

**SELECTBOARD
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 29, 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; Paul Courtois, Lieutenant; Ron Hoague, Police Chief; JoAnn Nichols, Animal Control Officer

PUBLIC: Gina Halpin Barrett, June Campbell, Kalob Campbell, Russ Danson, Jane Dunn, Tim Fagnant, Ellen Fleming, Rob Fleming, Emily Lewis, Anne Miller, Reed Nye, Dianne Percy, Ken Signorello, Margaret Smith, Courtney Thomas, Cheryl Van Epps, Lois Whitmore, Irene Wrenner, Lorraine Zaloom, Sharon Zukowski

Meeting Recording: https://www.youtube.com/live/jPDhfWNeEMY?si=c6rLikRAn0s_NqrL

Times associated with each agenda item are approximate.

1. CALL TO ORDER (00:00:07)

Shannon Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES (00:01:10)

The agenda was accepted as presented.

3. APPROVE AGENDA (00:01:14)

No changes, thus no approval required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD (00:01:15)

None

5. CONSENT ITEMS (00:02:34)

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by **MEG ZIMMERMAN**, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed 5-0.

a. Approve minutes: June 15, 2026

b. Approve check warrants: #18343 - 06/12/26; #18344 - 06/18/26

c. Consider approval of Selectboard work plan for fiscal year 2027

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Interview a volunteer to serve on the Essex Free Library Board of Trustees - Jane Dunn (00:02:56)

Jane Dunn said she has a background in Early Childhood Education and was formally a school librarian. Answering a question from M. Zimmerman about what contributions she would make to the Library Board of Trustees, J. Dunn said she would first like to better understand what the Board does. Answering a question from E. Lawrence regarding whether she had read the Board of Trustee's mission statement, J. Dunn answered affirmatively and said the website does not contain a lot of information pertaining to the duties of the Trustees. A. Watts clarified that the Selectboard sets the budget and Library Board of Trustees runs the library, sets the policy and hires the director. When asked what community meant to her by A. Watts, J. Dunn said community is defined through personal connection and active civic participation. Answering a

question from K. Chamberlin about her various non-profit work, J. Dunn said she worked as an Outreach Coordinator at a small nonprofit grieving center in Connecticut where she helped with marketing and fundraising. S. Jackson asked if she was aware of the Library of Things offered in addition to books, J. Dunn answered affirmatively. A. Watts clarified the meeting schedule for the Library Board. In response to a question from E. Lawrence about her application stating that she lived in Essex Junction, J. Dunn replied that she resides in the Town of Essex.

b. Interview a volunteer to serve on the Police Community Advisory Board - Dan Maguire (00:13:42)

Dan Maguire said he has served on the Police Community Advisory Board (PCAB) for 3 years. He said there has been a high turnover rate on the PCAB and he is optimistic about the current members on the Board. In response to a question from M. Zimmerman about the most significant challenge and reward during his tenure, he said the Board has had ongoing success in engaging marginalized citizens. Answering a question from S. Jackson about how the Selectboard can help with the turnover rate on the PCAB, D. Maguire discussed barriers to public participation in diversity and equity issues.

c. Interview a volunteer to serve on the Housing Commission - Lorraine Zaloom (00:20:29)

Lorraine Zaloom expressed concerns regarding community demographics, noting a trend of younger residents relocating from the Town and a lack of adequate housing options for older residents seeking to downsize. She said her biggest concerns are housing affordability and accessibility. Answering a question from M. Zimmerman about what goals she has for the Housing Commission, L. Zaloom said affordability is her biggest goal. Answering a question from E. Lawrence about what ideas she would bring to the Housing Commission, she said she has several key ideas that include working towards proactive growth and relationship building with other Commissions. In response to a question from A. Watts about what community means to her, she defined community as fostering connections and engagement across diverse populations through volunteering and civic action. Answering a question from L. Zaloom about the division of responsibilities between the board and the staff, G. Duggan clarified that the primary role of the staff is to support the Housing Commission in achieving its goals.

d. Interview a volunteer to serve on the Housing Commission and/or Conservation & Trails Committee - Cheryl Van Epps (00:31:04)

