. He is requesting assistance and states that, due to the extent of his injuries, he believes the dog poses a risk to public safety. The Board will decide this evening if the dog is considered to be a "potentially vicious dog" and can order any protective measures besides euthanasia.

S. Jackson administered an oath to all those who would be providing testimony. He requested any information about conflicts of interest, of which there were none. S. Jackson asked if any additional information would be submitted tonight, and Paul Courtois, Lieutenant with the Essex Police Department, said that the dog in question (Jack) bit his owner and a health care provider at the home this weekend.

J. Haddock said that he delivers Meals on Wheels every Friday. While delivering meals, a large black dog (Jack) came out of the house and rushed towards him. Jack pulled him down and bit him in several places. He said that the woman who came out of the home restrained Jack and told J. Haddock to “get the hell out of there.” He tried to drive to the emergency room but was unable to hold the steering wheel and needed to call Essex Rescue. He was in the Emergency Room for the rest of the day and received antibiotics. Answering a question from Ethan Lawrence, J. Haddock said that he does not know what would have happened to him if the dog was not restrained. J. Haddock said that this was the first time he had ever delivered to this property.

Janna Campbell, dog owner, said that she and her boyfriend had rescued Jack last year. She had not had any issues with his behavior until her parents broke their hips last month. She feels that he may be overprotective and confused by the increased activity at home. She said that she should have taken better precautions in chaining her dog. Discussing a different bite incident that occurred this weekend, J. Campbell said that she was bitten by her dog when he attacked a home health care worker. She said her heart goes out to all the victims. Answering a question from E. Lawrence, J. Campbell said that Jack will be secured when non-residents enter the home from now on. E. Lawrence said that the dog clearly cannot control himself and asked if J. Campbell feels she can control the dog. She said that she did not believe that Jack was aware that he was biting her in the incident this weekend. J. Campbell said that Jack has never left the property without her awareness and is chained until the fence is fixed. When J. Haddock was bitten, J. Campbell said that he entered through a different driveway and that the dog was going outside to go to the bathroom.

Nicole Peatman, Patrol Officer with Essex Police Department, provided testimony. She said that J. Haddock’s clothes were bloody and skin was hanging off his body. She said that Jack is up to date on rabies but had not yet been registered at the time of the attack. Joanne Nichols, Animal Control Officer, said that the dog is not currently registered but that this is in progress. She said that J. Haddock’s bite was higher-level, both in depth of the bite and the number of bites. S. Jackson said that this was described in the report as a Level 5 bite. P. Courtois said that there are no records of additional bites from this dog, although there was one “suspicious incident” in 2025 where the current owner was bitten by an unspecified dog. J. Haddock submitted additional photos of his wounds from the bite.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to close the potentially vicious dog hearing. Motion passed 4-0.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to have a public deliberative session to discuss potential actions. Motion passed 4-0.

A. Watts described the dog as terrifying and said he is in support of all of J. Nichols’s recommendations. J. Nichols described the two-barrier prevention and said that this would help with protecting home health staff entering the home. E. Lawrence suggested that the dog be muzzled anytime a non-resident is inside the home, J. Nichols concurred. J. Nichols suggested including deadlines for meeting recommendations and said that she can set up a time to inspect the property. Answering a question from A. Watts, P. Courtois said that a consequence of Jack’s owner not following the requirements put in place by the Selectboard

could be that she is forced to surrender the animal. He said that it does not sound like Jack's owner is not taking appropriate precautions. A. Watts said that the Selectboard cannot decide to put the dog down, however this can be requested through the court system should the town need to take possession of the dog. Any lack of meeting the requirements could result in the police department applying for a warrant to seize and subsequently euthanize the dog. Another bite would be a disqualifying event. J. Nichols said that neutering a dog can help with aggression but is not always possible. All agreed on 100% compliance with recommendations. The Selectboard discussed how some of the requirements need immediate compliance, however others, such as training classes, are more long-term. E. Lawrence said that he does not believe that the dog can be unattended outside until there the two-system barrier is present outside, all agreed.

The edited requirements are as follows:

1. The dog shall be registered within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.
2. Effective immediately, dog must be leashed at all times when outside, with supervision, unless inside a two-barrier, secure fenced-in area under condition #8.
3. Effective immediately, a two-system barrier shall be put in place for the dog to not escape out an exterior door to the outside.
4. Effective immediately, if anyone who is not a resident of the property is inside the home, the dog shall be placed behind a two-system barrier and, once trained to wear a muzzle, must be muzzled.
5. Within 48 hours, the leashing shall consist of two points of restraint, including a secured body harness and martingale neck collar.
6. The dog owner shall consult with a certified dog behaviorist to learn strategies to manage the dog's behavior and tendencies and/or complete the "Canine Good Citizen Program" through the American Kennel Club. Outreach shall be made to at least three behaviorists by Friday, February 6, 2026.
7. Dog must be trained to wear a basket muzzle and must wear the muzzle at all times when outside and/or when off the property, as soon as deemed possible by a certified behaviorist.
8. Within 90 days of receipt of this letter, the dog owner shall install a two-barrier, secure fenced in area for the dog to be outside in the yard.
9. The dog owner shall install "Beware of Dog" signs on the perimeter of the property with a phone number for a delivery person to call when arriving to the property to call to notify of the delivery. The signs shall be installed by noon on Friday, February 6, 2026.
10. The dog owner shall install a mail/drop box on the perimeter of the property for deliveries to keep delivery people from entering the property and up to the home. The box shall be installed by noon on Friday, February 6, 2026.
11. The dog owner shall consult with a veterinarian about neutering the dog and follow those recommendations, if he is not neutered. Outreach to a veterinarian shall be made by noon on Friday, February 6, 2026.
12. The dog shall not leave the property except for training or veterinary visits or kenneling, for as long as the dog lives in Essex, unless the dog's behaviorist provides the dog owner with written reason(s) for leaving the property.
13. The dog owner shall notify Essex Animal Control at 802-878-8331 within 48 hours in the event the dog and/or dog owner moves to a new address.
14. Any failure to comply with these conditions will result in the dog being surrendered to Essex Animal Control.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard approve the conditions as defined during the deliberative session and direct staff to provide a copy to the dog owner by the end of business tomorrow. Motion passed 4-0.

