

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Regular Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2026, 8:00AM

Meeting held at Essex Town Offices, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452
Draft Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, March 8, 2026

Attendees

Commission Members:

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

Remote: Anne Miller

Absent:

Staff: Tammy Getchell

Public: N/A

Partners: Alex Demoly, GBIC

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:04 AM by Chair Irene Wrenner.

2. Agenda Additions/Changes

Vice Chair Signorello proposed amending the agenda to allow potential action on the following items:

- Discussion about the EDC Work Plan
- Discussion about the EDC Attendance Policy
- Review of current development applications

Motion: To amend the agenda to include potential action on Items 6c, 6d, and 6e (Signorello / Wrenner).

Vote: Passed 4-0

3. Public to Be Heard

No members of the public were present.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. February 5, 2026

- A correction was noted to the spelling of Alex Demoly's last name.

Motion: To approve the February 5, 2026 minutes as amended (Wrenner/Signorello).

Vote: Passed 4-0

b. February 19, 2026

- A correction was noted for Lafountain Family Maple spelling.

Motion: To approve February 19, 2026 minutes as amended (Signorello/Dunbar).

Vote: Passed 4-0

5. Partner Updates

Partner update was provided by Alex Demoly, Vice President (GBIC).

Key updates included:

- Congressional Directed Spending Deadline:
Senator Peter Welch's deadline for submission is March 26, 2026. Municipalities, nonprofits, and other entities are encouraged to review opportunities.
- Vermont Chamber Manufacturing Day:
Scheduled for April 2, 2026 in Montpelier. The event provides an opportunity for Vermont manufacturers to meet with legislators and discuss policy issues affecting the sector.
- Commission members asked questions regarding the types of projects typically funded through congressional directed spending programs.

6. Business Items

a. Evaluate EDC Table / Community Interactions at Town Showcase

Commissioners discussed the Town Showcase event and the EDC informational table.

Highlights included:

- Positive feedback on table placement in the gymnasium.
- Strong community engagement.
- Two qualified applicants expressed interest in joining the Commission.
- Outreach materials and photos of previous business visits helped attract attention.

Suggestions included:

- Increasing participation from EDC members at the table.
- Expanding promotional materials.
- Incorporating recruitment strategies into the committee handbook.

No formal action was taken.

b. Update on Map of Essex Businesses

The Commission discussed ongoing efforts to produce a printed map to highlight Essex businesses.

Key points included:

- Limited engagement on the map during the Town Showcase.
- The map vendor has reduced advertising placement pricing.
- Additional outreach to businesses will be necessary.

Staff offered to assist with promotion through:

- The Explore Essex VT Facebook page
- The Town's quarterly bulletin
- Other Town communications.

Commissioners also noted that the current map format makes Essex difficult to locate and suggested exploring a version focused specifically on Essex.

No formal action was taken.

c. Discussion About the EDC Work Plan

Staff presented a draft implementation spreadsheet derived from the Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP).

The spreadsheet:

- Extracts implementation tasks relevant to the EDC
- Identifies responsible parties
- Includes timelines and performance indicators
- Allows progress tracking through Excel filtering and reporting

Commissioners discussed refining the document into a smaller and more focused EDC work plan.

Suggestions included prioritizing several concrete initiatives:

- Business outreach program
- Essex business map project
- Town branding initiative
- Essex vs. Essex Junction business education (i.e., local option tax)
- Business promotion and attraction strategies

The Commission also recommended removing items that fall under the jurisdiction of the Selectboard, including:

- Commission member term limits
- Commission appointment skill matrix

Motion: To rescind any previously approved EDC Work Plan (Signorello / Wrenner).

Vote: Passed 4-0

Staff will prepare a revised draft work plan incorporating the Commission's priorities.

d. Discussion About the EDC Attendance Policy

- The Commission reviewed the previously adopted attendance policy, which allowed attendance at only one-third of meetings.
- Commissioners expressed concern that the policy was too permissive.

Motion: To rescind the previously approved EDC attendance policy (Signorello / Dunbar).

Vote: Passed 4-0

The Commission will default to the attendance expectations outlined in the Town committee handbook.

e. Review Current Development Applications

- Commissioners briefly reviewed development applications scheduled for the Development Review Board (DRB).
- Ely Family Application
 - Commissioners noted the application appeared unchanged from a previous submission and chose not to submit comments.
- Nelson Family Application
 - The application involved a variance request related to a shed setback. Commissioners did not identify issues requiring EDC comment.
- No action was taken.

f. Schedule Next Business Outreach Visit(s)

Suggestions included focusing on businesses located in Essex West, with potential visits to:

- Local retail establishments
- Businesses within the Town's industrial area

The next outreach visit will occur March 19, 2026.

7. New Business

- Winooski/Burlington Bridge Replacement Planning
 - Commissioner Dunbar reported on early planning efforts for the Winooski–Burlington bridge replacement, which is expected to begin around 2028. The project may impact regional traffic patterns affecting Essex businesses.
- Workforce Development Opportunity
 - Commissioners discussed a shortage of elevator repair technicians, noting the absence of training programs north of Tennessee. The issue may represent a potential economic development opportunity.
- Legislative Caucus for VT's Economy on 2/27/26
 - Chair Wrenner shared that nearly all VT businesses have fewer than 500 employees, the very definition of a small business by the feds. 93% of all private sector firms here have fewer than 20 employees. What kind of support can we provide as they struggle post-COVID and amidst tariffs?
- Food Truck Program
 - Staff discussed the potential creation of a food truck program near major employers to provide lunch options for workers.
- Motion: To request that the Planning Commission review potential regulations related to food trucks (Signorello / Dunbar).
Vote: Passed 4-0

8. Reading File

The following items were received:

- EDSP Draft (February 25, 2026)
- Email from Greg Duggan re: dismissal from Economic Development Commission
- Email from Karen Adams re: Coffee with Committees feedback
- EDC memo on Town Plan action item prioritization
- VLCT resources on the Community Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP)

Commissioners were encouraged to review the EDSP draft prior to the next meeting.

9. Next Meeting

- March 19, 2026 – Business Outreach Visit - TBD

10. Adjournment

- Motion: To adjourn the meeting (Signorello / Dunbar).
Vote: Passed 4-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 AM.

Meeting recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eUE7LmBQkY>