

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
SATURDAY JANUARY 25, 2025

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

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Steve Eustis, Moderator; Jess Morris, Finance Director; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

SPEAKERS: Molly Beerman, George Dunbar, Cristin Gildea, Susan McCormick, Gabrielle Smith, John Terborgh

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Chawla called the meeting of the City Council to order at 12:30 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/ CHANGES

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

No changes, thus no approval required.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

a. Comments for Public on Items not on Agenda

This will be discussed after the budget presentation.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Discussion of the Proposed FY26 General Fund and Capital Budgets

Mr. Eustis introduced himself as moderator, and all Councilors and staff introduced themselves. Ms. Mahony said that this is not the final budget that will be voted on in April. It is an opportunity to include public input into the budget process. The proposed FY 26 budget is 3% higher than FY 25. This results in a 2.5% increase or \$69 change for the average taxpayer. Utility rates are expected to go up 14.7%. The City is establishing a stormwater utility, which will cost each property \$84.75. In full, City taxpayers will expect an 8.6% increase in taxes and utilities. Most of the revenue is from residential property taxes. Mr. Chawla said that employees will receive a 4% raise, and that health insurance costs are up 17.9%. He reviewed each of the City departments and noted any major changes. Essex Junction approved a special assessment request from Green Mountain Transit. EJRP has been working to separate enterprise and general fund budgeting. \$110,000 (or 1% of the tax increase) will be put into the fund balance for emergencies. The Local Options Tax brings in around \$900,000.

Mr. Chawla described the Capital Projects Summary, stating that sidewalk, roadway, and waterline improvements will be made on Susie Wilson Road this year. Ms. Mahony said that a Strategic Plan was developed for the City. She discussed how the plan connects to the work of staff over the next year. A bond vote for pump station improvements is likely to be on the ballot this spring. Ms. Mahony went over ballot deadlines and voting dates.

- 50 Mr. Eustis requested public input.
- 51 ▪ Ms. Smith suggested showing changes based on a home worth more than \$285,000, considering home
 - 52 value changes. Mr. Chawla said that this is the medium assessed value, however this will change
 - 53 drastically when the reappraisal is complete.
 - 54 ▪ Ms. Beerman asked if the City has a say in developing the budget for Town services that we pay for.
 - 55 Ms. Mahony said that the Boards communicate during the budgetary process but that there is room
 - 56 for more communication.
 - 57 ▪ Ms. Gildea asked for clarification on “misc. revenue.” Ms. Morris said that it is everything that is
 - 58 not property tax revenue. The funds from CVE go into the Capital Reserve Fund.
 - 59 ▪ Mr. Dunbar asked for more details on the stormwater fund amount and several capital, LOT and
 - 60 general fund line items. He expressed concern about Essex Junction bonding again considering how
 - 61 much reserve funds are available. Ms. Mahony said that the pump stations will have cost sharing
 - 62 with the town. Answering a question from Mr. Dunbar, Ms. Morris said that the audit will be
 - 63 presented in March.
 - 64 ▪ Ms. Beerman asked what the funds for the Main Street Park will now be used for. Ms. Mahony said
 - 65 that they may possibly be used for the Amtrak project.
 - 66 ▪ Ms. McCormick asked for an update on the Amtrak project. Mr. Yuen said that the current plans are
 - 67 conceptual, and that additional design is necessary for funds to be obligated. The construction at the
 - 68 station currently is Amtrak’s ADA work, which is separate from this project.
 - 69 ▪ Mr. Terborgh asked about the CVE revenue. Ms. Morris said that this is included in capital due to
 - 70 an existing agreement.

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72 Ms. Mahony encouraged all in attendance to use the QR code to take a poll question. Comment cards can

73 also be filled out. Mr. Eustis requested a show of hands as to those who approve of adding a \$100,000 for

74 fund balance into the budget. He also asked for a show of hands as to who would or would not support the

75 budget as written today.

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77 Mr. Chawla requested any additional public comment, of which there was none.

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79 **6. CONSENT ITEMS**

80 None.

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82 **7. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT**

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85 **8. READING FILE**

86 None.

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88 **9. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

89 None.

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91 **10. ADJOURN**

92 **Motion by AMBER THIBEAULT, seconded by ELAINE HANEY, to adjourn. Motion passed 5-0 at**

93 **1:28 PM.**

94

95 Respectfully Submitted,

96 Darby Mayville

97 Recording secretary