J. Haddock thanked the Board for deliberating in public session, and for their diligence. He said that, had Jack bit a smaller person it would have been fatal. He is a retired emergency room doctor and has never seen a dog bite as bad as the one he received. He is disappointed that the owner has not chosen to put the dog down.

b. Presentation and discussion of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Site Assessment Study for Essex Free Library (02:02:06)

Caitlin Corless said that an ADA study was conducted at the library in September. Greater accessibility will help more people benefit from the town's resources at the library. A site visit was held from the Vermont Center for Independent Living, who identified problematic areas. The building was built in the 1800s. The accessible parking spot did not meet current standards. C. Corless detailed changes to signage to ensure that it is at the appropriate height levels. She said that she was surprised to learn that no tables or workstations are ADA compliant and said that the library is looking to purchase eight ADA complaint tables. The library is advertising that books and other materials can be brought out to cars if necessary. Answering a question from K. Chamberlin, C. Corless said that that she does not think that existing tables can be changed to be compliant. Answering a question from E. Lawrence, C. Corless said that an automatic handicapped door that could be unlocked remotely is planned. E. Lawrence encouraged there to be a way that the door could open automatically without assistance. A. Watts disclosed that his wife is the Chair of the Library Trustees. He also noted that fund balance was approved to pay for the new tables. S. Jackson requested public comment, of which there was none.

c. Discussion about Rules and Regulations for Orderly Conduct of Business and Communications Policy (02:18:20)

G. Duggan said that there are some challenges regarding communications and orderly conduct that are applicable to the Board as it is now operating with four members and no Chair. S. Jackson said that he believes that it is important for the Selectboard to provide responses to public comments. K. Chamberlin said that he is comfortable responding to e-mail requests sent to the entire Board.

d. Consider approval of Town Meeting outreach materials (02:27:30)

G. Duggan said that this will be conducted by K. Chamberlin and S. Jackson, as E. Lawrence and A. Watts are on the ballot. He presented the materials that have been prepared by staff for outreach. The Board reviewed each document individually. A. Watts highlighted the changes that he has requested to the documents related to the vote on the potential town complex property. He said that he wanted to ensure that this document clarified many common misconceptions about the project. In public comment, A. Miller asked how the land would be sold, should it come to that decision. G. Duggan said that there are no plans at the time to sell this land. In public comment, K. Signorello said that staff did not reach out to petitioners when writing the Q & A on the petition. He asked if this group would be allowed to put a table at the Town Meeting Informational Hearing to explain further. G. Duggan said that he will investigate this.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard approve Town Meeting outreach materials, as edited. Motion passed 4-0.

e. Consider preliminary approval of Fundraising and Donation Policy (02:44:53)

K. Adams said that this represents a desire of the Board to establish a policy for receiving funds. Several committees have had the opportunity to review this policy; however, preliminary approval is not

recommended at this time. S. Jackson suggested that all donations received are given a receipt and thank you note. K. Adams suggested including a threshold as many donations are very minor. E. Lawrence suggested providing some kind of tier system for donations with specific gifts for each. A. Watts encouraged the Board to consider the cap for this this. In public comment, K. Signorello said that the Conservation & Trails Committee had been told by town staff in the past that they had a policy preventing a plaque from being placed next to a donated tree. G. Duggan said that he will investigate the existence of such a policy and report back.

f. Discussion about annual evaluation of the Town Manager (02:57:07)

G. Duggan recommended that this be conducted in Executive Session. S. Jackson said that the evaluations from G. Duggan should be available for all Selectboard members to review. In Executive Session, the Board will discuss the results of the evaluation. Typically, the Board prepares a letter, and the Chair meets with the manager to review the results. This should be completed prior to Town Meeting Day. K. Chamberlin will work to tabulate the results of the evaluations and follow up with Cathy Conrad, HR Director, to prepare the documents.

7. READING FILE (03:04:38)

a. Board member comments: A. Watts said that the Board needs to find a new alternate for the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission Board of Directors. This will be discussed at the next Selectboard meeting. S. Jackson said that he appreciated an update on the salt supply.

b. Upcoming meeting schedule

c. Status of Winter Operations 11/01/2025 through 12/31/2025

d. Letter from Green Mountain Transit re: fiscal year 2027 dues

e. Green Mountain Transit materials in response to January 26, 2026 conversation with Selectboard

f. Update on salt supply and road conditions

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Not held.

9. ADJOURN

**ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, for the Selectboard to adjourn.
Motion passed 4-0 at 9:36 PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary