

# 2024 City Council Orientation

Raj Chawla, Council President  
Regina Mahony, City Manager  
May 8, 2024





# Agenda

- Demographics & Comprehensive Plan
- Council-Manager Form of Government
- Council Authority
- Conflict of Interest and Ethical Conduct
- Manager Authority
- City Organization and Staffing
- Budget and Fiduciary Responsibility
- Priority Projects, Hiring & Events
- Resources, questions, and discussion!



# Essex Junction Demographics

Total Population	10,590
Median Age	39
Over 65	16.3%
Housing Units	4,789
Median Gross Rent	\$1,473
Median Household Income	\$92,589
BA or Higher	48.9%
Born Outside the US	15.3%
Language spoken at home	17.7% other than English

# Thoughtful Growth



Reclaim space for people to create a high-quality pedestrian experience.



## 2019 Comprehensive Plan

- 8-yr plan
- Done prior to separation
- Most content still relevant



Create a governance structure and shared vision for the Village and the Town that enhances the unique characteristics of each.



Continue to leverage the Village Center and Neighborhood Development designations to add diverse housing types and attract local businesses in these areas.

## Safety



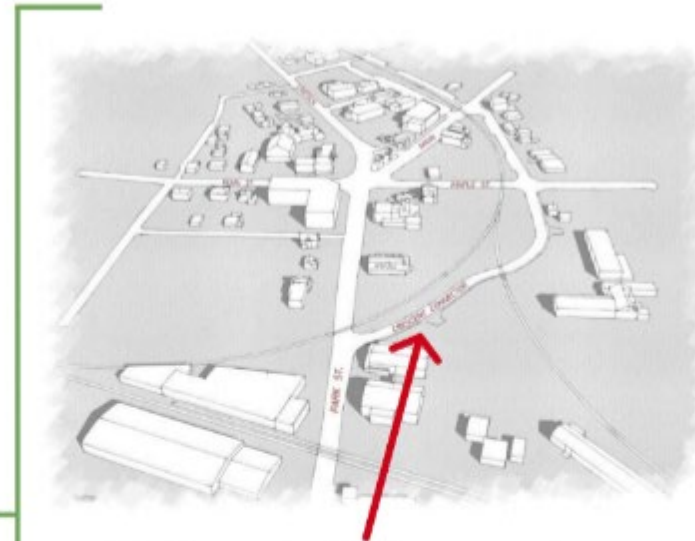
Calm traffic in the Village Center.



Proceed with Crescent Connector construction.



Improve access to and safety of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.



The **Connector Road** opens up six acres of underutilized land to development, while creating a way for traffic to avoid Five Corners. This road would improve traffic efficiency at Five Corners by 12%.

## Next steps:

1. Strategic Planning to help guide next steps now that we are a City
2. Annual Workplan/Strategic Planning Process

# 2019 Comprehensive Plan



The **Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan** defines a comprehensive long-range vision for the community. It contains general goals and policies that guide decisions about the physical development or redevelopment of the community, and community issues more broadly.

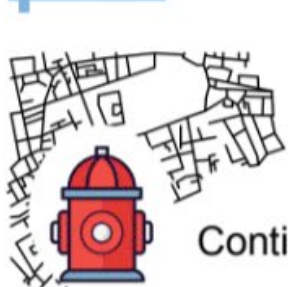
The following are highlights from the Plan, organized by **Heart and Soul** values to explain the breadth of issues this Plan addresses.



## Local Economy



Engage in policies to make progress on the transit-specific strategies in the Economic Development and Vision Plan including:



Continue to invest in public infrastructure and manage public assets in collaboration with the Town.



Regional multimodal improvements



Freight and commuter rail service expansion



Transit-oriented development



Work with the Town to implement the **Enhanced Energy Plan** to reduce energy consumption, generate more renewable energy, and reduce fossil fuel use in the heating, transportation and electricity sectors.

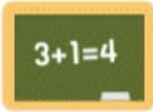
# 2019 Comprehensive Plan



## Education



Students are educated by a rigorous, well-balanced, proficiency-based curriculum to achieve reading and math fluency by the end of grade 3 and to graduate with the skills to be successful.



Strengthen early childhood education so children are ready to thrive in school and businesses have a robust workforce to support the local economy.



## Health & Recreation



Integrate substance use prevention into our culture by working with Essex CHIPS and the school district to ensure youth are receiving healthy messages where they live, learn, and play.



Offer programs and facilities to ensure residents of all ages and abilities have access to physical activity and healthy food choices.

# 2019 Comprehensive Plan



## Community Connections



Maintain and enhance a culture that values diversity and offers a welcoming spirit.



Participate in local government and volunteer to stay connected and ensure all voices are heard.

# Council-Manager Form of Government



## **Councilors** make up the City Council – the policy-setting board

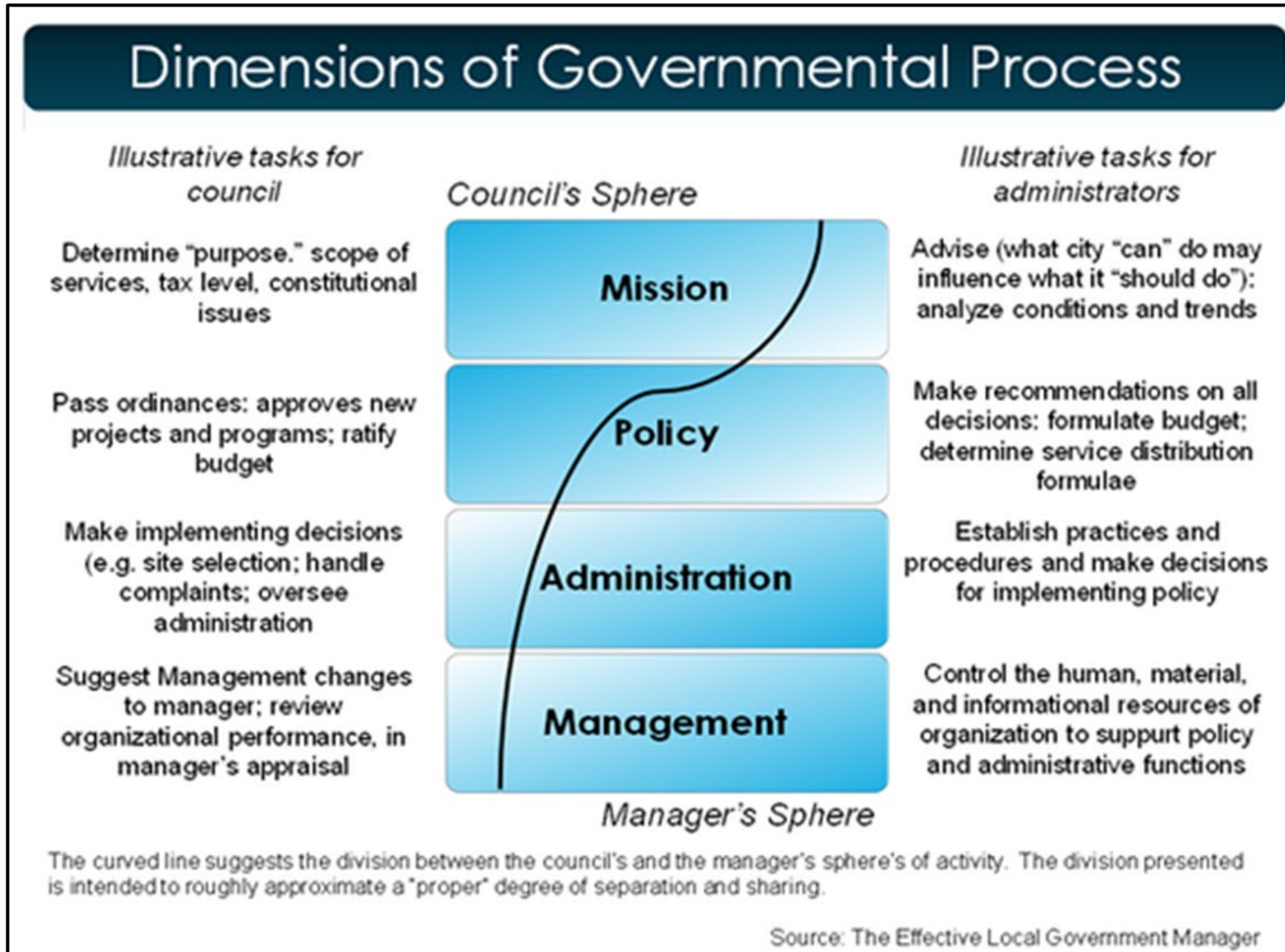
- As a group, set high-level priorities to provide direction to staff
- Make and change policy
- Oversee the big picture – budget, plans, property, and City Manager

## The **City Manager** is the Chief Administrative Officer - runs the City Operations

- Run day-to-day operations of the City
- Supervise and direct all staff
- Support Council in developing policy
- Implement and administer policy, budget, plans, and property



# Roles and Authority



# Council Authority



- Hire the City Manager
- Appoint City Attorney\*, City Clerk\*, Zoning Administrator
- Appoint residents to the DRB, Planning Commission and all other policy boards
- Serve as the Liquor Control Board, Local Cannabis Control Commission, Board of Health, and other Statutory requirements
- Make, amend, repeal ordinances
- Acquire, sell, lease property
- Provide for fiduciary oversight and approve budget to bring to the voters
- Provide an independent audit
- Convene public forums

\* Manager recommends, Council approves (City Charter 602 (d) and (o))

# Council Rules of Procedure



- Annually Council elects a president, vice president, and clerk
- The president runs the meetings
- A quorum of the Council is 3
- All action/direction of the Council is done by affirmative vote
- Follow the 2023 Communication Policy: “Formal positions of the City Council, or calls or questions seeking the official opinion of the City Council, should be referred to the City Council President unless another Councilor has been designated by the body or to the City Manager. If a resident communicates with the entire City Council, the Council President should respond on behalf of the Council.”
- President and Manager set the agenda. Councilors can request items by the Wednesday prior.
- Agenda Outline
  - Public to Be Heard
  - Business Items
  - Consent Agenda
  - Councilor Comments & Concerns/City Manager’s Report
  - Reading File
  - Executive Session (if needed)

Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays at 6:30 PM

# Boards and Committees



## Specified in Charter

- Planning Commission
- Development Review Board
- Board of Abatement
- Board of Civil Authority
- Library Board of Trustees

## Regional Organizations with City Representation

- Chittenden County Communications Union District
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Chittenden Solid Waste District
- Green Mountain Transit
- Town Meeting TV
- Winooski Valley Parks District
- Champlain Water District (Town Rep)
- Tree Farm Management Group

## Policy Committees of Council

- Bike/Walk Advisory Committee
- Tree Advisory Committee
- Capital Program Review Committee
- Police Community Advisory Board
- Tri-Town Sewer Committee
- Housing Commission – *currently inactive*

## Possible Future Policy Committees of the Council – *need to prioritize after Strategic Plan process*

- Energy Committee
- Downtown Committee
- Economic Development Committee
- Rec Advisory Committee
- Governance Committee – required in Charter
- Project-Based Committees (similar to 1 Main St. Park Design)
- Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee
- Community Engagement Committee

# Transparency



*Goals are that the public trust in its officers is preserved and ensure that all decisions made by public officers are based on the best interests of the municipality.*

- All (but executive session) communication by a Council member discussing City business is considered public
- Use your @essexjunction.org email to conduct City business
- Meetings must be warned with minutes produced
- Avoid instances where 3 or more Council members are present **and** discussing current or future items before the Council
- Information can be shared via email, but debate must take place in public setting. Careful of “reply all.”
- Executive session content and items marked confidential must be kept private.
  - Do not forward confidential emails
  - Do not talk about Executive session outside of Executive Session

