

PRESS RELEASE

November 29, 2023

Town of Essex purchases site for municipal complex

The Town of Essex acquired approximately 32 acres in the town center area on Wednesday, November 22. The purchase gives the Town a location where it can site future municipal facilities and support development in the Town Center.

The purchase came after the Town had spent the past seven months investigating the site's development potential, working with consultants to understand any potential development constraints. The Town Selectboard voted 4-1 on November 20 to move ahead with the purchase.

Essex used its federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to purchase the property for \$3 million. Essex had received nearly \$3.3 million in ARPA funding.

"This is a huge step for the future of Essex," said Selectboard Chair Andy Watts. "Since the Village of Essex Junction separated from the Town of Essex in 2022, our Town Offices are no longer located within our community. This land will allow us to build new Town Offices, a new fire station, and other facilities. Locating these buildings in the Town Center will help Essex create a vibrant new center for the community."

The Town's existing fire station has become small and outdated for the needs of the community. Other facilities that could be developed on the site include a library, recreation programming space, and more. Elected officials and staff will now begin working on a development timeline, including ways to fund future development.

"This is an exciting and unique opportunity to be a part of a community's efforts to shape the future of an undeveloped site in the middle of a town's center," said Community Development Director Katherine Sonnick. "It is a planner's dream."

The Community Development Department and Planning Commission have been taking preliminary steps to obtain a New Town Center designation from the State of Vermont. Such a designation will facilitate public and private development.

For more information, please contact Selectboard Chair Andy Watts at awatts@essex.org.