



**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

Online & 145 Maple St.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Wednesday, October 30, 2024
6:30 PM

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This meeting will be in-person in the Community Room of the Essex Police Department located at 145 Maple Street and available remotely. Options to watch or join the meeting remotely:

- **WATCH:** the meeting will be live streamed on [Town Meeting TV](#)
- **JOIN ONLINE:** [Join Zoom Meeting](#)
- **JOIN CALLING:** (toll free audio only): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 944 6429 7825; Passcode: 635787

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [6:30 PM]
2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**
3. **APPROVE AGENDA**
4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
 - a. Comments from the Public
5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - a. Rec Advisory Committee Interviews
 - b. Annual Presentation by the Tree Farm Management Group
 - c. Annual Essex Rescue Presentation
 - d. Department Head Brief to Council, Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent
 - e. Discussion and Consideration of Stormwater Related Ordinances – Amendments to Ordinance 19 (Stormwater Permit Transfer), New Ordinance 20 (Stormwater Management) and New Ordinance 21 (Stormwater Utility): Introduction and Warn Public Hearing
 - f. Discussion and Consideration of Amendments to Ordinance 8 Regulations of Motor Vehicles: Introduction and Warn Public Hearing
 - g. *Discussion and Consideration of an Executive Session to discuss a Contract
6. **CONSENT ITEMS**
 - a. Approve Meeting Minutes: October 9, 2024
 - b. Approve Main St. park Design Change in Scope
 - c. Capital Plan amendment for Pickup Truck for Water Department
7. **COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT**
8. **READING FILE**
 - a. Check Warrant # 25047 10/18/24
 - b. Land Development Code Amendment Written Report – just information as the Planning Commission Public Hearing is 11/7/24
 - c. Stormwater Utility Bill Insert
 - d. CVE Sound Reports
 - e. Planning Commission Minutes 10/10/24
9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 - a. An Executive Session may be needed to discuss a contract
10. **ADJOURN**

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL
MEETING AGENDA – October 30, 2024**

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public to Be Heard agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the President, during consideration of a specific agenda item. The public will not be permitted to participate when a motion is being discussed except when specifically requested by the President. Regarding zoom participants, if individuals interrupt, they will be muted; and if they interrupt a second time they will be removed. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of the City Council, like all programs and activities of the City of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the City Manager's office at 802-878-6944 TTY: 7-1-1 or (800) 253-0191.

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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 30, 2024**

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Raj Chawla, President; Amber Thibeault; Vice President; Tim Miller, Clerk; Marcus Certa, Elaine Haney.

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent;

OTHERS PRESENT: Colleen Ballard, Cora Delucia, Sven Ekloff, Maria Godleski. Dennis Thibeault, Resa.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

City Council President Chawla called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

None needed.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from public on items not on the agenda

None.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Rec Advisory Committee Interviews

The City Council interviewed Cora Delucia for a seat on the Recreation Advisory Committee (RAC). The candidate introduced herself and spoke about her interest in serving the community on the RAC. The Council asked her about her experience in the parks and what her favorite parts of the parks are. Ms. Delucia replied that she largely uses the parks for running and uses Stevens Park and Maple Street Park. She said she has been surprised that not very many people use the parks, and would like to increase community awareness of these amenities. She spoke about ways to increase community engagement and awareness of Essex Junction events and amenities. City Council President Chawla noted that this is the first of two interview sessions for seats on the RAC, but that candidates will be outreached once decisions are made.

b. Annual Presentation by the Tree Farm Management Group

Sven Eklof, President of the Tree Farm Management Group, began by introducing the members of the Tree Farm Management Board, noting that 6 of the 11 members are residents of Essex Junction. He spoke about what the Tree Farm Group does, including hosting a number of soccer and rugby leagues. He spoke about the past year's highlights, which included 2,500 hours of rental time, revenue of \$208,000, the hosting of five large tournaments (including frisbee, lacrosse, and football tournaments, in addition to soccer and rugby). He noted that 80% of field rentals are for children's sports, but that adult rentals are increasing. He spoke about a focus on reinvesting in the facility through improving and maintaining field conditions and field rotation, improving the portalet conditions, and improving grounds maintenance. He spoke about diversifying the activities at the Tree Farm. He noted that one goal for this year was to reduce costs, which they have been successful at and anticipate continued reduced costs in out years. He noted that all deadlines for the Town and Junction have been met, except for the attainment of non-profit status, but they are working diligently to obtain this status. He spoke about continuing to improve road conditions, especially after rain events, and spoke about improving relations with neighbors in terms of the road and parking.

55 Giles Willey spoke about the financial highlights for the Tree Farm Group this past year. He noted that this
56 past year had the highest income it's ever seen (which will come in at about \$216,000). He noted a 3%
57 increase in fees, which is in line with inflation. He said that he believes revenue will likely peak at around
58 \$220,000 annually for the facility, meaning that they will need to be very diligent about managing their
59 expenses. He noted that they had high expenses in 2022 and 2023, between field maintenance, dealing with
60 back taxes, and hiring a legal firm to help obtain non-profit status. He said they anticipate more modest
61 spending over the next year, as well as higher reserves from increased revenue.
62

63 Mr. Eklof concluded by speaking about Tree Farm Management Group's plans for 2025. He said they would
64 like to pursue having a seat on the board for someone from the school, given the school's active use of the
65 facilities. He said they are also focusing on improving the road and parking lot. He also spoke about bringing
66 all leagues into equal pay arrangements beginning in 2025, as well as having a more modest fee increase.
67 He noted that they are balancing increasing fees and rates with demand, to ensure that the facility remains
68 competitive in the market. He also said he would like to put together a capital project plan.
69

70 City Council President Chawla asked what alternatives to the Tree Farm facilities groups or tournaments
71 would have, if fees were increased too much. Mr. Eklof replied that there is the worry that increasing rates
72 too much would lead to fewer people (primarily kids) going outside and enjoying these activities. They also
73 spoke about potentially making the facility more competitive by converting the fields into turf, but
74 acknowledged that this is costly.
75

76 c. Annual Essex Rescue Presentation

77 Colleen Ballard, Executive Director of Essex Rescue, presented on this item. She began by noting that Essex
78 Rescue is asking to increase the contribution from municipal partners to 5.5%. She noted that last year's
79 increase of 3% did not quite cover the inflation increase for staff, and that a 5.5% increase will help offset
80 costs from inflation and growth in call volume. She noted that overall call volume has increased 30% in the
81 last 4 years. She said that Essex Rescue is generally in good financial health, though it is not immune to the
82 staffing issues facing most organizations currently. She noted an increase in per diem and part-time
83 personnel to try and staff a second ambulance, though the reliability of these staff (who often work multiple
84 EMS jobs) is tenuous. She noted several unanticipated capital expenses during the last year, including a
85 replacement HVAC system.
86

87 Councilor Haney asked if Essex Rescue will still offer a subscription plan, and Ms. Ballard replied that yes, it
88 will be offered with a \$5 increased cost (to \$55 in total). She noted that they did not want to increase the
89 amount too much, as this could present access issues to those on fixed incomes. Councilor Haney asked if
90 they could implement a sliding scale pricing model for the subscription, and Ms. Ballard replied that they
91 could, but that the management would be administratively burdensome and they lack staff capacity to do so.
92

93 City Council President Chawla asked about subscription utilization statistics. Ms. Ballard replied that around
94 9.6% of subscribers on average have been utilizing services. She noted that Essex Rescue is writing off
95 about \$400,000 between transports and non-transporters that is not reimbursable. City Council President
96 Chawla asked whether the State is providing any financial relief to EMS providers. Ms. Ballard replied that
97 the State put aside funding for training and work with the Ambulance Association. She also spoke about a
98 report on Vermont's health system that was funded through Act 167, and that one recommendation in that
99 report to improve the system and curb health care costs is to strengthen the state's EMS infrastructure. She
100 said that a number of EMS providers met with the State to discuss this recommendation and potential
101 strategies, including regionalization and community paramedicine.
102

103 Councilor Miller noted that the number of Essex Rescue's calls fielded for Essex Junction in 2023 was 1,187,
104 and asked how many of those Essex Rescue was able to field, and how many were answered by mutual aid
105 from neighboring municipalities. Ms. Ballard replied that in total there are around 400-500 calls annually
106 where outside ambulances are coming in.
107

108 Councilor Certa asked for details on how Essex Rescue staffs its ambulances. Ms. Ballard spoke about the
109 use of basic EMTs as crew leaders or chiefs, instead of only using paramedics or AEMTs in this role, to try

and staff more efficiently. Councilor Certa asked for details about volunteering and available training for EMS providers, and Ms. Ballard provided a summary of the training and certifications for EMT basics and AEMTs/paramedics, noting the education/training pipeline is between 1.5-2 years.

d. Department Head Brief to Council, Chelsea Mandigo, Water Quality Superintendent
 Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo provided a highlight of successes, challenges, and future work for the Wastewater, Stormwater, and Sanitation divisions that she oversees. She noted that the Wastewater division is almost fully staffed and is proud of that, and noted that a challenge for Wastewater has been the issues the digester has been having. She noted continued work on the Pe-phlo project, through a state grant. She noted that one challenge around Stormwater has been getting the utility set up, and said that once it is, they can hire someone to oversee that full time. She noted Stormwater challenges around failed outlets. She noted that the biggest hurdle for Sanitation is aging infrastructure. She spoke about future activities for each division. She noted that for Wastewater they are completing a ten-year evaluation of the facility to develop capital and upgrade project lists and applying for recertification for a land application program for biosolids. She noted that for Stormwater, the main focus has been on setting up a stormwater utility. She noted that for Sanitation, the division is working on a Sewer Use Ordinance and drafting/adopting a Sewer Allocation Policy, as well as working to bring final design forward for the three pump station replacements and working on identifying sources of infiltration and inflow in the collection system.