Cheryl Van Epps said she has a Master of Microbiology. She was previously employed at the Howard Center where she assisted with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She clarified that her departure was due to medical reasons, specifically citing a head injury and preexisting mental health conditions. C. Van Epps shared her experience in event planning through the Parent Teacher Organization, noting her role in organizing the NFL Play60 funded "Get Moving Night". She said she has been on the Brain Injury Advisory Board for the State of VT where she organized a state plan and needs assessment for brain injury patients. Answering a question from M. Zimmerman regarding her preference for which board she would like to serve on and what she wishes to accomplish while serving, C. Van Epps said she would like to serve on both. C. Van Epps emphasized the critical need to address housing and food security as high-priority community issues. She discussed supporting trail conservation, specifically leveraging her practical, hands-on experience with invasive species removal. In response to a question from A. Watts about what community means to her, she defined community as a group of people advocating for each other through social and safety networking to make sure that everyone is thriving. Answering a question from S. Jackson about how she feels the Trail Caregiver program is going, she said it would be beneficial for the program to have a subcommittee where the caregivers can discuss what is occurring at all the trails. C. Van Epps asked why the Conservation & Trails Committee is not a Commission. G Duggan clarified that a Conservation Commission is a legally distinct entity defined by state statute, which is the primary difference between the two bodies.

**e. Compliance Hearing and potential action to update conditions related to April 6, 2026
Selectboard Animal Control Order (00:47:00)**

K. Adams presented an overview of the packet that was provided to the Selectboard with the conditions that were placed on Loyla. Emily Lewis, Certified Dog Behavior Consultant and owner of Vermont Dog Behavior LLC, said when evaluating Loyla she based it off her individuality and not with the other dog in the home. She said after evaluating Loyla and the home, as well as speaking with Loyla's veterinarian and doggy daycare, she believes that Loyla is a dog that can be safely kept in her home. Emily said the family complied with animal control once they received the order to tether Loyla in their home and there has not been another incident reported since. She said after her evaluation and assessment, she believes that the current stipulations placed on Loyla are disproportionate to the behavior concerns that the dog has exhibited. E. Lewis said she provided the owners with a training package and plan to give Loyla a better quality of life than what the previous stipulations were at the original hearing. Answering a question from E. Lawrence about the recommendation of not using a muzzle, she clarified that in her professional opinion it is not necessary.

June Campbell said she is in the process of building a fence for Loyla and the dog is tethered by a chain all day. Appropriate signage has been placed to warn those that approach the property that there is a dog on the premises that they need to stay away from. Answering a question from E. Lawrence about whether she had read the proposed changes in the conditions of the packet, she said she did not receive a packet. J. Campbell said the current fence construction consists of a 6-foot wood and cement barrier with a secondary 5-foot section that will be added pending the availability of future funds. In response to a question from E. Lawrence about the height of the secondary section of fence, she clarified the secondary section would be 6-foot. K. Adams reviewed the proposed changes to the recommended animal control order for Loyla. Answering a question from E. Lawrence about the 90-day training timeline deadline, J. Campbell said affordability is the biggest issue, as well as the schedule of trainer E. Lewis with meeting the proposed deadline. E. Lewis said Kalob Campbell was provided with alternative trainers that could basket muzzle train the dog, which offer schedule flexibility at a more affordable rate.

In response to a question from E. Lawrence about if there would be cost savings and a change in scheduling constraints if the Selectboard allowed Loyla to remain without a muzzle, E. Lewis answered affirmatively. She clarified that no formalized aggression scale exists; behaviors exhibited by Loyla are territorial and defensive in nature. Answering a question from S. Jackson about how she defines aggressiveness when there was an attack on another dog, E. Lewis said although Loyla did bite another dog and cause a minor injury, she classified this incident as territorial behavior rather than aggressive behavior. Attacks on another dog would generally include multiple bites, the inability to get away and deep puncture wounds. M. Zimmerman said it would be beneficial for the homeowners and Loyla to have proper muzzle training. K. Adams clarified that the order would remain for Loyla's entire life.

Ellen Fleming said she and her husband live at 169 Brigham Hill Rd. She requested that the fence being built serve as a privacy fence to block sightlines into their property for residents and visitors. She said she feels the tether solution is only a temporary solution to a long-term problem and would like a timeline placed on the fence completion. E. Fleming asked that clarification be made on who can control Loyla in the "able bodied" adult section of the order. Rob Fleming said he feels the Selectboard should mandate the dog to remain fenced on the property due to the history of the dog's behavior. S. Zukoski asked the Selectboard to not remove the muzzle requirement and to consider the history of the dog and the owner. E. Lawrence clarified that Loyla has never hurt another person, the fence is in progress, and K. Campbell is changing

ownership of the dog to himself. E. Lewis said Jack's case is entirely separate from Loyla's case and should not influence the outcome of the case and Loyla's quality of life.

The Selectboard discussed the recommended updates to the animal control order for Loyla and exempted muzzle training from the requirements. E. Lewis clarified that a SprayShield is a compressed citronella spray that has a 10ft spray radius that is used to deter oncoming dogs as well as used to break up dog fights and preventing humans from placing their hands between dogs. She said her reasoning behind recommending a spray shield is for Loyla's safety and its affordability. When off the property, Loyla must always remain under the physical control of an able-bodied adult who is equipped with Spray Shield or a comparable product. S. Jackson commended the Campbell family for their efforts in completing the fence in a timely fashion despite financial constraints. E. Fleming said the sworn statements made to the police after the incident involving the dog named Jack are different from what is included in the police report. She expressed her concerns over the control order being followed.

The Selectboard hereby orders, for as long as "Loyla" resides in Essex:

1. Dog must continue to be leashed at all times when outside, with active owner supervision, unless:
 - a. The owner secures the specific "escape-proof" harness described in the consultation report and uses as a two-step security feature, with the second being the sturdy tether or leash that has been "backup clipped" as described in the report, OR
 - b. the owner has installed a securely fortified ("dig proof") 6-foot fence with a visual barrier to create an enclosed area with a locking gate or other device ensuring the area is adequate for containment AND this enclosure space has been inspected by the Police Chief or their designee and deemed acceptable.
2. Effective immediately, if persons unfamiliar with the property are inside the home, the dog shall be placed behind a two-system barrier to ensure the animal cannot interact with "strangers."
3. The dog owner shall pursue the training goals recommended in the report section titled "Training Package & Plan" (with the exception of muzzle training) with one of the certified providers referenced and complete within 120 days.
4. When off the property, the animal must remain under the physical control of an able-bodied adult at all times, equipped with shield spray or a comparable product.
5. The dog owner shall consider taking steps to comply with other recommendations in the Report not specifically noted here, including but not limited to requesting a transfer in Loyla's ownership to an eligible and capable member of the household.
6. The animal shall not be present at dog parks, playgrounds, or other public locations where a reasonable person would expect vulnerable people to be located, even if muzzled.
7. The dog's registered owner shall attend ten hours of responsible pet ownership education acceptable to the Police Chief within 30 days of this order. An example of this type of education available online is located here: <https://courtclassesonline.com/course/responsible-pet-ownership-course-10-hours/>. If a transfer in ownership of the animal is requested at any time in the future; any new owner shall be required to demonstrate they have completed such a course prior to the application being approved by the Town.
8. Prior conditions from the 4/6/26 order related to property signage and a delivery drop box shall remain in effect.
9. 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 in Essex.
10. Any failure to comply with these conditions will trigger a Selectboard hearing that may result in the dog being surrendered to Essex Animal Control.

J. Campbell acknowledged that she understood each item as it was read to her by the Selectboard.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE that the Selectboard approve the updated conditions for the animal “Loyla” owned by June Campbell on Brigham Hill Road as amended. Motion passed 5-0.

f. Discussion of draft Animal Control Ordinance amendments (02:40:12)

K. Adams presented the draft Animal Control Ordinance amendments. She said, due to recent events that occurred in the spring of 2026, there has been some discussion in the community about the limitations of the Animal Control Ordinance. These specifically include dog bites being rated based on their location geographically and not the severity of the bite. She reviewed the current Animal Control Ordinance. With the new ordinance, bystanders can report an incident but do not have a legal obligation to do such. K. Adams discussed the proposed timeline, noting that there is a desire to have the issue heard by the Selectboard in a faster manner. Some nuisance dog items, where there is not a risk to public safety, may be able to be handled administratively. Potentially vicious dogs, which may pose a risk to public safety, will still be heard by the Selectboard. After this occurs, the next steps are compliance, a lack of meeting conditions or surrender of the animal. She discussed a three strikes process to prove that the owner is competent at managing their animal. Voter approval would be required for some changes, such as the definition of a vicious dog.

E. Lawrence asked if the portion of the ordinance which discussed a bite occurring on or off property could be fixed immediately, K. Adams said this would require voter approval. K. Adams is researching where a dog would need to be housed during the appeal period. Police Chief Ron Hoague and Lt. Paul Courtois clarified that the current ordinance allows the police to impound dogs. R. Hoague said the Chittenden County Humane Society, which is normally used by the Essex Police for dog care, will not accept impounded dogs. The typical cost is \$100 a day to board impounded dogs. The Essex Police Department is not equipped to keep a dog for a period of time. Under State law, the Town is responsible for impounded dogs. K. Adams said quarantine should continue to be encouraged on the owner’s property unless this is not feasible. Compatibility between the Town and City regulations was discussed regarding enforcement. E. Lawrence suggested that the Selectboard take the time necessary until all outstanding questions are answered regarding this ordinance. R. Hoague said it would be ideal to have a facility at the county level which could provide impounding services. A. Watts discussed regional efforts to remedy this problem. A. Watts expressed concern about the potential liability to the Town with this ordinance. K. Adams said it is essential that the Town can enforce any ordinances that they have. She does not believe the Town would be liable for the actions of a private citizen or their animal. K. Adams said there is a possibility of including language which allows the Police Chief to order sterilization for an aggressive animal. R. Hoague said he is comfortable with this being included. This ordinance will be further discussed at the next meeting, but it is not anticipated that this will be voted upon in November. Staff will continue to work with legal council to fully answer outstanding questions, with a potential vote in March.

