SELECTBOARD
(DRAFT)

TOWN OF ESSEX SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 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; Charlie Cole, Fire Chief; Brittany McGregor, Planning Technician; Dan Roy, Finance Director

PUBLIC: Gina Halpin Barrett, Betsy Dunn, Dawn Hill-Fleury, Ken Goodnow, Edith Klimoski, Michael Miller, Reed Nye, Ken Signorello, Margaret Smith, Dianne Swafford, Lois Whitmore, Lorraine Zaloom, Sharon Zukowski, morri (screenname)

1. CALL TO ORDER (00:00:00)
Shannon Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES (00:00:29)
None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA
No changes, thus no approval required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD (00:00:49)
Lorraine Zaloom said she is concerned that she is required to use her private e-mail for Housing Commission business. Greg Duggan said a Town e-mail is typically given to the chair of each committee; however, he will follow up with the IT department to see the costs involved for giving each committee member a Town e-mail address. Margaret Smith expressed disappointment that a Local Option Tax was included on the November ballot without first addressing the zip code overlap between the Town of Essex and the City of Essex Junction.

5. CONSENT ITEMS (00:04:30)
ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by MEG ZIMMERMAN, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed 5-0.
a. Approve minutes: July 27, 2026
b. Approve check warrants: #18347 - 07/24/26
c. Consider approval to mail state general election ballot to all active, non-challenged voters

6. BUSINESS ITEMS
a. Interview and possibly appoint an Alternate Representative to the Chittenden Solid Waste District Board of Commissioners - Edith Klimoski (00:04:50)
Edith Klimoski said she has an educational background in waste reduction, diversion policies and resource management. She discussed her experience managing a recycling center and working in the private sector. Her second career is working against human trafficking in non-profit organizations. Kendall Chamberlin asked E. Klimoski if she is familiar with the issues the Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) is facing, she answered affirmatively. E. Klimoski discussed her fiscally conservative nature and said this is a major factor in her decision making. Answering a question from Andy Watts regarding the definition of community, E. Klimoski discussed her professional experience, facilitating conversations and ensuring that

all voices are heard. S. Jackson said the alternate is treated as a full member of the CSWD Board of Commissioners, except for voting.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by MEG ZIMMERMAN, to appoint Edith Klimoski as the Alternate Town of Essex representative for the Chittenden Solid Waste District Board of Commissioners. Motion passed 5-0.

b. Interview and possibly appoint a volunteer to serve on the Police Community Advisory Board - Dawn Hill-Fleury (00:14:07)
Dawn Hill-Fleury said she is a former Selectboard member who would like to volunteer in the community. She would like to see the Police Community Advisory Board (PCAB) be better organized and believes she can assist with this. She discussed frequent leadership changes in the PCAB and said it should be a communication bridge between the police department and marginalized groups. She was involved with the PCAB at its inception. A. Watts asked D. Hill-Fleury what she believes community means to her. She said she would like to give back more than she gets from the community, noting that she has lived in Essex for 67 years.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by KENDALL CHAMBERLIN, to appoint Dawn Hill-Fleury for the Police Community Advisory Board. Motion passed 5-0.

c. Interview and possibly appoint a volunteer to serve on the Energy Committee - Ken Goodnow (00:20:33)
Ken Goodnow said he has a background in electrical engineering and has had a long-term interest in solar energy. He is interested in the applicability of the Vermont State Bill S.202 to Essex. E. Lawrence asked K. Goodnow if he has attended any Energy Committee meetings. K. Goodnow said he has read through the minutes and mission statement but has not yet attended a meeting. A. Watts asked K. Goodnow to define community. K. Goodnow said he has lived in Essex for around 30 years and is interested in continually improving the community. K. Goodnow said he has not had experience serving on a volunteer board but does have professional leadership experience. K. Goodnow discussed an interest in geothermal heating and energy-efficiency in public buildings.

MEG ZIMMERMAN made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, to appoint Ken Goodnow to serve as a volunteer on the Energy Committee. Motion passed 5-0.

d. Consider approval of Town Manager's appointment of Zoning Administrator and Health Officer (00:29:50)
Greg Duggan said Sharon Kelley is retiring after almost 32 years of working for the Town of Essex. Brittany McGregor, Planning Technician, is the Town Manager’s appointment for Zoning Administrator. Meg Zimmerman asked B. McGregor what she is most interested in contributing to the role. B. McGregor discussed an interest in serving her fellow Town residents and shepherding them through the zoning and development process. She discussed the customer-facing nature of her current position. B. McGregor will continue to fill both roles until the Planning Technician position is filled. G. Duggan said this position was open and posted for around 1.5-2 weeks, and B. McGregor was selected as the preferred candidate. In public comment, Charlie Cole spoke positively about his experience working with B. McGregor. Lois Whitmore asked how many applications were received; G. Duggan said 9 were received but that B. McGregor was the only candidate interviewed.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by KENDALL CHAMBERLIN, to approve the Town Manager's appointment of Brittany McGregor as Zoning Administrator and Health Officer. Motion passed 5-0.

e. Consider approval of capital vehicle purchase of Car 10 for Essex Fire Department (00:38:02)
C. Cole said a Ford 150 pick-up truck with a police package is requested to be purchased. This is an additional vehicle for the department, not a replacement. This will become the primary EMS vehicle, so that large fire engines are not always used to go to EMS calls. E. Lawrence expressed concern about the Fire Department having more vehicles than can fit in the station. C. Cole detailed the cleaning and servicing needs of the Fire Department, necessitating multiple vehicles. E. Lawrence said funds were included in the budget for a utility vehicle; however, the money is being used for EMS purposes. Kendall Chamberlin said it makes sense to have more EMS vehicles due to the volume of EMS calls. A smaller vehicle for EMS will save money on vehicle wear and tears. S. Jackson requested public comment, of which there was none. K. Chamberlin said further discussions should be had on Town spending for EMS services.

ANDY WATTS made a motion, seconded by MEG ZIMMERMAN, that the Selectboard authorize the Town Manager to execute the purchase of a 2026 Ford F150 4X4 Pickup Police Service Vehicle from McGovern Municipal HQ for a price of $49,356.00, and to use local vendors for the needed upfit equipment as listed in this memo, for a total added cost of approximately $23,000, and a total vehicle acquisition cost of $72,356.00 to be expensed from Capital Funds.

Discussion: K. Chamberlin noted that this purchase is below the budgeted cost.

The motion passed 4-1, with ETHAN LAWRNCE dissenting.

f. Consider approval of changes to Investment Policy (00:52:20)
Dan Roy said proposed changes to the Investment Policy will provide additional flexibility for specific non-FDIC insured investment opportunities. M. Zimmerman suggested having a limit to the amount of funds which could be placed into higher-risk investments. E. Lawrence said the current Selectboard cannot bind future Selectboards. Karen Adams suggested a percentage figure, rather than a specific dollar amount, be limited to this type of investment. D. Roy explained the ebbs and flows of the Town's financial investments. All non-FDIC insured investments are to come before the Selectboard for review. In public comment, L. Zaloom said the FDIC does not insure against fraud, which may not provide sufficient protection. D. Roy provided additional details on the steps the Town takes to spread out their financial risk. L. Zaloom asked for information regarding risk in non-FDIC insured investments, as well as internal controls regarding fraud prevention. D. Roy discussed online risk mitigation and internal controls. G. Duggan will discuss cybersecurity procedures for fraud prevention at a future meeting. L. Whitmore suggested that a potential state bank be listed as a priority for investments.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by MEG ZIMMERMAN, that the Selectboard approve changes to the Investment Policy as proposed.

Discussion: A. Watts asked if the potential state bank should be included in this policy, S. Jackson said it could be once it is established.

The motion passed 5-0.

g. Consider approval to accept new "typical" home value in Essex for informational purposes (01:14:30)
G. Duggan said the townwide re-appraisal is almost complete. Thus, figures for the "typical" home value can now be updated. The average home value in Essex is $538,305 and the median value is $516,900. Staff recommends rounding up from the median and using a "typical" home value of $520,000. E. Lawrence discussed his calculations and said he believes that a small number of mobile homes without land may be artificially bringing down the average. He believes the most accurate number for a "typical" home value is around $625,000. A. Watts said he believes the median is the more accurate figure to use. K. Chamberlin suggested the verbiage of "example home" rather than "typical home." A. Watts suggested that there be an easier way for homeowners to calculate the tax rate on their individual home value. In public comment, K. Signorello suggested utilizing the median value, as it is easy to understand. L. Zaloom asked if there would be an increase to the capital tax as well and asked that the needs of those who are on fixed incomes be taken into consideration. G. Duggan said the capital tax will increase as property values increase. B. Dunn said Essex is the only community in Vermont who has a capital tax and suggested that other funding mechanisms be used.

S. Jackson said it would be helpful to residents for the Selectboard to best define and be able to justify this figure. All agreed with using the median going forward.

h. Consider approval of fiscal year 2027 tax rates (01:45:14)
D. Roy said rate information has not changed since this was discussed on July 13, 2026. Approval will allow tax bills to be issued to residents. He discussed the impact of reappraisal on the amount of taxes paid by each property owner. In public comment, Dianne Swafford asked the Selectboard to consider how these tax rates will affect tenants, especially those on fixed incomes. L. Zaloom asked for clarification on the local agreement rate, which was given.

KENDALL CHAMBERLIN made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, that the Selectboard set the tax rates for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, as follows:

-General Fund Tax Rate: 0.4330
-Local Agreement Rate: 0.0017
-Capital Tax: 0.0500

Toal Municipal Tax Rate Paid by Taxpayers: 0.4847

The motion passed 5-0.

i. Consider approval of Resolution of Appreciation for Sharon Kelley (01:57:38)
G. Duggan said Sharon Kelley is retiring after nearly 32 years of service, and today was her last day. The Selectboard and G. Duggan lauded S. Kelley for her service to the Town of Essex. S. Jackson requested public comment, of which there was none.

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, that the Selectboard adopt a Resolution of Appreciation for Sharon Kelley, and asked the Clerk to read it into the record after passage. Motion passed 5-0.

M. Zimmerman read the Resolution in Appreciation of Sharon Kelley into the record:

WHEREAS, Sharon Kelley has faithfully and diligently served the Town of Essex in the Community Development office since 1994, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the community's orderly growth, public safety, and general welfare; and
WHEREAS, Sharon retired from the Town of Essex on August 3, 2026; and
WHEREAS, Sharon first served in the role as Administrative Assistant and Payroll Clerk from October 1994 to December 2007, as the Zoning Administrator from December 2007 to August 2026, and the Health Officer from January 2023 to August 2026, Sharon showed a mastery of intricate knowledge of complex local land use; and
WHEREAS, the role of the Zoning Administrator demands an intricate knowledge of complex local land use regulations, state statutes, and public processes, all of which Sharon has mastered and applied with absolute integrity, fairness, and professionalism; and
WHEREAS, Sharon has spent countless hours reviewing development proposals, issuing permits, conducting site visits, and ensuring consistent, objective enforcement of Town ordinances to protect the property rights of all residents; and
WHEREAS, Sharon has continuously gone above and beyond to patiently guide residents, local business owners, realtors, and builders through the zoning application process, providing exceptional public service with a helpful and welcoming attitude; and,
WHEREAS, Sharon has provided invaluable technical support, timely documentation, and expert guidance to the Selectboard, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Development Review Board ensuring the success of local governance; and,
WHEREAS, Sharon's professionalism, expertise, kindness, and collaborative spirit have left an indelible, positive mark on the physical layout and community character of the Town of Essex;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Selectboard the Town of Essex, Vermont, that:

The Town formally extends its highest praise, profound appreciation, and heartfelt gratitude to Sharon Kelley for her years of dedicated, exemplary, and honorable service as Zoning Administrator and Health Officer.

Adopted this 3rd day of August 2026 by the Essex Selectboard and Town Manager.

j. Discussion about the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee
Not discussed.

7. <u>READING FILE</u> (02:03:08)
a. Board member comments: K. Chamberlin discussed procedures for extending a meeting past 11 PM, noting that it must be unanimous. He asked if an individual member could choose to exit the meeting prior to voting. S. Jackson said this could be discussed later. S. Jackson said the next Coffee with Committees will be held this Saturday, August 8. National Night Out will be held on Tuesday, August 4. M. Zimmerman thanked Noah Detzer for his service on the Housing Commission. A. Watts said it is important to publicly thank those who serve on committees but choose not to re-apply, as there is currently no process currently in place for this.
b. Upcoming meeting schedule
c. Letter of resignation from Noah Detzer, Housing Commission
d. Investment Update for fourth quarter of fiscal year 2026
e. Humans Services Funding Thank You - Age Well
f. Budget goals for fiscal year 2028

8. <u>EXECUTIVE SESSION</u>

Discussion was had regarding the need for an Executive Session, the Selectboard ultimately decided not to hold one.

9. <u>ADJOURN</u> (02:06:35)

ETHAN LAWRENCE made a motion, seconded by ANDY WATTS, for the Selectboard to adjourn. Motion passed 4-1 at 8:36 PM, with KENDALL CHAMBERLIN dissenting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Darby Mayville
Recording Secretary