Councilor Certa asked if the stormwater utility charges will be another line item in the water/sewer bill or whether it will be a separate bill for rate-payers. Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo replied that it will be included as a charge for existing accounts, but properties without water/sewer bills will receive a separate stormwater utility bill.

Councilor Miller asked about current remaining capacity and future sanitation capacity. Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo replied that from a flow perspective, the City is at about 2 million gallons in a system designed for about 3 million gallons, but in terms of treatment, the City is approaching 75% capacity. She noted tri-town work on a high-strength waste policy to help create more headroom within existing capacity.

e. Discussion and Consideration of Stormwater-related Ordinances – Amendments to Ordinance 19 (Stormwater Permit Transfer), New Ordinance 20 (Stormwater Management) and New Ordinance 21 (Stormwater Utility): Introduction and Warn Public Hearing

Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo said that in order to form a stormwater utility, the City needs to have ordinances to codify and govern the utility. She noted the creation of Chapter 20 in the municipal code for stormwater management. She noted that they are proposing amendments to Chapter 19 of the code to reference the City’s stormwater ordinance rather than the Town’s ordinance. She also noted that they needed to establish a stormwater credit manual for fees for non-single-family parcels, which is proposed the Chapter 21. She asked that the City Council warn these drafts for a public hearing in November.

Councilor Haney asked what the single-family residences will be paying, and Water Quality Superintendent Mandigo replied that the FY25 annual rate is \$72.69, which will be split between three bills from FY26 onward.

City Council President Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa, that the City Council warn a public hearing on November 13, 2024 to discuss the adoption of a credit manual and the addition and amendment of chapters to the Municipal Code for the regulation of stormwater management utility and permit transfer authority. The motion passed 5-0.

f. Discussion and Consideration of Amendments to Ordinance 8 Regulations of Motor Vehicles: Introduction and Warn Public Hearing

City Manager Mahony said that Chapter 8 regulates where the City has stop signs, one-way streets, streets with parking, streets without parking, and a variety of other detail necessary for the Police Department to enforce the City’s ordinances. She noted that this proposed amendment includes technical changes to accommodate an adjustment to traffic patterns from Global Foundries from River Street to Park Street, as well as the new traffic lights and traffic pattern changes related to the Crescent Connector project.

City Council President Chawla asked if the fee associated with violations has been updated, and also asked how this fee compares to that of Burlington. City Manager Mahony replied that this fee is consistent statewide. Councilor Haney noted that several streets are not listed in this ordinance, and City Manager Mahony said she will look into this and have them added. Councilor Miller asked that the diagonal spots off Iroquois Avenue be included in the limited parking list. City Manager Mahony replied that a better approach may be to holistically look at the City’s parking management strategy as a whole.

City Council President Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa, that the City Council warn a public hearing on November 13, 2024 at 6:30pm to receive comment on changes to Essex Junction Municipal Ordinance Chapter 8: An Ordinance Relating to Motor Vehicle Regulations as presented, and with any edits as discussed. The motion passed 5-0.

g. *Discussion and Consideration of Executive Session to discuss a Contract
See item #9a below.

6. CONSENT ITEMS

- a. Approve Meeting Minutes: October 9, 2024
- b. Approve Main St. Park Design Change in Scope
- c. Capital Plan amendment for Pickup Truck for Water Department

Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by City Council President Chawla, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.

7. COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:

City Manager Mahony thanked all who attended and participated in the Pumpkin-palooza event. She also noted that the City has begun land application of biosolids at Whitcomb Farm this week. She thanked the Police Department for lending their space for City Council meetings through the duration of renovations at 2 Lincoln Street. Councilor Certa thanked EJRP and other staff for putting on the Pumpkin-palooza event. He also noted that he will be holding a Coffee with a Councilor event on November 16th, for any interested members of the public. City Council President Chawla also spoke about the success of the Pumpkin-palooza event.

8. READING FILE

- a. Check Warrant #25047 10/18/2024
- b. Land Development Code Amendment Written Report – just information as the Planning Commission Public Hearing is 11/7/24
- c. Stormwater Utility Bill Insert
- d. CVE Sound Reports
- e. Planning Commission Minutes 10/10/24

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. *An Executive Session may be needed to discuss a Contract

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by City Council President Chawla that the City Council make the specific finding that premature disclosure of the contractual matters would place the city at a substantial disadvantage. The motion passed 5-0.

Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by City Council President Chawla, that the City Council enter into executive session to discuss a contract, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A) to include the City Council and City Manager. The motion passed 5-0.

City Council President Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to exit executive session. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:43 P.M.

10. ADJOURN

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**City Council President Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa, to adjourn the meeting.
The motion passed 5-0 at 8:43 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt