

**SELECTBOARD
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026**

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Greg Duggan, Town Manager; Karen Adams, Deputy Town Manager

PUBLIC: Jacobi Brown, Darlene Campbell Payne, Robert Carpenter, Brian Clifford, Brandon Curington, Elizabeth Dunn, Tim Fagnant, Ellen Fleming, Joseph Flynn, Joseph Haddock, Dawn Hill-Fleury, Sharon Illenye, Brad Jackson, Michelle Jackson, Sam Kinghorn, Georgia Lavigne, Rachael Lizotte, Linda Merchant, Anne Miller, Sarah Salatino, Ken Signorello, Bill Silverstrim, Margaret Smith, Jemima Talbot, Merry Trudo, Su Ughetti, Cheryl Van Epps, Marlon Verasamy, Irene Wrenner, Lorraine Zaloom, Meg Zimmerman, Sharon Zukowski, Abby S. (screenname), Jeanne (screenname), John (screenname), Kaleb L. (screenname), Larry S. (screenname), Michael (screenname), Pfagnant (screenname), Sarah (screenname)

Meeting Recording:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E27-4x6c-KU&list=PLljLFn4BZd2MX8tMSIwIYGFAQOith-Q_F

Times associated with each agenda item are approximate.

1. CALL TO ORDER (00:00:01)

K. Chamberlin called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES (00:00:27)

Greg Duggan requested the addition of Business Item 6e, "Pending or Probable Civil Litigation."

SHANNON JACKSON made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, to amend the agenda to add Item 6e, "Pending or Probable Civil Litigation." Motion passed 3-0.

3. APPROVE AGENDA (00:00:58)

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed 3-0.

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

Su Ughetti spoke against the actions of the South Burlington Police Department in a recent Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid. She said Essex needs to prepare for future raids, and would like a follow up on any action that the Selectboard may have taken regarding protecting citizen data from ICE.

Brian Clifford said he serves as a part of a rapid response group responding to ICE activity. He said he believes that ICE would have left last week's raid had they not had the support of local and state law enforcement. He would like the Essex Police to commit to not going to the scene of ICE raids.

Sharon Illenye encouraged the Selectboard to inform surrounding properties following a dog bite hearing. She believes the seriousness of the bite committed by the subject of the dog bite hearing that was held in January should have resulted in the animal going into the custody of the Town. She expressed concern that there are other animals living in the home where a man recently died by a dog bite. S. Illenye also said she believes that ICE should not be present at elections.

Tim Fagnant said the local and state police are doing their job as requested by the citizens of Vermont and said ICE is doing a job that they have been hired to do. He said the police are not there to “protect the instigators” and that collaborating with other local law enforcement agencies is part of the police department’s job.

Merry Trudo asked which committee is responsible for planning a response to ICE raids and said one should be created immediately if none exists.

Lorraine Zaloom said police officers should not appear in uniforms at Town Meeting. She encouraged there to be a policy for ICE interactions with the Essex Police and said she believes that recent actions during the South Burlington raid could result in lawsuits and safety issues for the police themselves.

Irene Wrenner said the governor recently approved changes to the Town charter. She encouraged the Selectboard to consider moving the current town hall to the newly purchased property.

Margaret Smith said she has noticed more cars in the area with unreadable license plates. G. Duggan recommended that she contact the police about this issue.

Darlene Campbell Payne said she is the sister of Stephen Campbell, the man who was killed by a dog attack last week. She said that, after the first time the dog bites someone, it should have been labeled vicious and impounded. She suggested that the owner’s history and living situation be investigated as well. She believes that if these steps had occurred her brother would still be alive.

Rachel Lizotte asked if the Town was aware of how many dog bites/issues have been reported at Indian Brook. She believes the off-leash situation at Indian Brook is untenable.

Sharon Zukowski said the off-leash/on-leash area is very confusing at Indian Brook.

Cheryl Van Epps said she is very concerned about those who have been detained by ICE. She asked the Town to consider their liability if something should happen to someone who is detained by ICE in Essex.