# Ethics and Conflict of Interest



- The City of Essex Junction Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy was approved on May 11, 2022; effective on July 1, 2022. This is attached will be reviewed annually by way of this presentation.
- This Policy is adopted pursuant to requirements of Vermont Statutes (24 V.S.A. §2291(20) and 24 V.S.A. §1984).
- Policy Statement: To maintain the public trust that is critical to the continued operation of the municipality. There are five principles to which public officers and employees shall adhere to:
  - represent and work towards the public interest rather than private/personal interests.
  - accept and maintain the public trust.
  - exercise leadership, particularly in the form of consistently demonstrating behavior that reflects the public trust.
  - recognize the proper role of all government bodies and the relationships between the various government bodies.
  - always demonstrate respect for others and for other positions.

# Ethics and Conflict of Interest



## What is a conflict of Interest?

A real or seeming incompatibility between a public officer's or employee's private interests and their public or fiduciary interests to the municipality they serve. A conflict of interest arises when there is a direct or indirect personal or financial interest of a public officer/employee or a person or group closely tied with the public officer/employee

a. A direct financial conflict of interest arises when a public officer/employee acts on a matter that has a direct financial impact on that public officer/employee, including but limited to the following:

i. Financial interest in the sale to the City of any property when such financial interest was received with prior knowledge that the City intended to purchase the property.

ii. Contractual arrangements with the City in which the public officer or employee has a financial interest.

b. An indirect financial conflict of interest arises when a public officer/employee acts on a financial matter that impacts a person or group closely tied to the public officer/employee.

c. A direct personal conflict of interest arises when a public officer/employee acts on a matter that has a direct impact on the public officer/employee in a non-financial way but is of significant importance to the public officer/employee.

d. An indirect personal conflict of interest arises when a public officer/employee acts on a matter in which the public officer's/employee's judgment may be affected because of a familial or personal relationship or membership in some organization and a desire to help that person or organization further its own interests.

# Ethics and Conflict of Interest



What is a conflict of Interest? *continued*

A situation where a public officer has publicly displayed a prejudgment of the merits of a particular quasi-judicial proceeding.

A situation where a public officer has not disclosed ex parte communication(s) related to a quasi-judicial proceeding that is before the public body to which that public officer belongs.

- What is not a conflict of Interest? It is not a conflict of interest if your interest is no greater than that of other persons generally affected by the decision



# Ethics and Conflict of Interest



The policy identifies “Prohibited Conduct”

- A public officer/employee shall not participate in any official act or action or conduct if they have a conflict of interest, whether real or perceived...five specific situations listed.
- A public officer shall not personally – or through any member of their household, business associate, employer, or employee – represent, appear for, or negotiate in a private capacity on behalf of any person or organization that has an interest in an official act or action pending before the public body in which the public officer holds office.
- A public officer/employee shall not accept gifts or other offerings for personal gain by virtue of their public office/employee that are not available to the public in general. [permissible gifts are listed]
- A public officer will not request or accept any reward, gift, or favor for taking an official act or action or advocating for or against an official act or action.
- A public officer/employee shall not use resources unavailable to the general public – including but not limited to municipal staff time, equipment, supplies, or facilities – for private gain or personal purposes.
- A public officer who is a member of a public body shall not give the impression that they have the authority to make decisions or take actions on behalf of that body.



# Ethics and Conflict of Interest

- What to do if you have a conflict of interest?
  - Disclose:
    - The public official shall disclose, in an open public meeting, the nature of the actual or perceived conflict of interest, prior to any consideration of the matter.
    - Once there has been a disclosure of an actual or perceived conflict of interest, other public officers shall be afforded an opportunity to ask questions or make comments about the situation.
  - Recusal:
    - A public officer shall declare whether they will recuse him or herself and explain the basis for that decision. If the public officer has a conflict of interest but believes that they are able to act fairly, objectively, and in the public interest they shall state why they believe that. Otherwise, the public officer shall recuse him or herself from the matter under consideration.
    - The failure of an appointed public officer to recuse themselves in spite of a conflict of interest, whether real or perceived, may be grounds for discipline or removal from office.
- If you are recused:
  - You cannot sit with, deliberate with, or participate in discussions with the public body as a public officer
  - However, such member may still participate as a member of the public or private party, if applicable

# Manager Authority



- Serves as the Chief Administrative Officer
- Prepare the annual budgets and administer them
- Oversee all ordinance enforcement, collection of funds, and expenditure of funds
- Serve as the Personnel Director and hire, manage, and fire (if needed) staff; including appointment of Treasurer (Charter 602(b))
- Regularly report to the Council on finances and operations
- Attend and participate in all Council meetings
- **Serves as the Councilors' primary support**

# Communicating with Staff



- Questions and requests should be directed to the Manager
- To the extent that general questions or history is requested, it will be shared with the full Council
- Councilors are encouraged to:
  - Attend facility tours with Department Heads and the Manager
  - Reach out to staff before meetings with questions and to understand more about an issue or item on the agenda.
- The Manager must be cc'ed on all correspondence between staff and Councilors
- Direct constituents to the City Manager when asked about an operational issue
- Emergency Situations
  - The City Manager or Acting City Manager will attempt to keep the council informed
  - During emerging events, the focus must be on the event and public safety. In these instances, it's best to speak with one voice (Manager, Chief, Council President)

# Staff Authority Directed by State Statute



**Zoning Administrator:** Must adhere to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 17 and enforce the Land Development Regulations.

**Police Chief:** Must adhere to 24 V.S.A Chapter 55 and enforce all local and state laws.

**Fire Department:** Must adhere to V.S.A. relevant to a variety of building trades and fire safety protocols.

**City Clerk:** Must adhere to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 35 and administer all elections and recording as prescribed.

# City of Essex Junction

## Organization chart

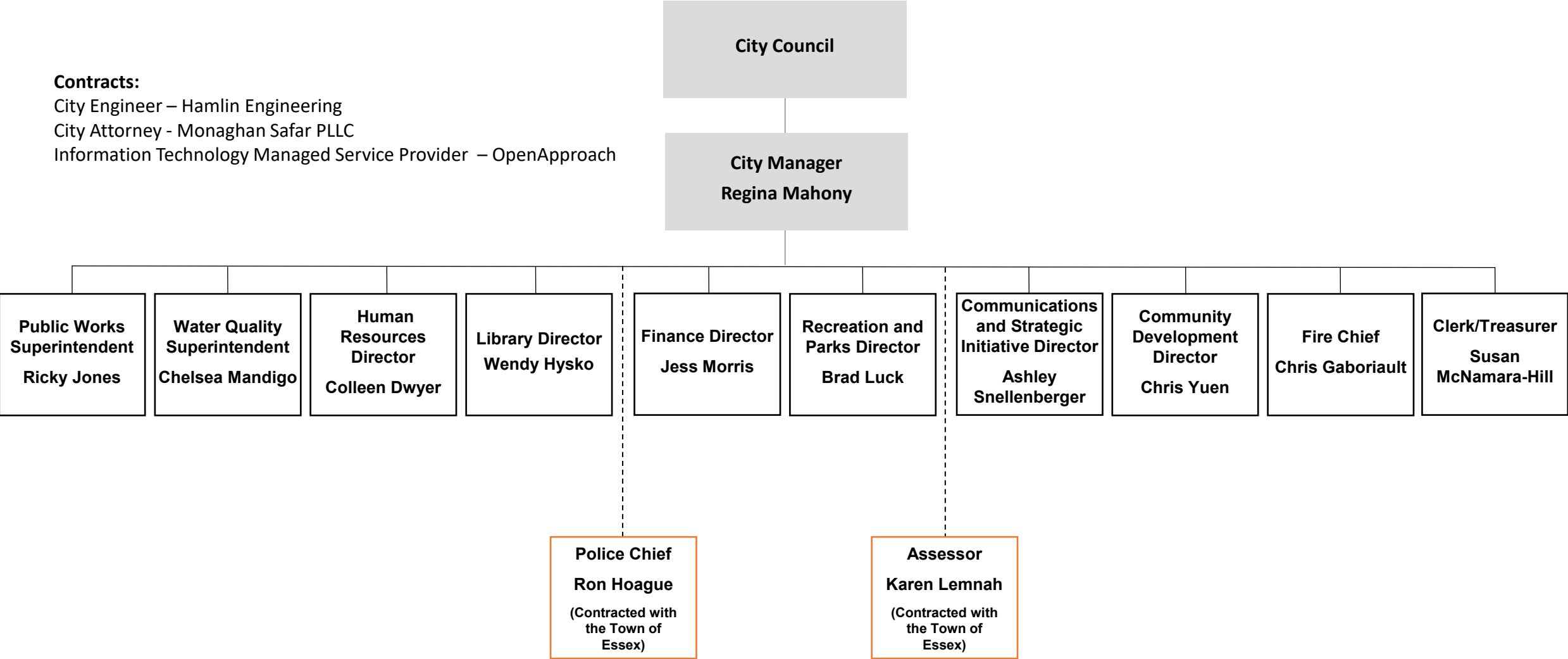


**Contracts:**

City Engineer – Hamlin Engineering

City Attorney - Monaghan Safar PLLC

Information Technology Managed Service Provider – OpenApproach



# Facilities



- 2 Lincoln
- Brownell Library
- Fire Department
- Maple Street Park and Facilities
- Park Street School
- Department of Public Works Garage
- Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Fire Station

- Parks
  - Maple Street Park
  - Maple Street Pool
  - Cascade Park
  - Stevens Park
  - Essex Dog Park\*
  - 1 Main St. Park



# FY 25 Budget: Summary General Fund

FY24 Budget	FY25 Budget	\$ Change from FY24	% Change from FY24
\$11,421,171	\$12,004,124	\$582,953	5%

## Estimated Tax impact

FY24 Rate	FY25 Rate	\$ Change	% Change
\$0.9199	\$0.9807	\$0.0608	6.6%

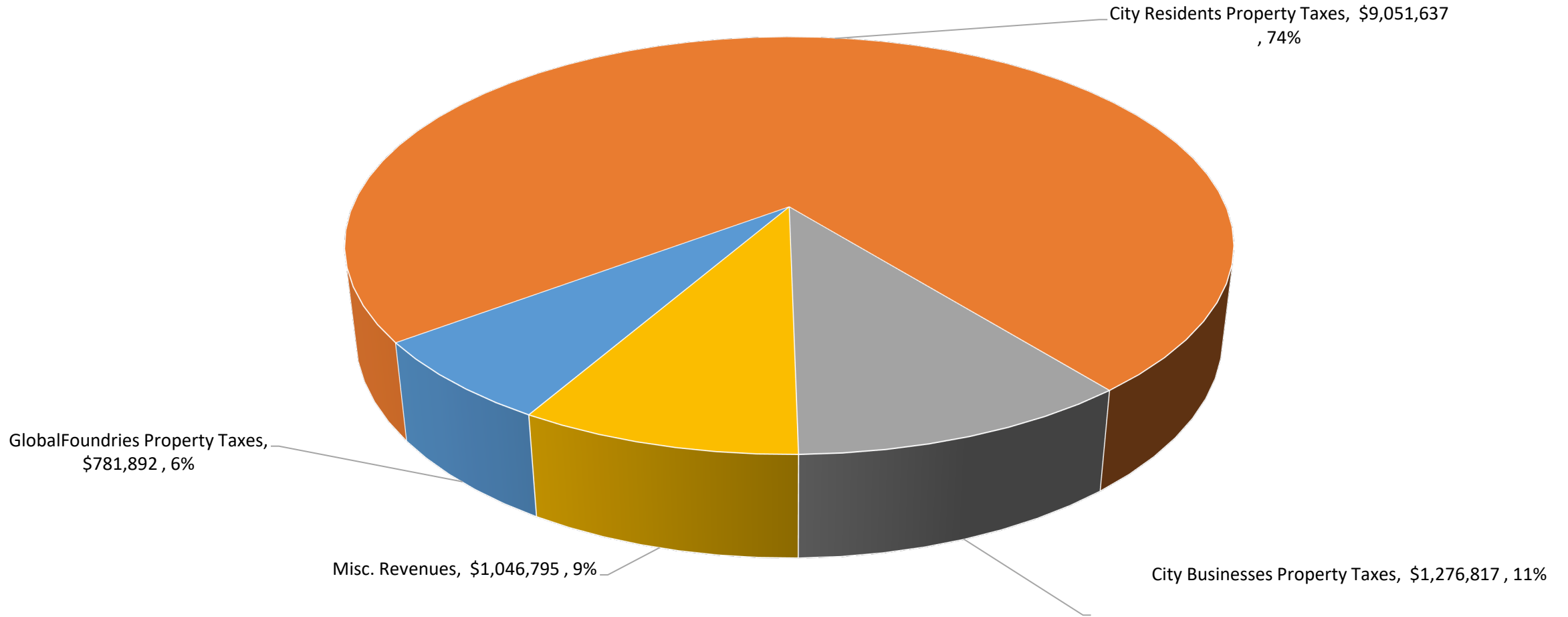
Estimated tax increase to a \$280,000 City property is \$170



# FY25 Budget: Revenues



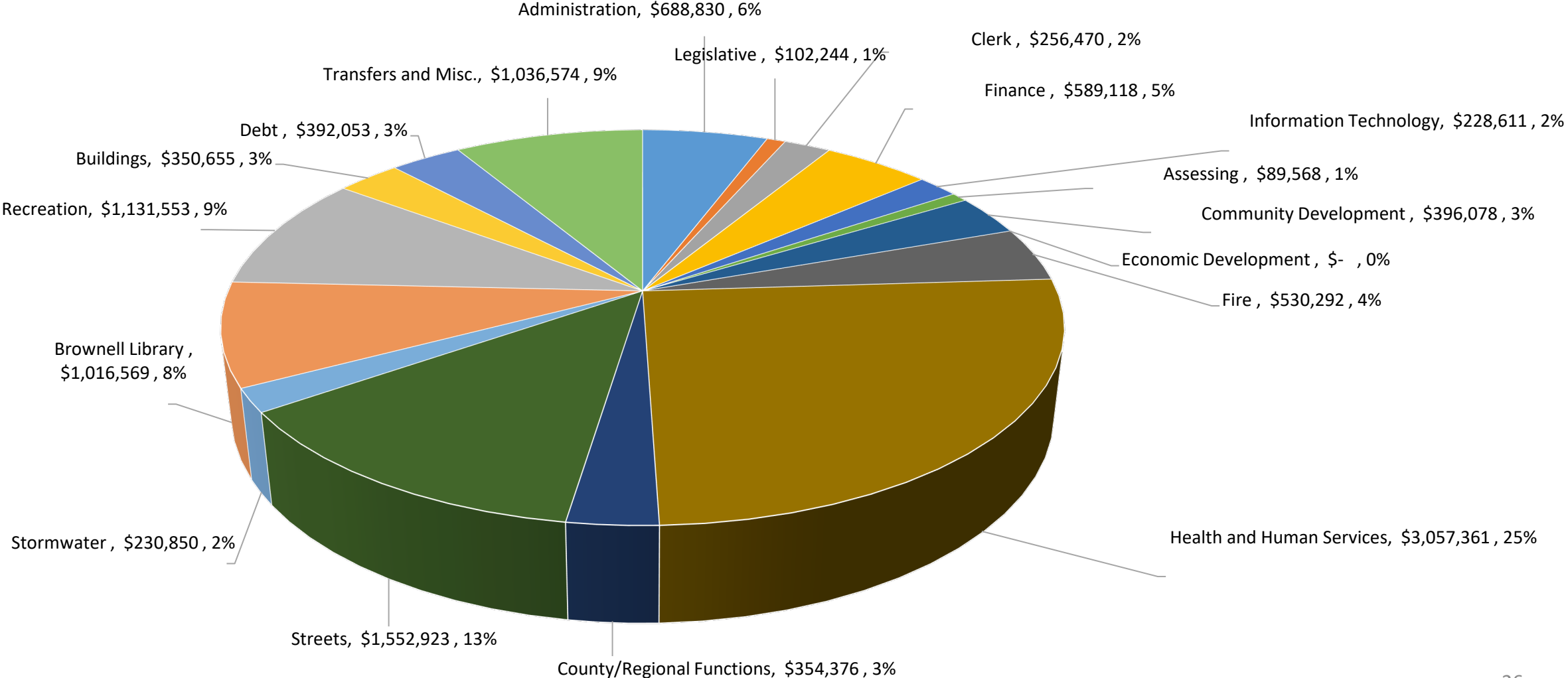
FY25 Proposed General Fund Revenues



# FY25 Budget: Expenditures



FY25 Proposed General Fund Expenditures



# Purchasing



Purchases	Type	Purchasing Agent
<\$500	incidental	all staff
\$501 - \$2,000	Routine	Designated purchasing agents by Dept Head
\$2,001 - \$5,000	Minor	Designated purchasing agents by Dept Head - 3 Quotes required
\$5,001-\$10,000	Moderate	Designated purchasing agents by Dept Head - 3 Quotes required
\$10,001-\$40,000	Large	City Manager or delegation to Dept Head - 3 Quotes required
>\$40,000	Major	City Council

Competitive Bidding	
	Standardized competitive bid format required; or use of prequalified vendor or exceptions: competitive proposals, sole source purchase, recurring purchases, maintenance, repair, or emergency purchase
>\$40,000	
>\$250,000	Optional prequalification for single project
Sole Source	
<\$40,000	Awarded by Unified Manager
>\$40,000	Awarded by City Council
>\$150,000	Funded in accordance with Grant Terms

Grants need Council approval if there is a financial obligation; approved by City Manager if no financial obligation.

**Resource: Purchasing Policy – Effective Date 10/11/2018**

# Priority Projects (a selection)



- 2 Lincoln Renovation
- Strategic Planning Initiative
- Construction Projects
  - Crescent Connector
  - Main Street Waterline
- Ordinance Enforcement
- Amtrak Multi-modal Station
- Stormwater Utility
- WWTF – 10-year assessment
- Governance Committee – 3 years from City Charter approval
- Salary Study and negotiation of Association Contract
- Future facility needs: Public Works, Fire and Recreation
- How can we be a more equitable and inclusive community?
- Library Roof
- Transit Oriented Design Project
- Support community, regional and state housing needs: Land Development Code amendments, Rental Registry analysis, Housing Commission – Inclusionary Zoning & Housing Trust Fund

# Hiring:



- City Planner
- Equipment Operator/Maintenance Technician
- Licensed Afterschool Program Assistant Coordinator
- Licensed Afterschool Program Site Coordinator
- Preschool Assistant Teacher
- Program Director-Older Adults
- Seasonal Stormwater Technician Intern
- Seasonal Water Resource Recovery Operator Intern

<https://cityofessexjunction.applytojob.com/apply>

# Upcoming Events



- Memorial Day Parade
  - Saturday, May 25, 2024
  - 9:30 AM - Pre-parade program at 5 corners
  - 10:00 AM - Parade begins
  - Parade Route: From St. James Church, Route 2A to 5 Corners, up Pearl Street to the main entrance at Champlain Valley Exposition
- Community Fair at the Library
  - Saturday, June 15, from 2-4 pm
- Renovations at 2 Lincoln
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July



# Resources

- [City Charter](#)
- Ethics and Conflict of Interest
- [Purchasing Policy](#)
- [Budget](#)
- [Ordinances](#)
- [City and Town Agreements](#)

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Regina Mahony, City Manager – [rmahony@essexjunction.org](mailto:rmahony@essexjunction.org)