

Essex Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

August 6, 2026 – 8:00 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Town staff representative Tammy Gatchell called the meeting to order at approximately 8:10 a.m.

2. Reorganization and Election of Officers

The Commission conducted its annual reorganization and elected the following officers:

- **Chair:** Irene Renner
- **Vice Chair:** Anne Miller
- **Clerk:** Alistair Deakin

3. Agenda

The Commission discussed additions to the agenda, including adding **New Business** and providing an opportunity for **Member Comments** in future agendas.

The Commission also discussed placing outreach to newly established Essex businesses on a future agenda.

4. Approval of Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes of the June 4 and June 18, 2026 meetings. Corrections were noted, and the minutes were approved as corrected.

5. Meeting Schedule

The Commission reviewed its regular meeting schedule and agreed to continue:

- **Business meetings:** First Thursday of each month at 8:00 a.m.
- **Business outreach meetings:** Third Thursday of each month.

The Commission also discussed periodically inviting economic development partners and other organizations to provide updates at future meetings.

6. EDC Work Plan

Tammy Gatchell presented the EDC work plan and discussed the Town's approach to connecting committee activities to the broader Economic Development Strategic Plan and measurable performance indicators.

The Commission discussed several current and potential work-plan activities, including:

- Business outreach and retention;
- Transportation needs related to Saxon Hill;
- Development of a business map;
- Signage and zoning issues affecting businesses;
- Opportunities to identify individual EDC members to lead specific work-plan items; and
- Potential future EDC budget needs.

Members will review the Excel version of the work plan in preparation for further discussion and possible approval or modification at the next business meeting.

7. Business Development, Land Use, and Zoning

The Commission discussed economic development opportunities and the relationship between land use, zoning, and business growth.

Discussion included the value of encouraging a diverse range of commercial and employment-generating uses, opportunities to better connect businesses seeking space with available property, and the EDC's potential role in providing economic development perspectives to the Planning Commission and Selectboard during consideration of zoning changes.

The Commission also discussed signage requirements and other regulatory issues affecting local businesses.

8. Business Outreach

The Commission discussed ways to strengthen outreach to existing and newly established Essex businesses.

Members discussed continuing coordinated EDC business visits rather than dispersing outreach among individual members. The Commission identified **520 BBQ** as a potential location for its August business outreach visit, tentatively scheduled for **August 20**.

Alex will contact 520 BBQ regarding a potential visit.

The Commission also discussed the possibility of establishing a **Business Advisory Group** to provide regular input from local business owners and strengthen communication between the business community, Town staff, and the EDC. Tammy will explore the concept further, including a potential EDC role.

9. Upcoming Events and Opportunities

The Commission discussed several upcoming opportunities, including:

- The **Community Fall Festival**, scheduled for September 19 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the middle school;
- The **Vermont League of Cities and Towns Town Fair**, scheduled for October 7; and
- Workforce development initiatives, including the Workforce in Motion summit.

Interested EDC members may participate in the VLCT Town Fair, with Town staff assisting with registration.

10. Partner and Community Updates

The Commission discussed opportunities to receive periodic updates from regional economic development partners, including GBIC and other organizations.

Town staff will arrange a separate opportunity for an update from the Burlington-area industrial/economic development organization discussed at the meeting.

The Commission also discussed the Town's practice of holding periodic meetings between Selectboard members and committee chairs.

11. Reading File / Member Comments

Members received updates regarding materials in the reading file. Future agendas will include an opportunity for member comments.

The Commission expressed appreciation to Meadow Roast for hosting a previous EDC event.

12. Next Steps

Prior to the next regular business meeting:

- **Alex:** Contact 520 BBQ regarding an August 20 business outreach visit.
- **Tammy:** Circulate the Excel version of the EDC work plan.
- **EDC members:** Review the work plan and be prepared to discuss proposed changes and priorities.

- **Tammy:** Add outreach to new businesses to a future agenda.
- **Tammy:** Explore development of a Business Advisory Group and a possible EDC role.
- **Tammy:** Coordinate VLCT Town Fair registration for interested members.
- **Tammy:** Arrange an update from the regional economic development partner discussed at the meeting.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately [TIME].

Respectfully submitted,

Alistair Deakin

Clerk

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