Irene Wrenner said she has empathy for those who have dealt with ICE and vicious dogs. She said she wanted to make sure that there are no “behind the scenes” negotiations with ICE to put a detention center in Essex.

5. CONSENT ITEMS (00:48:06)

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed 3-0.

a. Approve minutes: February 26, 2026; March 2, 2026

b. Approve check warrants: #18324_ - 02/20/26; #18325_ - 02/27/26; #18326_ - 03/06/26

c. Consider approval of Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways (TA-60)

d. Consider approval of Certification of Compliance for Town Road and Bridge Standards and Network Inventory

e. Consider approval of Public Hearing Notice for Laying Out or Altering Deer Crossing Lane

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion with Essex Westford School District about Annual Meeting date (00:49:19)

Robert Carpenter, Jemima Talbot, and Marlon Verasamy, all of the Essex Westford School District (EWSD) Board, presented. R. Carpenter said there has been citizen interest in moving the school budget vote to Town Meeting Day, which will be decided upon by voters this spring. It is anticipated that this would save \$40,000. Most other school districts in the state vote on Town Meeting Day. EWSD no longer mails ballots to all voters, but residents are allowed to request one via a postcard that is mailed to all.

Answering a question from K. Chamberlin about the school district's Saxon Hill property, M. Verasamy said EWSD would be willing to have conversations about selling the Saxon Hill property to the Town of Essex.

L. Zaloom asked how the voting date would impact EWSD's ability to develop a budget. R. Carpenter said this will shift the timeline earlier, and that the district would respond to state changes.

b. Discussion about Town ordinances for dog licensing and control

Karen Adams said that, after the dog bite was reported in January, the Selectboard held a "potentially vicious dog" hearing. A vicious dog hearing, with euthanasia as a potential option, was not available for the Selectboard to consider as the attack happened on the dog owner's property. Several weeks later, the animal that was subject to the potentially vicious dog hearing killed a man in his home. S. Jackson expressed his condolences to the family of the man who was killed and said there is a serious flaw in the current process. He said he believes that additional options should be made for the Town to be able to protect the community and individuals in their homes. E. Lawrence said other communities consider a dog eligible for a vicious dog hearing if a bite breaks the skin and said that he would like to see the Selectboard create goals for this process.

K. Chamberlin suggested notifying the abutting neighbors in the case of a dog attack. He said that, even after a death had occurred, the police still needed to owner's consent to take the dog without a warrant. He suggested that anything over a level 4 bite should allow for police impoundment. S. Jackson said he is not concerned with the possibility of additional reports to the Selectboard and said he welcomes anything that makes the community a safer place. The Selectboard discussed the Town's ability to impound dogs, and for how long that this would be possible. E. Lawrence said he would like to see the definition of potentially vicious changed. He said he believes that a dog bite resulting from a home invasion should not come under this standard. E. Lawrence said the property owner, not just the dog owner, should be liable for a bite. The Selectboard will investigate the financial figures to hire a full-time Animal Control Officer. The Selectboard would also like to investigate situations where there are multiple dogs in the home, and one dog has a vicious/potentially vicious dog hearing.

In public comment, Joseph Haddock said he was a previous victim of this dog who ended up hospitalized from his bites. He said he appreciates the Selectboard's attention and care in this process. Ken Signorello said he believes that it should be noted in the police report and if the owner is a victim of a bite from their own dog. T. Fagnant said he has had interactions with the smaller dog (brown dog) on the property, which he says is just as vicious. He said his neighbor and her infant were "challenged" by the brown dog on the owner's property. He said Essex may require a full-time animal control officer at some point. T. Fagnant said his daughter is afraid to walk past the offending property. The smaller dog frequently leaves the property and is aggressive to humans. He suggested dogs be impounded immediately after a bite to allow for investigation.

E. Lawrence said none of the restrictions that have been placed on the animal which was subject to the hearing (black dog) are in effect with the brown dog, as the black dog has been removed from the property.

