

Elaine Haney, Chair  
Essex Town Selectboard

August 12, 2020

Elaine,

At the Village Trustee meeting on August 11<sup>th</sup> we unanimously agreed to hold a special meeting on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup> to finalize the charter our two boards brought to near completion earlier this year. We believe the remaining, unfinished portions of the charter are not controversial and we will use the notes made by the Selectboard and Trustees at our June 17<sup>th</sup> and June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 meetings to guide us. We respectfully request that the Selectboard also warn a special meeting prior to Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup> to review and, hopefully, approve our finalized version of the charter in time to submit it to Town Clerk McNamara-Hill on Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup>. This would allow it to be placed on a community-wide ballot for the November 2020 election, which was the longstanding and mutually agreed upon goal of our two boards. The Trustees would be available to attend your special meeting to participate in the review and in making any additional changes.

The Trustees also unanimously agreed that we must oppose the '3-3' charter change initiative that the Selectboard intends to re-submit to the House Government Operations Committee. We understand that as routine practice the Selectboard makes no distinction between votes inside the Village and outside the Village in community-wide elections. But in this particular instance, on a measure that seeks to formally divide the Essex electorate into 'Town' and 'Village' wards, we believe it is self-evident that a majority in both the intended wards should agree to the division. As you know, a majority of Village voters did not approve the '3-3' proposal.

In closing, we urge the Selectboard to re-consider the advice of House Gov. Operations Chair Sarah Copeland Hanzas in her letter to both our boards outlining her committee's reasons for tabling the '3-3' proposal:

"We look forward to re-visiting a charter change once the voters of the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction have approved a plan of merger ... It is our hope that our concerns can be addressed as part of this *more thorough process* and that we can work with you to ensure passage of the plan of merger in the General Assembly." (Italics added for emphasis.)

With the goal of building a stronger community for all our constituents, let's try to recapture the collaborative spirit that has brought our two governments such positive results over the last seven years. Let's honor the excellent work we've done on the charter for a merged community and get it on the ballot for November.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Brown', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Brown

President, Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees