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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 3, 2025**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Paul Courtois, Essex Police Lieutenant;
Tyler Depasquale, Essex Police Officer; Isabel Lardner, Animal Control
Officer; Elle Lenzini, Animal Control Officer; John Rowell, Health Officer,
Ashley Snellenberger, Communication & Strategic Initiatives Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Tiena Flores, David F., Jim Waite, Isaiah Williams

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

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

2. **AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

City Manager Mahony requesting reversing the agenda order so that #6a is #5a, and vice-versa.

3. **APPROVE AGENDA**

City Council President Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to switch the order of #5a and #6a on the agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

4. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

a. Comments from Public

None.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Re-warn the Land Development Code Amendment Public Hearing from 2/12/25 to 2/26/25

Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by City Council President Chawla, that the City Council re-warn a public hearing for the Land Development Code amendments as discussed on January 22, 2025 from February 12, 2025 to February 26, 2025, so that proper notice requirements can be met. The motion passed 5-0.

6. **PUBLIC HEARING**

a. *Potentially Vicious Dog Bite Hearing

City Council President Chawla noted that this comes as a request from Essex Police Lieutenant Paul Courtois regarding Isaiah Williams and his dog Kanin. He noted that Kanin has recorded four bites with the Essex Police Department, on August 22, 2024, October 27, 2024, December 8, 2024, and January 12, 2025, and further noted that Kanin is not registered with the City of Essex, nor has had rabies shots since August, 2023. He noted that as of January 15, 2025, Mr. Williams has not had the dog vaccinated nor registered, though he had been instructed to do so. City Council President Chawla then swore in the witnesses who will give testimony during tonight's hearing. Councilor Thibeault noted a conflict of interest and recused herself from tonight's proceedings.

Essex Police Officer Depasquale provided a summary of the complaints received to date from 51 Main Street, Unit 1 (Mr. Williams' place of residence), based on the collection of police reports received since August. He spoke about the August 22, 2024 incidents, where complaints were received about a dog

54 being off leash who had chased an individual, and a complaint was lodged in which an individual was
55 bitten three times by an aggressive dog near 53 Main Street, for which she later sought medical
56 attention. He read a statement from the individual about this experience. He spoke about an incident on
57 September 29, 2024, where an individual with a leashed dog was walking by 51 Main Street and they
58 were charged at by a large, unleashed dog. He noted that an officer advised Mr. Williams to keep his
59 dog leashed while outside. He spoke about an incident on October 27, 2024, where an officer was bitten
60 by the dog at 51 Main Street while responding to a domestic disturbance in the residence, and that the
61 officer received medical treatment for the bite after the incident. He spoke about an incident on
62 December 8, 2024, where a dog bite victim was treated at the University of Vermont Medical Center,
63 which notified the City of Essex Junction that the dog bite was from a violent dog housed at 51 Main
64 Street, Essex Junction. He spoke about an incident on January 4, 2025 of a complaint received from a
65 resident of 53 Main Street who was cornered by a vicious dog from 51 Main Street while she was trying
66 to take out her trash. He spoke about an incident on January 12, 2025 where the Police Department
67 and Essex Rescue responded to a dog bite complaint at 51 Main Street from an individual visitor who
68 was bitten inside the unit while trying to replace the unit's smoke detectors. Officer Depasquale said that
69 the dog described in these incidents has been identified as a 2-year-old Cane Corso named Kanin and
70 the owner has been identified as Isaiah Williams, that Kanin has been involved in four unprovoked
71 attacks since August 2024, and that he has requested this dog hearing.

72
73 Councilor Certa asked if the sidewalk counts as part of the premises, and Officer Depasquale replied
74 that public sidewalk would be considered off premises. City Council President Chawla asked if the tickets
75 have been paid, and Officer Depasquale replied that he is not aware of the ticket status. City Council
76 President Chawla asked whether a common area in an apartment building is considered off premises
77 given that it is outside of the dog's primary residence. He said that he is assuming that they haven't
78 heard about some incidents because they occurred off premises. Officer Depasquale replied that 51
79 and 53 Main Street have different landlords and no property dividers.

80
81 City Manager Mahony asked if there are any further updates since the time of reporting on whether the
82 dog has been registered or vaccinated. Officer Depasquale replied that he has not received any
83 additional updates. City Manager Mahony noted that there was another incident involving this dog last
84 week, and Officer Depasquale said that the department is looking into this incident further at this time.

85
86 Councilor Certa noted that the individual in the August 22, 2024 dog bite issue did not issue a written
87 statement until January 2025 and asked why, and Officer Depasquale replied that she was hesitant
88 about making a complaint against the dog because she did not want it to be put down.

89
90 Isaiah Williams and Taina Flores spoke as the defendants and owners of Kanin. Ms. Flores said that
91 when people are in the house and are making certain movements, Kanin has started acting the way he
92 is acting in the past 9 months. She noted that this is the first dog they have had as a puppy. Mr. Williams
93 said he tries to be home more now that the dog's behavior is becoming an issue, and emphasized that
94 he is not an aggressive dog. He said that he thinks some of the behavior may be due to the fact that he
95 is not home as much with the dog. Ms. Flores said that Kanin is protective of her and her son against
96 individuals that come into the house that Kanin may perceive as strangers. Ms. Flores clarified that their
97 apartment unit does not share a hallway with neighbors, and they have their own front door and back
98 door. City Council President Chawla asked for clarification on how the dog has been able to get out of
99 control. Ms. Flores clarified that the December 8, 2024 incident was the result of Kanin perceiving
100 aggressive behavior between a visitor staying at their apartment and one of their friends. She said that
101 she has received suggestions that they get Kanin fixed, which may help solve the aggression issues.
102 She said that she has scheduled a second rabies vaccination with her veterinary clinic for Monday,
103 February 10, 2025.

105 Councilor Certa asked if there is a way to secure the animal on the property, and Ms. Flores replied that
106 they have a long chain to secure Kanin. City Manager Mahony asked how the dog is getting out of the
107 house off-leash. Mr. Williams replied that he thinks the dog is escaping when the door is left open
108 accidentally.

109
110 Animal Control Officer Lenzini said that the City's latest record is that Kanin's last vaccination was on
111 August 2, 2023 and that his next was due on August 2, 2024, and that he is not registered with the City.
112 She noted that neutering dogs typically reduces certain types of behaviors and calms dogs down
113 somewhat. Health Officer Rowell added that after the first dog bite incident, he tried unsuccessfully to
114 follow up with the owners of Kanin about information for free rabies clinics, given that they had cited
115 financial barriers to vaccination. He said that he has also been in contact with Kanin's owners a number
116 of times, given that he has received multiple complaints about the dog being loose and acting
117 aggressively toward people.

118
119 City Manager Mahony asked if they have any recommendations on appropriate next steps, given these
120 circumstances. Animal Control Officer Lenzini replied that her biggest recommendations would be
121 neutering the dog, seeking out professional training, and taking steps to secure the dog on the premises
122 more successfully. She said that if the City Council deems that the dog should be removed from its
123 current living situation, she has contacted the humane society, which is willing to take him in. Animal
124 Control Officer Lardner said that she has been in contact with the humane society and that given the
125 brief description of the four dog bite incidents, the animal care manager said that behavioral euthanasia
126 is a likely outcome in this case if the dog is surrendered to the Humane Society. She said that a dog
127 with a bite history like this would be difficult to find an appropriate placement for, but acknowledged that
128 the bites have been minor and the dog has willingly released them, which are factors in favor of this
129 behavior being more about management than anything else. She noted that this particular breed of dog
130 is bred to be a guardian and are predisposed to be protective of their property, but she ultimately
131 acknowledged that placement organizations will have a difficult time placing this dog in an adoption.

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133 Councilor Certa noted that some of these management solutions could potentially be costly, and asked
134 if Mr. Williams and Ms. Flores would be willing to entertain them, if the Council were to require this level
135 of training. Animal Control Officer Lardner said that she could provide contact information for several
136 recommended trainers but that she does not know the cost at this juncture, and Ms. Flores said she
137 would need to know the cost in order to determine if she could afford it. She said that she wants to do
138 everything she can to make sure Kanin's behavior is improved.

139
140 City Manager Mahony asked if more physical barriers could be put up to ensure the dog does not get
141 outside, and Mr. Williams replied that they could look into putting a screen on the back door or gate on
142 the porch. City Manager Mahony asked if they would be willing to muzzle the dog, and Mr. Williams and
143 Ms. Flores replied that they would be willing to use a muzzle. City Manager Mahony asked if they think
144 they will be able to train the dog and take the steps necessary to curtail this behavior, or whether they
145 would be willing to give up the dog. Ms. Flores replied that she is confident they can improve Kanin's
146 behavior.

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149 **7. DELIBERATIVE SESSION**

150 a. *A deliberative session may be needed

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152 **Councilor Miller made a motion, seconded by City Council President Chawla, to enter into**
153 **deliberative session. The motion passed 4-0.**

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156 **8. ADJOURN**

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Councilor Haney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Miller, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 4-0 at 7:10 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Coonradt