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**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 26, 2025**

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

ADMINISTRATION: Regina Mahony, City Manager; Wendy Hysko, Library Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Duncan, Jeanne Grant, Karen Hergesheimer, Brian Shelden.

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

None.

5. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. Champlain Water District Annual Presentation

Joe Duncan, General Manager at Champlain Water District, presented on this item. He began by providing an overview of the Champlain Water District (CWD), noting that it has been a wholesale water provider since 1973, and that it produces water drawn out of Shelburne Bay and pumps it to nine member municipalities (Shelburne, Jericho, Milton, South Burlington, the Town of Essex, the City of Essex Junction, Williston, Colchester, and Winooski). He noted that Essex Junction is CWD's largest customer by volume (due to the inclusion of Global Foundries, which is a large water user). He noted that the City has its own staff to administer the utility and distribution piping that brings water from transmission mains to the businesses and homes of the water users in the City. He spoke about when CWD has its monthly and annual meetings. He noted that in the 1970s through the 1990s CWD was able to hold its water rates flat, largely because it sold more water year-over-year (largely attributed to IBM), but that since the 1990s, they have seen changing water usage patterns and have had to contend with more consistent and stable levels of water usage. He spoke about CWD's proactive capital improvement funding model, which allows it to stay ahead of potential maintenance issues for its systems and avoid rate hikes to water users.

Councilor Certa asked about how CWD is trying to keep costs down in its budget, especially given that health insurance premiums have been increasing significantly across the state for the last several years. Mr. Duncan spoke about challenges in trying to competitively search for the best health insurance plans for staff, but said that they are actively seeking the most competitive plans for health insurance and building insurance to try and limit cost growth.

b. Brownell Library Director Brief to Council

Library Director Hysko began by speaking to some of the impacts to the Library of the renovation of the 2 Lincoln Street building, in terms of trying to accommodate meeting spaces and parking. She also noted that there have been staffing challenges (mostly due to illness) but that they have been able to fill gaps where needed. She expressed gratitude to patrons, staff, and outreach workers. She highlighted concerns with potential cuts to library services at the federal level, noting that this funding is crucial for inter-library loan

55 services within Vermont. She said they are looking forward to the roof replacement project, and noted other
56 maintenance work they anticipate conducting on the building.

57
58 City Council President Chawla asked about the policies mentioned as future activities, particularly around
59 sustainable library initiatives. Director Hysko spoke about how the Trustees are focusing on recruiting a more
60 diverse set of board members and staff, adopting more sustainable purchasing policies and practices, and
61 sharing more resources in order to reduce the Library's footprint.

62
63 Councilor Miller asked about training around firearms and safety protocols with the Essex police. Director
64 Hysko replied that this is mostly related to safe handling of firearms in the event that staff find them in
65 unaccompanied bags (given that the state does not regulate firearms in libraries).

66
67 Councilor Certa asked about the City's plans for increasing the human services presence in the Library, or
68 other thoughts on how the City can best serve the needs of individuals who may be in distress and going to
69 the Library. Director Hysko spoke about a program the South Burlington Library has with an intern who is
70 staffing a desk to respond to various human services needs, and noted that this type of model requires some
71 staff time to train up an individual to provide that set of services. She said she would be reluctant to bring
72 interns into the Brownell Library in this role, due to turnover and the lack of capacity for current library staff.
73 She also noted that current outreach workers provide similar services, and expressed deep gratitude for their
74 services. Councilor Certa asked about efforts to improve staff morale at the Library. Director Hysko replied
75 that staff are trying to stay positive and supportive of each other, that they take pride in the mission of the
76 Library and the work around it, and that the Library is primarily a place for resource-sharing, which includes
77 connecting people to the resources in the community. She spoke about the value of training staff in de-
78 escalation techniques, which has proven useful in a number of instances.

