

Memorandum

To: Selectboard
Greg Duggan, Town Manager

Cc:

From: Karen Adams, Deputy Manager; Tammy Getchell, Public Information Officer

Re: Discussion about results of resident survey on Selectboard values (10 minutes)

Date: 6/5/2025

Issue

The issue is for the Selectboard to review and discuss public comments received through their recent survey process.

Discussion

The recent Selectboard survey asking residents to weigh in on adopted long term goals was offered from May 21 through June 4, 2025. Respondents were asked to rank each goal in terms of importance to them, and asked if there were additions to the list that the Board should consider. 158 responses were received.

Attached is a data report which shows the average ranking each adopted goal received. There were also 71 open ended responses received which are provided in alphabetical order.

Cost

N/A

Recommendation

This memo is informational.

Attachments:

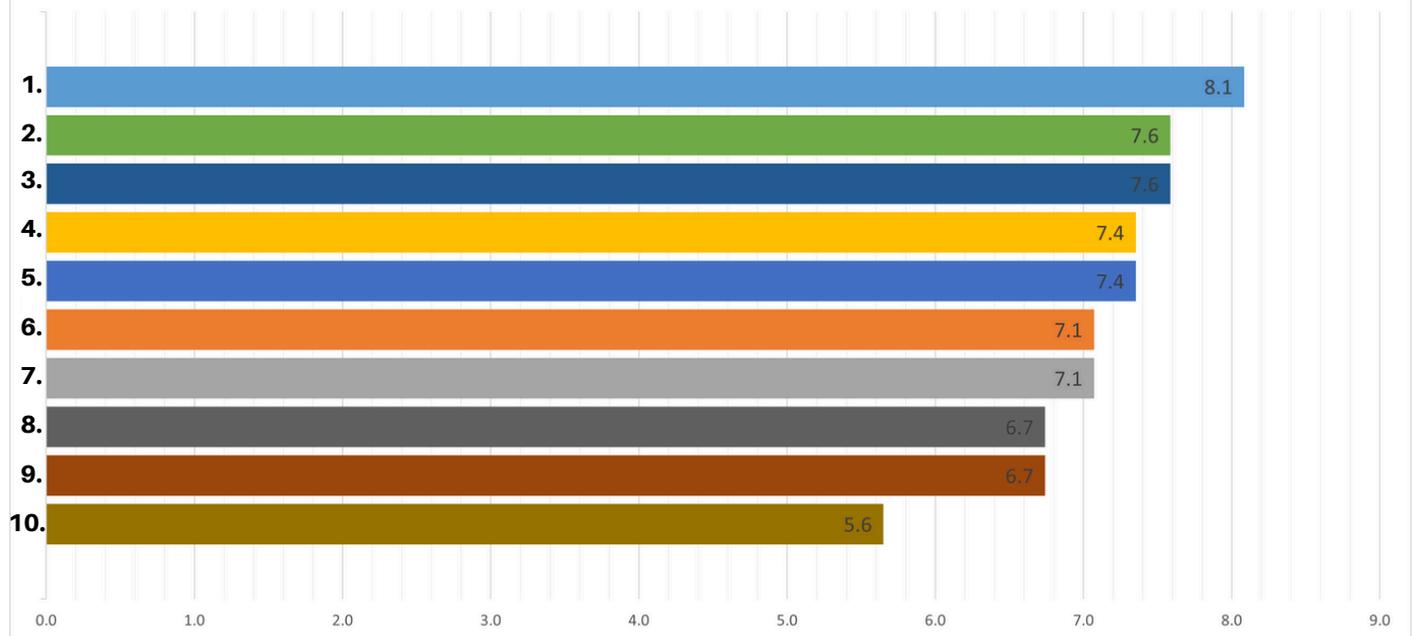
1.	Survey Chart
2.	SB Survey responses

ESSEX SELECTBOARD LONG-TERM GOALS 2025-2033 SURVEY OF TOWN RESIDENTS

The Essex Selectboard conducted a survey that asked residents to rank the importance of current strategic long-term goals. The survey received 158 responses.

Prioritizing Essex Selectboard Long-term Goals

1. ■ Ensure that Essex's capital needs are understood and fully funded, with an exploration of all possible mechanisms.
2. ■ See that progress is made toward the community's vision for construction of a new municipal complex.
3. ■ Consider non-property tax revenue sources and update in the best interest of the community.
4. ■ Continually improve access to and accessibility of information and documents.
5. ■ Make improvements in multimodal transportation options throughout Essex.
6. ■ Improve awareness of community events, encourage volunteer participation in those events, and evaluate the variety of events that are held.
7. ■ Review guiding documents, policies, and standards to reflect the needs of the community, and update accordingly. Review relevant and important policies annually.
8. ■ Ensure long-term support of high-quality public safety.
9. ■ Be responsive to the impact of opioids in the community.
10. ■ Evaluate the community's recreation needs and make sure the needs are met and funded accordingly.



Selectboard Values Survey - Open Ended Responses (71)
A study of how many waivers, variances and the like that the Essex Planning Commission has approved since 2005.
Access for Essex residents to local, quality child care
Adding at least 100 units of housing.
Address overdevelopment and building which raises our taxes, increases traffic and air and water pollution. Downzone the RPD-I district so large warehouses and truck traffic is reduced.
Affordable housing. More transportation options for seniors, especially for evening events. Keeping Vermont values at the forefront of all decisions, i.e. no Amazon here. We do not need to support the millionaires on the backs of the working class.
Alignment of services to pragmatic and responsible funding levels that do not excessively tax residents.
As Essex grows from a rural town to a suburb of Burlington, we need to do traffic assessments and adjust roads to the increased traffic that is already happening and will happen.
Assuming roads and other infrastructure are in the capital projects are in #1
Balance the budget, no deficit spending, accountability for efficiency in spending. Eliminate Woke form government.
Bring business to Essex to help with paying property taxes, funding our schools and giving people good jobs in our town!
Building the tax base with high value commercial properties like the Amazon project.
Change zoning on state-owned parcels of land, so the conversation about a new women's correctional / re-entry facility can continue. The PC has stalled out: embarrassing! Change the map before requiring answers to questions that aren't zoning-related.
Consider local option tax and prioritize housing — especially affordable and middle income.
Continuing to work on walkability within the town (particularly near the Town Center complex site) and safe biking options.
Create a bike path/bridge over the circ, down near Pinewood manor, so kids/families can ride bikes to area near the schools.
create a sense of community; both through shared spaces and shared experiences
Do not approve the Amazon warehouse!
Don't build the so called new town center
Energy efficiency, renewables adoption, electrification of transportation, and attention to GHGs.
Ensure integrity of our Voting system and guarantee those that vote are citizens and registered voters of USA, Vermont, and Essex.
Ensure that the town has "human-centered growth" and that growth is in keeping with the values in the adopted Town Plan.
Expand sewer to Sandhill/117 area and encourage the building of more family housing throughout the town.

Find ways to provide additional funding to the fire department. Prioritize securing of new infrastructure and equipment now, as the associated costs and timelines continue to increase exponentially. The longer we wait, the higher the burden we incur.
Find ways to reduce taxes and hold those committing crime responsible.
Finish the circumstantial highway. Even though shumlin gave away the right of way that can be modified.
Focus on the things we know how to do (policing, plowing streets, building buildings/infrastructure, support for the poor.) De-prioritize things we wish we knew how to do but realistically don't (decreasing opioid addiction/homelessness,etc.)
Focus should be on meeting the community's basic needs, and developing a long-term tax strategy recognizing the likelihood of loss of State and Federal funding.
HOUSING!!! Please redo this survey! Much prefer that committees/commissions & town plan priorities be all listed for residents to rank them. We've collectively identified housing affordability is stifling our economy and nowhere to be seen!
I opt for a no-growth plan. I am sickened by huge apt buildings, the tenants aren't incentivized to have ownership of town so don't care about it like owners. NO MORE APARTMENTS. I like high prop taxes, they increase value of town.
I would love for continued priority and thought about environmental responsibility and sustainability, as well as on consideration for the well being of residents who may belong to minorities and/or have disabilities or age-related limitations
Improve connectedness and walkability via paved paths and bike paths and snow clearing.Ensure the “municipal complex” provides value to the community with community spaces and new community centers, not just rebuilt municipal bldgs
Improve public awareness and information regarding available public services, recreation options, events, and entertainment options.
In regards to question 8 providing access and community centers to curb the crisis or that need not just an increase in police.
In the current economic climate, that the taxpayers dollars are spent conservatively and wisely and not expended on a new building tor property that was not voted on by taxpayers.
Include in the town plan affordable housing for enters and first time home owners.
Indian Brook stocking and maintenance. Engage with VFW in order to re-establish a relationship concerning the space.
Investing in expanding the bike path, especially connecting the Tanglewood and Greenfield neighborhoods to the FMS/EMS schools and to the existing bike path so that families and kids can have a safe way to bike around.
It is important to my family to maintain the services available in Essex and the school system, but. I also understand that taxes are too high. I would like to see Essex encourage responsible development to broaden the tax base to reduce taxes.
It is unconscionable to pursue the municipal complex given what has happened to Essex taxes recently from the separation and the extreme increases for schools. Shelve it until there is school tax relief.