S. Zukowski encouraged the schools to be notified in the case of dog bites and said landlords do not have the choice to accept tenants with emotional support dogs. She said if a dog bites a home invader, they could bite other people legitimately visiting the home. L. Zaloom said it would be helpful to reach out to other municipalities to learn more about how they handle the issue. She said she was disappointed with the memo from Vermont League of Cities and Towns, as it seemed more legalistic than concerned with public health and safety. She said there should be a requirement for the Animal Control Officer to see a dog prior to the hearing. She said she put down her own dog because her own dog tried to bite her and said it was not worth the risk to her family. Mandating that a dog be put down would help to minimize the guilt to dog owners.

Ellen Fleming said she is a neighbor who had encountered the brown dog in the driveway. Her driveway crosses the offending property owner's property via a right-of-way. She suggested looking into police reports from the entire property, not just the owner of the black dog. Answering a question from E. Fleming, K. Adams said a written complaint must be filed with the Town and a hearing held within seven days of receiving the complaint.

D. Campbell Payne said a dog needs to be impounded and evaluated as soon as it bites someone. Answering a question from D. Campbell Payne, G. Duggan said that an Animal Behavioral Specialist was solicited in the previous hearing for the black dog and said qualifications would be researched for the future.

Sarah Salatino asked if neighbors have the right to shoot "friendly" dogs. She said this is in response to an issue of her neighbor's chickens coming onto her property and her dog killing one. K. Chamberlin suggested she speak with the police department, and E. Lawrence suggested she check into state ordinances. Bill Silverstrim discussed dog owners whom he feels are making poor choices and said this is a multi-layered problem. L. Zaloom suggested the Town reach out to the state to ensure that state statute is clearer. C. Van Epps said her son was bitten by their family dog and said doctors and vets can provide expertise in dog bite hearings. She said work needs to be done so that issues like this are not allowed to happen again. I. Wrenner that she is surprised that a dog cannot be removed after a serious incident.

c. Consider approval of Town Manager's appointment of Cemetery Commissioner Joe Teegarden (02:17:03)

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to approve the Town Manager's appointment of Joe Teegarden to the Cemetery Commission for a term ending March 31, 2029. Motion passed 3-0.

d. Discussion and potential action about the Town Manager's annual performance evaluation (02:18:53)

This was discussed during Executive Session.

e. Pending or Probably Civil Litigation (02:18:55)

This was discussed during Executive Session.

7. READING FILE (02:19:00)

a. Board member comments: S. Jackson thanked the Parks & Recreation Department for their work on their recent survey on Community Gardens. He said he would like to discuss the Selectboard schedule to best align it with school vacations. K. Chamberlin thanked Dustin Brusco for his service on the Development Review Board.

b. Upcoming meeting schedule

- c. February Reappraisal Update
- d. Resignation from Development Review Board - Dustin Bruso
- e. Draft schedule for Selectboard meetings, April 2026 - April 2027
- f. Brief update on Upper Main Street Municipal Complex next steps
- g. Parks & Recreation Community Garden Survey Results
- h. Town Meeting results and future debrief
- i. Public Works Winter Operations update as of March 12, 2026
- j. Email from Green Mountain Transit re: Potential Elimination of the #4

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION (02:20:46)

a. An executive session was held to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3), to include the Town Manager. Motion passed 3-0.

b. An executive session was held to discuss pending or probable litigation

SHANNON JACKSON made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard make the specific finding that general public knowledge of pending or probable civil litigation or prosecution to which the public body is or may be a party would place the Town at a substantial disadvantage. Motion passed 3-0.

SHANNON JACKSON made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard enter Executive Session to discuss pending or probable civil litigation or prosecution to which the public body is or may be a party, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(1)(e), to include the Town Manager and Deputy Town Manager. Motion passed 3-0.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to exit Executive Session. Motion passed 3-0 at 10 PM.

After exiting Executive Session, ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, to authorize the Vice Chair and/or Clerk to present the Town Manager with his evaluation. Motion passed 3-0.

9. ADJOURN

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, for the Selectboard to adjourn. Motion passed 3-0 at 10:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary