

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
JANUARY 14, 2025  
DRAFT**

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

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Charlie Baker, Sarah Muskin

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Clemens called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES**

None.

**3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

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

None.

**4. MINUTES**

**a. December 5, 2024**

**MOTION by SCOTT MCCORMICK, seconded by ELIJAH MASSEY, to approve the minutes of December 5, 2024. Motion passed 5-0.**

**5. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Discussion on Act 181 and the process to develop a new Regional Future Land Use Map and Municipal Housing Targets**

Ms. Muskin and Mr. Baker, of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) presented. Ms. Muskin discussed Vermont Act 181, which is intended to maintain Vermont's historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside. This act will change the types of properties that will require Act 250 approval, with the more developed areas not requiring such. Municipalities no longer need to apply for state designation areas. Much of Essex Junction is already subject to interim Act 250 exemptions, such as transit corridors and downtowns but these exemptions will be superseded by the new regulations.

The CCRPC is working on implementing a regional land use map which will frame development in the area. Ms. Clemens said that the map appears to have most of the City listed as a planned growth area. Ms. Muskin said that this is true, as Essex Junction has public sewer and water as well as zoning regulations. Mr. Yuen explained the differences in granularity between the zoning map, city future land use map and the regional future land use map. With the proposed regional land use map, most Essex Junction properties would most likely not require Act 250 review. Mr. Yuen will investigate the possibility of Essex Junction pursuing Tier 1A status, which would require taking over management of the existing Act 250 permits.

The steps required to achieve meaningful public participation were discussed, with Mr. McCormick suggesting collaborating with Essex Junction's TOD project as well as reaching out to local churches. Ms. Muskin said that the CCRPC will receive a housing target from the state, and this will be disaggregated amongst member municipalities. The targets will need to be incorporated into municipal plans and towns must mitigate barriers to meeting these targets. Mr. Baker discussed better tracking construction at the state level and potential consequences for refusing to work toward meeting such targets. Mr. McCormick discussed additional conversations needed around housing targets, including climate and environmental sustainability. The PC discussed a variety of community engagement ideas with the CCRPC, such as collaboration with the schools, Rotary Club, and holding office hours in the Brownell Library. Ms. Muskin will stay in communication as this document is further developed and will plan to be back in front of the board this spring.

**b. Connect the Junction TOD Master Plan – Discussion of Next Steps**

Mr. Yuen said that the consultants have provided staff with a first draft of the big ideas report and are working on the full draft plan. This should be available prior to the February 6<sup>th</sup> joint meeting of the PC and City Council.

**c. Discussion on for January 25 Community Meal public engagement opportunity**

All planning-related initiatives will be at a cluster of tables together. Mr. Yuen will create a poster to showcase the work that the PC has done over the past year. The report for the Connect the Junction TOD Master Plan will not yet be available by this time.

**d. Animating Infrastructure Mural Grant**

Mr. Massey explained the application process and different tracks available to municipalities. Essex Junction is working on developing a pitch to be invited for the full application, as this is a very competitive process. He suggested the fire station or crescent connector as potential sites for public art. He discussed collaborating with students in the district on this project. An outreach and engagement strategy should be developed with the pitch, and the grant will provide up to \$1,000 for this and administrative costs. An artist will only be engaged if awarded the grant. A conceptual design can be created to share with the public. Mr. Massey asked all PC members to consider the location and type of art desired, as well as public engagement for this process.

**e. LDC amendments process update**

Mr. Yuen said that the LDC amendments have been passed onto the City Council, and that he presented them last month. The City Council will be discussing the topic again on January 22, 2025 and may warn a public hearing as early as February 12. After the public hearing, the City Council may choose to adopt or change the LDC. Once it is adopted, there is a 21-day appeal period. During this period, all development applications will need to be evaluated based on both the new and old regulations, whatever is more stringent.

**f. Prepare topics of discussion for City Council join meeting**

Mr. Yuen said that the TOD process will be one of the major items of discussion. He said that this will be an opportunity to provide feedback or discuss any other issues that the PC feels they need direction on. Mr. McCormick suggested discussing project alignment with the City Council and reviewing the status of the projects that were discussed at their last joint meeting two years ago. Ms. Clemens brought up the height limit in Essex Junction, noting that the state allows for five stories if affordable housing is included.

Mr. Yuen said that building heights will be a major topic in Connect the Junction area. Other ideas suggested include: establishing additional committees, transportation, community engagement, economic development and housing. The PC will create an outline of the topics that they feel they will potentially discuss and share this with the City Council.

**6. MEMBERS UPDATES**

Mr. McCormick discussed a potential workshop on environmental topics funded by the Rotary Club. He also said that the state Climate Council is working towards increasing home weatherization and is behind their targets.

**7. STAFF UPDATES**

None.

**8. ADJOURN**

**MOTION by ELANA JUODISIUS, seconded by SCOTT MCCORMICK, to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 PM. Motion passed 5-0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Darby Mayville