

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Regular Meeting Minutes

January 15, 2026, 8:00AM

Meeting held at Essex Town Offices, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452

Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, January 16, 2026

Attendees

Commission Members:

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

Remote: Anne Miller

Absent: Igor Polenov

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan, Tammy Getchell

Public: Patty Davis

Partners: Lindsay Bloos, TPMA; Teresa Nortillo, TPMA; Aadiana Miranda, TPMA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:13 AM by Chair Irene Wrenner

2. Agenda Additions/Changes

- No changes made to the agenda

3. Public to be Heard

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

4. Minutes to approve

- January 8, 2026 - Motion to approve as amended (Dunbar / Miller) passed 4-0.

5. Partner Updates – no one from GBIC was present

6. Business Items

A. Draft Town of Essex Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) – TPMA Presentation

TPMA (Lindsay Bloos) presented updates planned for the EDSP draft based on feedback received:

- Add clarification/context where requested
- Include more comprehensive survey data
- Reduce repetition of demographic information
- Adjust the Strategic Action Plan and align the Implementation Plan accordingly (timelines, metrics, responsible parties)
- Add a summary/executive summary for quick reference

Framework / Focus Areas reviewed:

1. Destination development
2. Entrepreneurship & business retention
3. Education/workforce supports (housing, childcare, healthcare, transportation as quality-of-life needs)
4. Business attraction & expansion (site inventory, targeted industries, value proposition/marketing, land use alignment)
5. Leadership & community engagement (capacity, commission structure, partner coordination, community feedback loops)

Key discussion themes:

- Business location/data reporting issues (Essex vs. Essex Junction misclassification, shared ZIP code 05452, sales tax and related reporting impacts, and challenges with state reporting thresholds for categories with fewer than 10 businesses). Commissioners discussed outreach/education and the possibility of surveying/triangulating misreported businesses to estimate the scale of the issue.
- Data sources/limitations and why raw employer-identifying datasets are not available; TPMA offered to walk commissioners through methods/offline follow-up.
- Plan scope vs. broader constraints: Commissioners raised concerns about climate resiliency, limits to growth, sustainability, and state-level growth pressures (including Vermont “Futures” style projections). TPMA acknowledged the concerns, noted these were not top stakeholder themes during engagement, and indicated willingness to strengthen macro-level narrative and references, while noting this was not an impact analysis project.
- Community impacts were raised, including truck route concerns on Town roads, infrastructure capacity, water quality/reservoir closures, and growth tradeoffs.
- Patty Davis shared information with the commission

Next steps noted:

- TPMA will incorporate feedback, reduce repetition, add summary, and note the municipality reporting/data issue as a challenge.
- Commissioners to submit written corrections/feedback to Tammy Getchell, who will route to TPMA.

6B. Consider Approval of 2025 EDC Annual Report Submission

- Commission reviewed the updated draft annual report (revised since the prior meeting). A wording update was noted to reflect governance (reference to Selectboard rather than “governing bodies”).
- Motion: Approve 2025 EDC Annual Report and submit for publication (Wrenner / Dunbar) passed 4-0.

6C. Consider Adoption of EDC Mission Statement

- Commission reviewed the mission statement (previously adopted but updated wording under discussion). A friendly amendment was made to replace “serves as an advisory resource” with clearer “advises” language.
- Amended mission statement opening sentence approved as:

- “The Economic Development Commission advises relevant staff departments, Town commissions and committees, and the Selectboard.”
- Commission noted the Selectboard may need to approve the mission statement as the creating body (process question raised; Chair offered to seek clarification). Motion: Adopt the updated mission statement as amended, (Wrenner / Dunbar) passed 4-0.
- Action: Chair to send updated mission statement language to Tammy Getchell.

6D. Consider Approval of Advisory Memo to Planning Commission re: Economic Impact of RPD-I Uses

- Commission reviewed Anne’s memo regarding approved uses in the RPD-I district and their economic impacts (prepared based on prior meeting feedback). Discussion noted possible future memo(s) if additional zoning topics arise.
- Motion: Transmit the memo titled “Recommendations regarding approved uses in the area zoned RPD-I” to the Planning Commission as written (Signorello / Dunbar) passed 4-0.
- Action: Memo to be forwarded through Tammy/Community Development.

6E. Update on Map of Essex Businesses

- No update. Chair noted the item will return on a future agenda.

6F. Consider Approval of EDC Action Plan Priorities for Planning Commission February 12 Meeting

- Chair shared a draft list of action plan priorities. No detailed discussion due to time; commissioners asked to review and provide edits via email ahead of the February meeting.

6G. Review Current Development Applications

Two applications were briefly reviewed:

- Eurowest (housing proposal): Commission discussed the value of housing in a walkable/amenity-rich area (access to services, transit proximity), while expressing concerns about site layout/design. Discussion also raised the economic/community implications of 100% rental housing vs. ownership/equity-building options (including stability, community engagement, and household budget impacts).
- Jenny boundary adjustment/related applications: Noted as due February 19; Commission agreed to review further at the next meeting along with other items.

6H. Schedule Next Business Outreach Visit(s)

- Commission discussed potential outreach visits, including Brown’s River Maple and LaFountain Family Farm (recognizing winter access challenges).

7. New Business

Chair Wrenner shared community/nonprofit updates, including:

- Essex CHIPS returning to their space and hosting an open house
- Brownell Library 100th birthday kickoff event and upcoming programming
- Community Health Centers activity and new location at 87 Main Street

8. Reading File

Items listed on the agenda were referenced:

- CDFA webinar recording (Jan. 8, 2026) on Tax Increment Financing
- Email regarding EDC response to Katherine for DRB meeting on Jan. 15
(Discussion primarily occurred earlier under related agenda items.)

9. Next Meeting

- Thursday, February 5th, 2026, 8:00 am at the Essex Town Offices

10. Adjournment

- **Motion** to adjourn at 9:52 am, (Signorello / Dunbar) passed 4-0

Meeting recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85ewApE4SYQ&t=274s>