It would be nice to see much better sidewalk plowing since maybe we're getting back to good old Vermont winters
Local Options Tax to help fund the 80/90 Upper Main Project
Lower taxes
Lower taxes. Build more affordable housing.
make sure all meetings and events are all inclusive and accessible for the disabled community including sign language interpreters for the deaf
Manage traffic flow - don't make rt 15 even worse in terms of traffic consider how to alleviate the terrible two mile corridor between Essex way and Essex free library of slow moving rush hour traffic.
More bike paths to connect remote parts of town and enhance the outdoor access for the town.
More homes that aren't 500k each/2000mo , but then everyone else will move here because their new homes are 500k+. In a losing battle. More industry for better jobs. Better traffic advances so 5 corners doesn't take 10 min to get through. Thank you.
Not really a lot of info on the proposed women's prison or the Amazon warehouse facility that may be coming to the town. Are the two proposals something that Essex residents will vote on in the future or are they done deals?
Not to support the development of a corrections facility in Essex.
Offer Local Government 101 to improve understanding of municipal operations and increase public engagement.
Paying attention to the town plan and goals. Usually it's a matter of the developer wants it, okay, we'll give a variance or we'll just overlook the infraction.
Planning for open and safe walking paths available for everyone not just linking neighborhoods.
Please consider the needs of the elderly. Children in this community are well taken care of, but the elderly...We need designated classrooms and exercise space. We paid taxes for a long long time.We deserve attention.
Please don't let Essex turn into commercial sprawl like Williston and South Burlington. Thank you.
Please inform and update us on the status of The Tree Farm soccer fields. They are currently beautifully maintained for soccer use only.
Please remember to update weather-related items. The amount of rain, flooding, and wind damage we have seems to effect property and their value.
Prioritize the residential zoned areas that already exist and ensure the maintenance of existing sidewalks are maintained without waiting 40 years at the expense of existing residents that expect and pay for this multimodal safety on our Town roads!
Protecting renters and building government transparency and accountability
Provide either better staff support for committees and commissions to facilitate their projects or give them more independence including a small budget and ability to apply for grants.
Remove funding of non-profits from property taxes. Non-profits should be funded privately not with public funds.

STOP adding more traffic to Route 15 through Essex. YOU are shortening the lives of families by approving new builds. The families (including two child care centers) are breathing in the exhaust of the 17K daily traffic count.
Stop building apartments . We are over crowded now and need to keep our town a town. Focus on developing run down properties and small attached apartments instead. We don't need more cars, traffic etc.
Support education - funding, attracting the best teachers, keeping music and arts as core curriculums, keeping curriculums current (e.g. AI)
Supporting local businesses and residents over large businesses
The library
The new town center will not be available to use as a social gathering place for seniors for some time. Is there a possibility of a temporary meeting place seniors could go to socialize among themselves. Many elder folk get very lonely.
We need affordable housing more than we need a new town center. We do NOT need Amazon. It is inconsistent with our vision. We need reliable companies that provide well paying jobs that do not cause work injuries.
We need to prioritize the character of this community. That we preserve and enhance the natural spaces in our town -- and give residents more opportunity to explore them through programs and activities in our waters, parks, and forests.
What are their priorities regarding our forests. Do they think that new buildings should be developed even if it fragments our forests and consideration for the wildlife corridors
What happened to the need to be fiscally responsible, I don't need and could live without a full and vibrant town that meets every need and want if I don't live here because I can't afford it.
Your survey fails us by asking leading Qs. We want a community needs assessment. Essex Town governance lacks transparency, doesn't inform the public of the process of land development permit application & other issues until it's too late.