

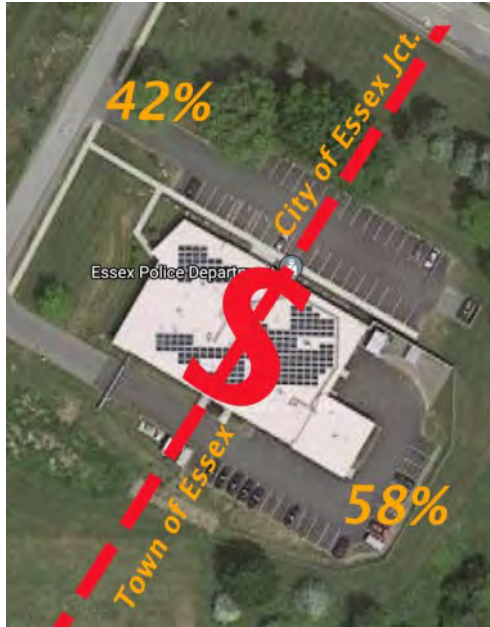
Village Trustees Send Separation Conditions to Town Selectboard

by Irene Wrenner

At the July 19th Joint Meeting, the Village Trustees presented a dozen detailed "priorities" they would like the Selectboard to consider for a forthcoming Separation agreement.

Among them were requests for:

- ♦ Town Police Budget to be shared with the new City of Essex Junction via grand list proportions — currently 42% for the Village (priority #1). Call volume in the Village is currently greater than outside the Village, and numerous special events in the Village require extra police coverage, according to Chief Ron Hoague;
- ♦ Town government to vacate 81 Main Street office building and sell within five years, preferably to the City for 58% of its value (#10); and
- ♦ Town Parks & Recreation department to offer resident season passes to City residents for Indian Brook Park (#11).



The Trustees wish for the new City to pay toward less than half the police budget, despite the Village having a higher call volume than the rest of the Town, as well as several large events needing an extensive police presence downtown.

The complete list of presented Village priorities may be found in the Meeting Packet, page 4: www.essexvt.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_07192021-1195

SB Chair Andy Watts, by far the most senior SB member, pushed back strongly on several priorities. He indicated:

- [The Town government should remain](#) in the building it owns at 81 Main Street for as long as it pleases. (#10)
- Prohibiting the Town from voting on any bond in the near future, as the Trustees requested, would be problematic. ["That ties our hands."](#) (#2)
- [The Village should not try to limit](#) how many Finance staff the Town may hire. (#7)

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Public Forums

All Town residents are invited to provide feedback to the Selectboard on separation:

- Wed., Aug. 4, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- Fri., Aug. 6, noon to 1 p.m. (remote)
- Sat., August 21, morning @ 81 Main St.

Raptors, Reptiles and Rabbit Promote Summer Reading



Michael Clough showcased live specimens and spoke about Vermont wildlife on the Essex Free Library lawn on July 15th.

Caregivers of all ages and their youngsters were rapt as the Managing Director of the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum spoke on a warm, sunny afternoon.

Clough referenced classic books, films, and cartoons as he introduced raptors, reptiles and a rabbit to his curious audience.

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New Million Dollar Box Culvert Tested by Heavy Rains



The recently installed box culvert beneath Densmore Drive, shown before and after severe thunderstorms brought drenching rains to town on July 20th, providing this stormwater drainage system its first real test.

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Selectboard Clerk [Tracey Delphia questioned](#) the requested 42% contribution to the Police Budget (#1) as unrealistically low.

Acknowledging the complexity of separating the recently-consolidated Finance functions, SB member [Pat Murray asked](#), would the Trustees consider continuing to share the Finance Department instead? Village President Andrew Brown was the only Trustee to reply and simply said no.

Parks and Recreation was not included on the Village wish list beyond Indian Brook Reservoir and senior services, despite prior discussions on long- or short-term sharing.

In presenting their list of Separation demands, the Trustees failed to mention a number of costs paid solely by the Town: Green Mountain Transit, Winooski Valley Park District, Essex Rescue, and Health Officer staffing.*

The Trustees suggested the SB put together proposals to deal with any missing topics or counter-proposals.

It might take SB members the rest of the summer to hammer out an acceptable path for the Village / Town-inside-the-Village (TIV) to secede,

even though they have no town-wide charge from constituents to do so.

Meanwhile, the Trustees have a self-imposed deadline, targeting an autumn vote on Separation and hope the SB will accommodate them, proceeding without public input if necessary.

Despite the precipitous timeline, the Trustees plan to honor the non-binding suggestion for a November vote from their constituents this past April.

They had previously asked the Selectboard to join them on July 26th to continue talking about the details of a Separation plan.

After returning from an executive session to discuss the proposed priorities, the Selectboard opted to not discuss Separation plans again this month with the Trustees. They prefer to hear from the public in August before negotiating further.

**The next meeting packet (July 27th) contained a table of Intergovernmental and Health & Human Services Expenses that the Town pays now, totaling over \$750,000. The Village may need to budget half that amount toward Separation costs.*

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He invited participants to touch most of the animals presented.