79
80 c. Brownell Trustee to Council Brief

81 Jeanne Grant, Chair of the Brownell Library Board of Trustees, provided the brief to the City Council. She
82 spoke about collective concern about the financial stability of the library in the current political climate. She
83 spoke about staff turnover due to the high cost of living in this area. She spoke about two key staff hires,
84 including a technical assistant who processes youth materials and plans adult programs, and the library
85 assistant for youth and young adult services, who coordinates programs for teens and tweens, as well as the
86 summer reading program. She spoke about the Library's diverse programming in the past year and its high
87 attendance. She spoke about the Library's passive programming (craft kits, jigsaw puzzles, looms, etc). She
88 spoke about the work that staff did to implement of Act 150 this past July, which created new privacy
89 protections for youth ages 12-18. She spoke about the Library's sustainability plan, which includes
90 environmental stewardship, social equity, economic feasibility, energy efficiency, waste reduction, the
91 promotion of digital resources, and community engagement. She spoke about the Library's role in hosting
92 swaps (of toys, seeds, sewing, etc), which is a sustainable activity that can help build community. She spoke
93 about turnover of 3 positions on the Board of Trustees. She spoke about the successful development of a
94 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Board of Trustees and City Council to help clarify roles
95 and responsibilities of each. She spoke about the Library's strategic planning process, which is completed
96 every five years, and includes a significant amount of community engagement and feedback through surveys.
97 She expressed gratitude for the Library's staff, and spoke about the Library as a valuable community asset.

98
99 City Council President Chawla said he would be interested to see the results of the surveys related to the
100 strategic planning process. He said that the impacts of federal political and financial policies and activities
101 will be felt across the community in the coming months. He said that more communication between the
102 Trustees and the Council during this period of flux and uncertainty could be beneficial.

103
104 d. Discussion & Consideration of Renewal of the City Manager Contract
105

106 Councilor Certa made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, that the City Council renew the
107 Employment Agreement for the City Manager with Regina Mahony as negotiated, and through
108 September 14, 2027. The motion passed 5-0.
109

110 6. **CONSENT ITEMS**

- 111 a. Approve Meeting Minutes: March 12, 2025
- 112 b. Approve July 4th Fireworks Display Permit – EJRP
- 113 c. Approve Application for the Municipal Planning Grant for the 2027 Comprehensive Plan
- 114 d. Approve Library Roof Bid Award
- 115 e. Approve Lincoln Terrace Quick-Build Pedestrian Crossing Improvements
- 116 f. Approve Street Vending Permit Mr. Ding-A-Ling

117
118 City Council President Chawla made a motion, seconded by Councilor Haney, to approve the consent
119 agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.
120

121 7. **COUNCILOR COMMENTS & CITY MANAGER REPORT:** City Manager Mahony noted that the City is
122 conducting camera monitoring at the Five Corners intersection to assess how the lights are functioning
123 and conduct improvements if needed. She noted that reappraisal letters will start to be mailed to City
124 properties in May and that they should have more information to share in April. Councilor Certa noted
125 that the City's Governance Committee will hold its organizational meeting tomorrow evening at 75 Maple
126 Street and can be attended in person or via Zoom. City Council President Chawla thanked Public Works
127 for its quick response to the water main break in the Countryside development.
128

129 8. **READING FILE**

- 130 a. Check Warrant #24071 03/21/2025
- 131 b. Tree Advisory Committee Minutes 02/27/2025
- 132 c. Planning Commission Minutes 03/06/2025
- 133 d. Bike Walk Advisory Committee Minutes 03/13/2025
- 134 e. Tri-Town Joint Review Minutes 03/18/2025
- 135 f. CATMA 2024 Annual Report

136
137 9. **ADJOURN**
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139 Councilor Thibeault made a motion, seconded by Councilor Certa, to adjourn the meeting. The
140 motion passed 5-0 at 7:39 P.M.
141

142 Respectfully Submitted,
143 Amy Coonradt