g. Discussion and potential action about placing Local Option Tax question(s) on the November 2026 ballot (03:37:43)

G. Duggan said a decision on warning the Local Options Tax (LOT) vote for the November ballot must be made by July. K. Chamberlin said he would like to see this voted upon in November to determine the will of the people. E. Lawrence said he believes November is a good time to ask the question due to higher voter turnout but said he personally would only be in favor of an alcohol tax. A. Watts said he is in favor of a vote on this issue and said it is important to provide information to voters on how these funds will be spent prior to voting. He is not in favor of dedicating these funds to capital due to recent capital tax increases. He suggested dedicating a portion of these funds to tax relief. E. Lawrence said the LOT should only be

placed on rooms, meals and alcohol, as these will primarily impact those from out of town. M. Zimmerman said the LOT could become less regressive by reducing the property tax rate.

In public comment, K. Signorello suggested that LOT funds go into a fund, and its use be voted upon. He expressed concern that many Essex online shoppers are accidentally paying LOT funds to Essex Junction. He questioned why a regressive tax is necessary when other taxation options are available. He said the LOT may have an oversized impact on small local businesses. Irene Wrenner said the LOT has been considered for decades in Essex and consistently turned down. She believes a lack of a LOT drives customers to Essex. She said balanced and fair information should be presented by the Town, should this issue be voted upon. Margaret Smith also expressed concern about LOT funds incorrectly being diverted to Essex Junction and said the Lowes in Essex is specifically picked by shoppers due to the lack of LOT. Anne Miller said it is important to note what the funds will be spent on prior to requesting money. She believes that the LOT is regressive, that the lack of such offers a competitive advantage to Essex, is anti-business and impacts mostly those who generally do not come to meetings. Sharon Zukowski believes that property tax relief provided by the LOT will only benefit property owners and discussed the regressive nature of this tax. K. Chamberlin said there are several relief options for those in need, and said the LOT represents a small amount of money for most purchases. This issue will be discussed further in July.

h. Consider appointments to Town of Essex boards, committees and commissions (04:07:20)

A. Watts said he will not be participating in discussions nor votes on the Essex Free Library Board of Trustees appointments as his wife serves on the Board.

7. READING FILE (04:07:55)

a. a. Board member comments S. Jackson thanked Trefor Williams for his service.

b. Upcoming meeting schedule

c. Memo re: grant for aquatic nuisance control at Indian Brook Reservoir

d. Letter from Sharon Zukowski re: Vicious Dog Ordinance

e. Resignation from Planning Commission - Trefor Williams

f. Fiscal Year 2025 Fund Balance Assignments update

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION (04:08:16)

a. An executive session may be requested to discuss the appointment or evaluation of a public officer or employee

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by **ANDY WATTS**, that the Selectboard enter into executive session to discuss the proposed public official appointment in accordance with 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3) and to include the Town Manager and Deputy Town Manager. Motion passed 5-0 at 10:39 PM.

KENDALL CHAMBERLIN made a motion, seconded by **ETHAN LAWRENCE**, to exit executive session. Motion passed 5-0 at 10:51 PM.

MEG ZIMMERMAN made a motion, seconded by **KENDALL CHAMBERLIN**, that the Selectboard make the following appointments to the Conservation & Trails Committee: Bino Cummings for a 3-year term for reappointment, Carrie Macfarlane for a 3-year term for reappointment, and Morgan Kirk for a 3-year term for reappointment and Bart Bechard for a 1-year term for the vacancy; and to the Police Community Advisory Board: Dan Maguire for a 3-year term for reappointment;

and to the Housing Commission: Cheryl Van Epps for a 3-year term and Lorraine Zaloom for a 1-year term. Motion passed 5-0.

A. Watts recused himself at 10:53 PM.

MEG ZIMMERMAN made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, that the Selectboard make the following appointments to the Essex Free Library Board of Trustees: Emily Gibbs for a 3-year term for reappointment, Allan Ramsay for a 3-year term for reappointment and Jane Dunn for a 3-year term. Motion passed 4-0-1 with ANDY WATTS abstaining.

9. ADJOURN

KENDALL CHAMBERLIN made a motion, seconded by ETHAN LAWRENCE, for the Selectboard to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0 at 10:55 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville & Jamie Harrison
Recording Secretaries