TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
PUBLIC HEARING MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Greg Duggan, Town Manager; Karen Adams, Deputy Town Manager; Ann Costandi, Water Quality Director; Tammy Getchell, Director of Community Engagement & Economic Development; Dennis Lutz, Public Works staff; Aaron Martin, Public Works Director

PUBLIC: Lindsay Bloos, Peter Ehrlich, Brad Ferland, Anne Miller, Adrianna Miranda, Ken Signorello, Margaret Smith, Cheryl Van Epps, Lois Whitmore, Rob Williams, Michael (screenname)

Meeting Recording:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5jTrogcZyE&list=PLljLFn4BZd2MX8tMSIwlYGFAQOith-Q_F&index=1

Times associated with each agenda item are approximate.

1. CALL TO ORDER (00:08:01)
As Shannon Jackson is remote this evening, Ethan Lawrence called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES (00:08:21)
A document regarding Public Works was given to all Selectboard members. Upon request from Kendall Chamberlin, Consent Item 5e, "Consider approval of 1st, 2nd, 3rd class and outside consumption liquor license renewals," will be addressed as Business Item 6g.

3. APPROVE AGENDA (00:09:31)
KENDALL CHAMBERLIN made a motion, seconded by MEG ZIMMERMAN, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed 5-0.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD (00:09:56)
None.

5. CONSENT ITEMS (00:10:37)
MEG ZIMMERMAN made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed 5-0.
a. Approve minutes: April 6, 2026
b. Approve check warrants: #18333 - 04/03/26; #18334 - 04/10/26
c. Consider adoption of Local Emergency Management Plan
d. Consider approval of opioid settlement funds to support local summit
~~**e. Consider approval of 1st, 2nd, 3rd class and outside consumption liquor license renewals**~~

6. BUSINESS ITEMS
a. Interview a volunteer to serve on the Energy Committee - Rod Williams (00:11:07)
R. Williams said he has served on the Energy Committee for the past year and has professional experience in government and energy. Answering a question from M. Zimmerman, R. Williams said that continued work on the Energy Plan is the biggest challenge facing the committee. He said building relationships with

other members of the committee has been very rewarding. Andy Watts disclosed that R. Williams is his neighbor, but he does not feel that this is a conflict of interest. Answering a question from S. Jackson, R. Williams spoke of a desire to engage young people in the committee's work and potentially have a youth member on the committee. E. Lawrence said appointments are anticipated to be made at the end of June.

b. Consider approval of resolution regarding a municipal boundary adjustment with Town of Jericho (00:18:04)
G. Duggan said a resident had requested a municipal boundary adjustment as their property is partially in Essex and partially in Jericho, but accessible only via Jericho. The Jericho Selectboard has issued a resolution in favor of such. G. Duggan said Essex staff does not recommend pursuing this adjustment due to the precedent it may set. No precedent has been found for a smaller-scale adjustment such as what is proposed. Peter Ehrlich, property owner of the parcel in question, said he believes this adjustment makes sense. He said the home had been in Jericho; however, it shifted to Essex due to resurveying. Answering a question from M. Zimmerman, P. Ehrlich said this change would allow him to be active on municipal boards in Jericho. G. Duggan said staff research has shown that this property was always located in Essex. In response, P. Ehrlich said a Jericho permit was pulled for construction, despite the lot being located both in Essex and Jericho. G. Duggan said a 1977 subdivision document, assessing cards, and tax records show the home's location in Essex. A. Watts expressed concern about setting a precedent and feels that the developer made a documentation mistake during construction. K. Chamberlin said individual parcels lines should not be adjusted. In public comment, Margaret Smith asked which municipality taxes were paid to, and how the situation was discovered. In response, P. Ehrlich said Jericho staff members checked his address when he attempted to run for the Jericho Selectboard. Taxes are paid to both communities. In public comment, Ken Signorello pointed out a 65-foot swath of land that he believes is in both Jericho and Essex. In response, G. Duggan said that he believes it is undetermined what municipality this swath of land belongs to.

KENDALL CHAMBERLIN made a motion not to sign a resolution to make a change to the property line. Motion retracted by KENDALL CHAMBERLIN.

ANDY WATTS made a motion to adopt the resolution in support of the municipal boundary adjustment with the Town of Jericho. No second, motion fails.

c. Presentation and potential adoption of the Economic Development Strategic Plan (00:36:44)
Tammy Getchell said the Town of Essex has selected Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA) to complete the Economic Development Strategic Plan. She discussed public engagement in the process and stated the draft plan has been presented to the Economic Development Commission and Town staff. Lindsay Bloos, Senior Consultant at TPMA, provided an overview of the process, timeline, key considerations, public engagement and project purpose. The five sections of the Strategic Action Plan are: Destination Development, Entrepreneurship and Business Retention, Education and Workforce Support, Business Attraction and Expansion, and Leadership and Community Engagement. L. Bloos discussed markers of success in implementation and stated that it is a living document with quarterly work plans recommended. Answering a question from K. Chamberlin, L. Bloos discussed the appropriate mix between business and residential properties. All Selectboard members thanked Town staff and TPMA for their hard work.

In public comment, Lois Whitmore asked for additional details on the impact of public transportation in the plan. L. Bloos discussed walk and bike friendliness and efforts to partner with industry partners and housing and commuting struggles in Essex. Implementation of the plan is not dependent on ongoing public transportation.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by SHANNON JACKSON, that the Selectboard adopt the Economic Development Strategic Plan as presented. Motion passed 5-0.

d. Presentation and discussion about proposed Municipal Wastewater Allocation Ordinance (10.18 of the Town Ordinances) Update (01:08:35)
Aaron Martin and Dennis Lutz presented. The proposed Municipal Wastewater Allocation Ordinance reflects changes to the Town Plan, zoning bylaws and zoning maps. The estimated usage of a single-family home would be updated to 150 gallons per day, instead of the current 200 gpd. If approved by the Selectboard, the changes will also impact the Water and Sewer ordinances, which will be presented to the Selectboard later. D. Lutz said zoning impacts sewer allocation, as public sewer should be in place in areas designated for growth. Answering a question from K. Chamberlin, D. Lutz discussed conflicts between the zoning and sewer allocation near Essex Elementary School. He hopes that the zoning can be corrected in the future. He said he believes the Sewer Allocation Map should be updated when the zoning maps are changed. Answering a question from E. Lawrence, D. Lutz discussed recorded sewer flow in a specific data set and the costs per construction of sewer infrastructure. A. Martin said costs of connecting to sewer and constructing a mound system can be similar. The Selectboard maintains a reserve to allocate as necessary and will continue to do so under the proposed changes to the ordinance. Answering a question from K. Chamberlin, D. Lutz discussed the impact of fixed costs and flow on sewer user rates. K. Chamberlin also suggested incorporating a loading charge. A. Martin said this will be discussed by the Tri-Town Sewer Committee.

D. Lutz discussed the administration of allocation at the state and local level. Answering a question from M. Zimmerman, A. Martin confirmed that allocation would be reclaimed by the Town should a developer purchase capacity and then not need it, without a refund. D. Lutz said connection fees in Essex are currently lower than surrounding communities. Essex is expected to be responsible for future bond payments to upgrade the Essex Junction Wastewater Treatment Facility, which will have an impact on future rates. K. Chamberlin said he is happy to see that allocation fees will be updated on a more regular basis. With the proposed changes, minor allocation applications would be able to be approved administratively rather than be approved via the Consent Agenda. The Selectboard will continue to hear larger requests or requests for discretionary allocation. Answering a question from K. Chamberlin, A. Martin said accessory dwelling units would be handled in a similar way to what they currently are. An inter-municipal agreement between the Town of Colchester and Town of Essex will be developed for the Colchester properties that are connected to the Essex sewers. Staff said they are requesting direction from the Selectboard that the changes noted are acceptable, however they would like to have all three ordinances approved simultaneously. All Selectboard members indicated approval for that approach.

During public input, C. Van Epps discussed septic system failures on Wildwood Drive which resulted in the Town offering public sewers in this area. She asked about the impact of global climate change on the public sewer systems. D. Lutz described regional trends and said the data being reviewed is current and local. Data can be recalculated without changes to the ordinance itself. Anne Miller asked about the impact of water saving technology, the aging population on water usage and future growth patterns on water usage. D. Lutz said that data can be adjusted based on trends and said that sufficient capacity is available. E. Lawrence said this will be discussed at a future meeting.

e. Discussion about next steps with Upper Main Street municipal complex (02:12:52)
K. Adams said the Town of Essex purchased land on Upper Main Street to create a municipal complex, housing and public lands. The project is in the infrastructure design phase. The Town has received a

$500,000 grant from the Northern Borders Regional Commission for the design work, with the total project cost estimated at $1,500,000. Staff have been working to identify funding for the remainder of this project. K. Adams discussed the steps that would go into the infrastructure design phase. Potential funding sources have also been identified, and additional grants will be sought. She estimates a gap of around $304,000 to be earmarked for future years. She discussed the proposed project area. Approval will need to be requested from the Northern Border Regional Commission to move forward. No action is required this evening. Answering a question from K. Chamberlin, K. Adams said the cost includes planning for full infrastructure design. No additional land purchase is required with this project. K. Chamberlin expressed discomfort with utilizing Capital Funds and suggested using interest revenue instead. Answering a question from S. Jackson, K. Adams said installing space for community gardens can be researched. G. Duggan said Essex Parks & Recreation has been exploring sites for community gardens throughout Essex. E. Lawrence asked if the $304,000 must be appropriated prior to the grant being received. K. Adams said this is not the case. She said grant funds must be accepted by March 1, 2027, however no extension on the completion date is provided. Thus, staff hope to accept the grant in the next few months, go to bid in fall and complete the project by June of 2028. E. Lawrence requested public comment, of which there was none.

f. Discussion about Selectboard process for strategic planning and annual work plan for fiscal year 2027 (02:27:45)
G. Duggan said staff are suggesting that strategic planning occur over several meetings, rather than at a single meeting as has happened in past years. He would like to identify "source documents," which are plans approved by the Selectboard and/or community to guide municipal work and goals. He proposed that on May 4, the Selectboard would review and approve a list of source documents as well as Selectboard values and long-term goals. On May 18, draft work plans from departments would be available and the Selectboard could review potential work items and assign priorities. A draft Selectboard work plan would be developed at the June 1 Selectboard meeting, with approval on June 15. All Selectboard members were amenable to this change in process. K. Chamberlin encouraged the Board to spend more time considering water and sewer issues. E. Lawrence requested public input, of which there was none.

g. Consider approval of 1st, 2nd, 3rd class and outside consumption liquor license renewals (02:37:47)
K. Chamberlin expressed concern that liquor licenses are being awarded to properties that are delinquent in taxes. He described this as a privilege and one of the few methods that the Selectboard could use to bring forth payment. K. Adams said boards have a wide latitude in issuing licensing if it is consistent. G. Duggan said it can be difficult in certain cases to know if the owner of an establishment is also the owner of the property. There are policies associated with the police review of liquor licenses, however there is nothing additional besides this. Staff work to put delinquent taxpayers on approved payment plans. G. Duggan said an unsigned agreement is in place with the currently delinquent property owner who leases to establishments that are seeking liquor licenses. S. Jackson encouraged staff to include the tax status with all applicants in the future. E. Lawrence requested public input, of which there was none.

SHANNON JACKSON made a motion, seconded by MEG ZIMMERMAN, that the Selectboard approve the liquor license applications for businesses located in the Town of Essex listed in the April 15th, 2026 memorandum re: "Liquor License Applications."

SHANNON JACKSON amended his motion to include 1st, 2nd, 3rd class and outside consumption liquor licenses. Motion passed 4-1, with KENDALL CHAMBERLIN voting in opposition.

7. <u>READING FILE</u> (02:46:47)

a. Board member comments: S. Jackson congratulated the Town of Essex on receiving Tree City USA status and upon receiving the Recreation Trails Program grant. K. Chamberlin thanked administrative and finance staff for budgetary information. E. Lawrence thanked Parks & Recreation staff for stocking Indian Brook with trout.

b. Upcoming meeting schedule

c. Chittenden County Communications Union District 2025 Annual Report

d. Act 250 - Public Comment on Proposed Guidelines for Road Construction Jurisdiction

e. Investment Update for third quarter of fiscal year 2026

f. General Fund Fiscal Year 2026 budget and spending review - third quarter

g. Fiscal Year 2027 Water and Sewer Budget and Rate Preview

h. Old Colchester Road Pedestrian Bridge Study Update

i. 2025 Tree City USA Designation

j. Notification of 2026 Recreation Trails Program grant award

k. Preview of request for guidance on potential updates to Investment Policy

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Not required.

9. ADJOURN (02:28:37)

SHANNON JACKSON made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, for the Selectboard to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville & Jamie Harrison
Recording Secretaries