

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
JULY 3, 2024  
APPROVED August 1, 2024**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Diane Clemens, Chair; Scott McCormick, Vice-Chair; Elena Juodisius; Elijah Massey

**ADMINISTRATION:** Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

**OTHERS PRESENT:** None

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

In lieu of a chair, Mr. Yuen called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

**2. REORGANIZATION**

**SCOTT MCCORMICK made a motion, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to appoint DIANE CLEMENS as Chair. Motion passed 4-0.**

**ELIJAH MASSEY made a motion to nominate SCOTT MCCORMICK as Vice-Chair. Motion passed 4-0.**

**3. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

Ms. Clemens requested to add Future Priorities as Item F.

**4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

**a. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda**

None.

**5. MINUTES**

**a. June 6, 2024**

**MOTION by SCOTT MCCORMICK, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to approve the minutes of June 6, 2024. Motion passed 4-0.**

**6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Introductions for new Planning Commission member(s)**

All Planning Commissioners, both new and existing, introduced themselves and provided information about their background. Ms. Juodisius introduced herself as the newest Planning Commissioner, and a new resident of Essex Junction.

**b. H.687 Summary as it relates to Municipal Planning**

Mr. Yeun said that H. 687 has been passed and is in effect. He discussed the four development-based tiers that the state is now separated into and said that Essex Junction will most likely fall under Tier 1B. Major changes include the following: municipalities must now allow for a duplex or four-plex on the same size lot that a single-family home is permitted, no restrictions for the number of non-related occupants are permitted, and hotels and motels that are converted to permanent affordable housing must be permitted.

For the most part, few changes to the Land Development Code (LDC) need to be made in response to this bill as Essex Junction has been proactive with their policies.

**c. Essex A North Lot Solar Project Petition for Certificate of Public Good**

Global Foundries has petitioned to the Public Utilities Commission for a certificate of public good to add solar panels on their site. The PC is not able to review such applications but can write to the Public Utilities Commission if they have feedback. Global Foundries is no longer attempting to bring other commercial entities on site, as envisioned in their 2012 Master Plan.

**d. Land Development Code amendments, including discussion on following:**

**i. Recap of Changes previously discussed**

Mr. Yuen said that this is the largest current project that the PC is working on right now and briefly reviewed the work that has been done to date.

**iii. Approval of Temporary Uses – Food Trucks and Trailers**

Recent additions have included the regulation of food trucks, as the former guidelines made it impossible for food trucks to operate year-round. Mr. Yuen discussed complaints about generator use and suggested that full-time food trucks need to be connected to utilities. All agreed that this was a good idea. The rear setback in the RO district was added back into the code, as this had been inadvertently deleted. Mr. Yuen said some zoning district consolidation could be completed once the Comprehensive Plan is updated.

**iii. Review of Dimensional Standards, based on “Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods”**

Mr. Yuen said that City staff has reviewed the Land Development Code (LDC) dimensional requirements with consideration of the “missing middle” housing. Some examples of enabling this type of housing include accessory dwelling units, duplexes, small-scale multi-household buildings, and neighborhood-scale mixed-use live/work buildings. These were more common before zoning began to separate different kinds of uses and building types. He said that infill development can be used to add more housing. The City applied to be a pilot community for the Homes for All initiative, and while not selected, this provides a good framework for changes to dimensional standards. The Enabling Better Places guide recommends incremental changes and offers sample language for updating allowable housing types. Some of the elements that Essex Junction can integrate include matching minimum lot size to local patterns, removing density caps, regulating coverage percentages carefully and aligning other dimensional standards with the existing or desired patterns. He compared suggested setbacks to Essex Junction’s current setbacks in a variety of different districts and said that the front setback affects the owner’s ability to park more cars in the rear in the case of a multi-family residence.

Mr. Yuen suggested that setback patterns match or exceed the existing built pattern in the historic parts of the City, noting that this would take years or decades to achieve. The reasoning for historical zoning and settlement patterns were discussed. Mr. McCormick said that it would be helpful to identify places within the City that would be good location for the infill suggested in the Homes for All program. Mr. Yuen compared the maximum lot coverage in certain zones of Essex Junction, noting that this could be replicated in other zones. He pointed out examples of other properties that exceed the lot coverage requirements. Mr. Yuen discussed changing housing needs and the housing crisis which have made ensuring that housing if densified more important than in previous generations.

Mr. McCormick spoke of engaging the public while designing a housing plan. Mr. Yuen said that the City has not had enough applicants to restart the Housing Commission, and noted that there are also openings in the PC and Development Review Board (DRB). He said that the PC should not wait for the creation of such to make housing policy decisions. Ms. Clemens described other efforts besides setbacks to help create infill development, stating that setback might create additional requirements and not be supported by the public. Mr. Massey said that it is important for the PC to both develop a formal plan and eliminate the “low-hanging fruit” to ensure housing growth. Mr. Yuen summarized the discussion, stating that there is an interest to test the waters on adjusting the dimensional requirements based on historical patterns in the inner and transitional zones. Mr. Yuen will create a memo offering potential changes for the PC’s review at their next meeting. He said that there will be numerous opportunities to adjust the process based on public feedback. Ms. Clemens suggested having a discussion with the DRB or the City Council on these potential changes.

**e. Vermont Climate Action Plan feedback**

Mr. McCormick said that the Climate Action Plan has over 300 items which are prioritized. He discussed some of the projects proposed, especially those related to housing policy. He requested that the PC review this document at the next meeting, especially the section on how to get information on an issue from stakeholders.

**f. Future Priorities**

Ms. Clemens said that the Comprehensive Plan will need to be reviewed in the future and encouraged all Commissioners to read the current version.

**7. MEMBERS UPDATES**

Mr. McCormick discussed holding a joint meeting with the City Council to discuss upcoming initiatives.

**8. STAFF UPDATES**

Mr. Yuen discussed the work that had been done on the Transit Orientated Development study, and the public engagement for such. He detailed future public engagement that will be necessary to complete the LDC updates.

**9. ADJOURN**

**MOTION by SCOTT MCCORMICK, SECOND by ELENA JUODISIUS, to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 PM. Motion passed 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Darby Mayville