Among the fun facts and scientific knowledge he shared about their collection:

- ♦ The gray tree frog has two survival skills: camouflage, and the ability to come back to life in the spring after literally freezing each winter, during which time its heart stops beating.
- ♦ Snakes get portrayed as villains throughout literature. However, only some snakes are venomous. Curiously, Clough's non-venomous rat snake has the ability to mimic the behavior of a venomous species in self-defense.
- ♦ A box turtle can live up to 150 years.
- ♦ Michael's red-tailed hawk, named Bill, was secured to his glove with leather strips, called jesses, a 4,000-year-old inven-

tion from central Asia, which allowed him to hold that raptor safely.

The peregrine falcon is the fastest animal on the planet. It can dive for prey as fast as a racecar – over 200 miles per hour.

- ♦ Rabbits eat over 400 species of plants, hence his describing them as “fuzzy little lawnmowers.” A rabbit can run as fast as a horse but can also defy physics by turning a corner without slowing down.



Events in the [Town's Summer Reading Program](#), Tales and Tails, continue through mid-August.

EFL is open Mondays through Fridays from 10 am to 6 pm, and Saturdays from 9 am to Noon.



Amtrak's Back!



Rain didn't dampen the spirits of train enthusiasts who welcomed back the Vermonter line on the morning of July 19th.

Passenger service through Essex Junction was suspended by Governor Phil Scott in March 2020, due to COVID-19.

Videos by Ken Signorello of the train's arrival and of speech-making are posted at

www.EssexRetorter.com/videos.



A Time to Go

My wife and I just said goodbye to our beloved dog Bentley, age seventeen. If you have a pet, you know how easy it is to become attached to the little munchkins and how hard it is to watch them deteriorate. Eventually, to avoid prolonging their pain, you let them go.

Reflecting on this, I've concluded it's time: Time to let the Village of Essex Junction go, time to let it separate from the Town, and time to stop the seemingly endless bickering over merger.

There's more to life and bigger challenges to face.

The Trustees seem bullish on creating what they call the

"Independent City of Essex Junction." They have established a sophisticated website promoting separation. They have a timeline and an agenda.

Also, the Trustees recently gave a list of suggestions to the Selectboard that would ease the Village's transition – including transferring nearly \$1 million of money from the Town to the new City; kicking the Town staff out

of the Town offices; treating City residents as Town residents for privileged access to the Indian Brook Reservoir.

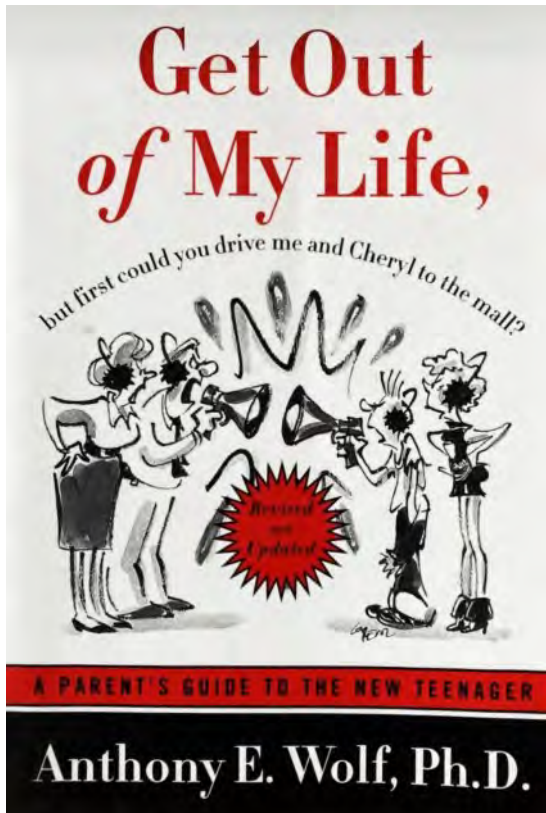
This rather audacious version of "dependent independence" reminds me of a book we had when our daughters entered their teenaged years: *Get Out of My Life, but First Could You Drive Me & Cheryl to the Mall: A Parent's Guide to the New Teenager*. "Yes, Mom, don't bug us, but by the way ..." is equivalent to the Trustees telling the Town,

"Yes, we're going to be independent but ... you have to pay."

It's time, therefore, to let the Village go; time for the Selectboard to stop responding to the Trustees and start listening to the 11,000+ residents of what would be the New Town of Essex.

We have a right to chart our own course, and also to be protected from the Trustees of the proposed Independent City of Essex Junction from perpetually having their hands in our wallets. After all, it will be our Town, our treasure.

Bruce S. Post, a former Essex Town Selectboard member, was chief of staff for the 1980 presidential candidate U.S. Congressman John B. Anderson.



Separation Myth #1

A single tax bill will be the product of a successful separation vote according to the Village-sponsored, pro-Separation website, OurVillageOurVoices.com.

Fact: Village taxpayers already receive just one tax bill for school and municipal charges.

You may monitor the status of myth #1 as follows: under The Facts heading, choose the Taxes selection, and see the second of the Questions and Answers.

The Essex RETORTER

Published by
Essex Retorter LLC
12 Main St.
Essex Jct, Vermont

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www.EssexRetorter.com

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