

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2019

Present:

Selectboard Members: Mike Dunham, Nat Kinney, Doug Molde, Kyle Nuse, Eric Osgood
Others: Rosemary Audibert, Brian Krause, Walter Pomroy, Casey Romero, Daryl West, David Butler, Lois Frey, Greg Tatro, James Whitehill, Gordy Smith, Seth Jensen

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:01.

2. Additions, Changes to Agenda

Nat added possible action on winter road maintenance by homeowners. Eric noted that the dates of the minutes to be approved should be changed to September 16, October 7, and October 14.

Eric asked for a moment of silence to acknowledge the losses of Barb Dodge and Sharon Duffy.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Meetings Past

Nat moved and Kyle seconded to approve the minutes of September 16, 2019 with the change Kyle had requested and the minutes of October 7, 2019.

Eric asked what is included in the verbatim transcript of the racial justice workshop item on September 16 that Kyle felt was missing from the original version. Kyle said she felt a lot of the conversation was missing and she wanted to make sure it got in. Eric said this is not the first time we have included a verbatim transcript. But all that is required in minutes is the motions that were made. In some historical minutes that is all that is included. He feels there are good reasons for including the gist of the discussion. Then in the future people can understand the intent of the board in making a decision. It might not be clear from just the motion. But he is hesitant to support having a verbatim transcript unless there is some outcome Kyle felt was necessary that is captured.

Kyle said that agenda item was written up in the newspaper and she felt like it didn't represent the meeting well. She felt not enough of the discussion was shown. Eric said he doesn't want to confuse what the media may report with the meeting minutes. Kyle said in this situation she felt like the minutes didn't reflect enough of what she had said. Doug said this is not the first time we have included a verbatim transcript. There are some things we would like to have on the record. He is okay with that now and then. Mike said he thinks we have only done it for an employee discussion and that was for a specific reason. Nat said it was also done for a dog bite hearing. (*David Butler arrived at 7:09.*)

The motion was passed with Mike opposed.

It was agreed to postpone approval of the October 14 minutes as not all board members had reviewed them.

4. Treasurer's Report / Review and Approve Bills, Warrants, Licenses / Any Action Items

Rosemary said we are at 28% of budget spent. We have received our second installment of highway state aid money and should receive PILOT money by the end of the month. (*Lois Frey arrived at 7:11.*) The amount of delinquent taxes still owed is \$79K. She will give people until the first of the year to get caught up before the accounts go to the attorney. Current taxes are 38.25% collected, which is similar to the past 2 years.

Mike moved to approve and sign the non-arbitrage and use of proceeds certificate, promissory note and resolution needed to borrow \$150,000 from Community National Bank for the purchase of a new truck, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.

Kyle moved to approve the requests from Vermont Studio Center to serve alcohol at cocktail parties from 5:30 to 6:00 on October 27 and November 24, 2019, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.

Rosemary said the town purchased a trailer belonging to Glendon Ingalls at a tax sale and the redemption date has passed. Does the board want to sell the trailer back to him if he pays what he owes in taxes? **Mike moved to sell Glendon Ingalls' trailer back to him for the amount he owes in taxes, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.**

5. Road Commissioner/Road Foreman Report and Action Items

Brian Krause said the public works crew finished the grant-funded work on Fox Lot and Wilson Roads. Next year he is applying for a grant to put stone-lined ditches on Upper French Hill Road.

Brian gave the board numbers for the work to be done at the skate park, if the town crew were to do it. It would not happen until next year.

Casey said she had underestimated how much fill would be needed. The figure came as a shock. Unless the town is willing to do the work this can't happen because if they have to pay an outside contractor it will wipe out the rest of their grant money.

Nat said Brian K. had included going over the test boring data with the consultant as an item for him to do, but at one point Brian S. had said he would be doing that. Brian K. said he hasn't gone over the data with Brian S. yet. Nat asked, so both will be involved? Brian said yes.

6. Winter Road Maintenance by Homeowners

Nat moved and Mike seconded to authorize people who own property on Class 4 roads to do winter road maintenance on those roads without applying to the town for a permit, for the duration of the 2019-20 winter. Doug asked what "winter road maintenance" is. Nat said plowing and sanding. Eric asked Brian K. if he is in agreement with the motion. Brian said yes. (*Brian K. left at 7:23.*) **The motion was passed.**

7. Planning Commission Report

David Butler said the Planning Commission hasn't yet finished working on a recommended Class 4 road policy. They are going to recommend that the town keep any right of way currently owned, even Class 4 roads that are not drivable. But they will recommend that any portion of a Class 4 road that extends beyond the last driveway to a legal residence on that road be turned into a legal trail. They decided to define "legal residence" as any structure that

can be occupied full-time or seasonally occupied. (*Greg Tatro arrived at 7:25.*) The only cases where they recommend throwing up a town right of way is where town roads extend into state property. There are 2 or 3 instances of that. They don't see any need to maintain a right of way on property that is owned by the state.

David handed out the Planning Commission's recommendations for each individual road. They recommend only a few changes. Under their recommendations, Mine Road would be turned into a legal trail. Coddling Hollow Road would be maintained as a Class 4 road to David Prince's driveway and after that would be turned into a legal trail. People who own property on Class 4 roads pay less in taxes than those who live on Class 1, 2 or 3 roads but they are still paying taxes and the Planning Commission feels they are due some sort of service. Turning their roads into legal trails and making them responsible for everything would probably not sit well with their insurance companies or banks or with them. The town is not responsible for maintaining culverts and bridges on legal trails, but is responsible for them on Class 4 roads.

David said the Planning Commission will recommend that the town maintain the permit system at no charge so the town knows who will be doing what. For instance, the town should know who will be responsible for plowing in case something happens. (*Gordy Smith arrived at 7:29.*) If something is damaged, the town will know who is responsible for it.

Nat said often there isn't just one person on the road who maintains it. David said the Planning Commission will recommend that someone be responsible, or maybe two people. They don't think it is necessary to charge fees. Some members of the community with property on Class 4 roads have made a point about natural catastrophes or localized problems due to something like a beaver pond. The Planning Commission believes that at some point the town needs to take responsibility for the basic structure of the road. (*James Whitehill arrived at 7:32.*) In the case of a road becoming impassible, because property owners are paying taxes, the Planning Commission believes the town should take some responsibility. Washouts can occur in between culverts. He has seen that a lot.

David said one thing that is difficult is the question of how to distribute funds budgeted for annual maintenance of Class 4 roads. One thing the Planning Commission discussed, which seems to be fairly well accepted, is creating a hierarchy of what landowners can offer for a cost share. Maybe there is an owner who wants to be responsible or maybe an owner just needs some gravel brought up and he can spread it. Maybe by a certain date landowners can apply for use of the budgeted money and part of the application will show how they are willing to share the cost in dollars or in equipment time. The board could allocate funds according to that.

The Planning Commission is also talking about separating the surface from the structure of the road. Most of the Planning Commission agrees that property owners can make repairs to the surface if there is a small washout or a humped culvert. They believe it is in the best interest of the town if landowners are allowed to deal with the surface and possibly ditches and inlets/outlets of culverts, maybe without a permit. If they are doing something to benefit the town by maintaining a town asset without the town having to spend money he thinks the town should let them do it, with just some sort of notification to Brian K. or Brian S. so the

town knows the work is happening. It is important that the town knows what is going on. It is not important that the property owner put up a bond or a down payment. Any time the structure of the road is impacted, for instance if someone wants to put a power line or water line across the road, digging down below the frost line, that has to be done in a certain manner so the road does not degrade. The Planning Commission feels that should require a permit and probably a performance bond and liability insurance.

Doug asked why the Planning Commission would prefer trails to Class 4 roads. David said because there are certain sections which from now on should not be roads. The best examples are the section of Coddling Hollow Road from the Gomo lot to Waterville or the Davis Neighborhood Trail. For the town to get into certain sections of road would cost exorbitant amounts of money. New state legislation is requiring towns to maintain water quality on those sections of road. Until the state changes the requirements it is easier to turn those roads into trails and not be responsible for culverts and bridges on them.

Eric asked if the Planning Commission found out what use there can be of a legal trail. David said from what he can understand in statute there can be any use as labeled by the board, vehicular or not. It is just that the town is not responsible for maintaining structures on the trail. It is the responsibility of the landowner or VAST.

Doug asked if there is any recommendation regarding gating or not gating. David said his understanding is that if you allow someone to gate it there is a certain time period after which it becomes a private road. Doug said Rob Moore indicated we have the option to gate or not. David said he didn't look into gating trails but if the town allows a gate to exist for a certain amount of time on a Class 4 road it becomes a private road.

Eric asked, it is up to the board what we authorize on a legal trail? If a landowner wants to log, we can authorize logging trucks? David said yes. In their language about permitting they have referred to the landowner or other interested parties.

Doug asked, was there any thought about, rather than drawing the line permanently, allowing landowners to request moving the road back from a trail to a Class 4 road? David said he thinks statute always allows landowners to petition the board to change a road's status.

Eric asked if David knows when the policy will be before the selectboard. David said he doesn't because it is going to take some time. (*Seth Jensen arrived at 7:48.*)

Nat said it sounds like an improvement for people living on Class 4 roads. We would actually be taking responsibility for more. David said it could provide comfort to insurance companies.

Eric said the amount of work the suggested changes to road status would entail is huge. Each of these would require a public hearing with all landowners invited. The selectboard would have to have public viewing of the highway and a finding of fact for each one. He thanked the Planning Commission for all their work. (*David left at 7:52.*)

8. *Merger Study Contract*

Eric said he asked Gordy if he would come in to explain where the trustees went on the merger study contract. Gordy said the trustees agreed that the contract should refer to both the town and the village. The trustees want all communication to go to both Brian and Meredith. Gordy read an article in the News & Citizen indicating that some wanted a comparison with towns that have already merged. He and the other trustees feel if there is any comparison it should be with municipalities that have municipal utilities. Gordy thanked Mike for trying to save the town and village money by reaching out to him to check whether the town and village could use one attorney.

Doug moved and Mike seconded to send the proposed CGR contract to the town's attorney for review along with the comments of the selectboard and the trustees and to split the cost between the town and the village. Gordy said the trustees don't care if we use the town's or the village's attorney. **The motion was passed.**

9. *Act 250 and Bike Trails*

Eric said regarding the question of whether Act 250 applies to the proposed hiking trails, he believes the trustees' thought was to have Walter Pomroy run that question through the village attorney and they are asking if the town would split that cost. Gordy said they felt going to an attorney instead of an environmental consultant would cut cost down and give us an answer more quickly. As property owners they feel they need to ensure they do not authorize activities that open them up to liability and they need to balance that with a desire to allow beneficial activity.

Walter said he feels this is superfluous. Eric asked if he would be willing to lay out his plans for the attorney. Walter said yes.

Mike moved to seek an opinion from the village's attorney about whether an Act 250 permit is needed for the proposed trails and to invite Walter Pomroy to participate in the meeting, with the town and the village splitting the cost, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.

Nat said the word "superfluous" sums up his thoughts. If this is the path of least resistance he is willing to go down this road but it seems excessive to him. The motion was passed.

Eric asked Gordy to explain the village's thoughts regarding environmental study. Gordy said they would like to avoid consulting any environmental consultant. A consultant will look for work and be expensive. Scott Meyer, who has worked for the state on environmental issues, suggested presenting Walter's information to Trish Coppolino of the state Brownfields committee and asking her if any environmental testing needs to be done for the trails. The trustees agreed to that. They feel the answers on this and on the Act 250 question will give the trail committee the green light to proceed.

Eric asked if trustees were going to take the lead on this. Gordy said the village is handicapped due to the manager being out on leave. **Mike moved to authorize Brian Story to get an opinion from Trish Coppolino of the state Brownfields program regarding the need for environmental testing on the site of the proposed trails, Doug seconded and the motion was passed with Nat opposed.**

10. Talc Mill Subdivision

Eric said he believes the trustees approved subdivision of the talc mill property. Gordy said the motion passed 3 to 2 to proceed with subdivision. The trustees agreed not to proceed at this point with environmental testing or the question of what to do with the property, just subdivision. Then maybe the boards, with public input, can decide what do with the property.

Nat asked when Meredith will be back. Gordy said January 1, but he is in communication with her. Brian also sends a lot of correspondence to her.

Doug said he is strongly in favor of subdivision and others selectboard members agreed.

Doug moved to proceed with subdivision of the old mill house parcel from the rest of the talc mill property, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Public Input – Walter Pomroy

Walter said in the past 3 months he has met with many people about the proposed trails. The community is starting to coalesce around this project. Last week he met with the Historical Society. They want to be involved in creating signage for trails and additional historical information signage along the rail trail regarding the property. He thinks he may be able to get them to create a historic trail downtown. Lisa Crews is in the process of applying for a grant that will pay for tools so we can get volunteer crews. He was flabbergasted and stunned by what he read in selectboard minutes. He had previously told the board that before he asked a lot of volunteers to spend time and effort to create trails he wanted to know if the board had any plans for this property and the board said no. Then at last week's meeting they talked about plans for the property including logging and paving the area that has been used as a shooting range. These are places where he wants to build trails. The community is in favor of the project but he is losing support from the selectboard. He saw an excavator working on the VAST trail, but he was told he needs an environmental assessment to do much less digging than what the excavator was doing. He is being held to higher standard. Is this board in favor of the project or not? He can't see spending more time on this or asking others to until he has a firm commitment from this board that the project can go forward. He asks the board to give him assurances that he can move forward before he spends more time on it.

Eric said the board has talked about logging for a couple of years. When the board did priority setting and looked at projects, each just went up on the wall. Including that as a potential project doesn't necessarily mean logging will get done. The trail project was also on the wall. If that never materialized perhaps the town would do logging then. Any future plans for the property would have to go through the trustees. He is no less committed to seeing trails put in. He thinks they would be a great asset.

Nat said the board didn't approve the minutes of the last meeting today because most board members have not read them. The exercise at that meeting was an effort to bring unresolved issues forward. Nowhere did we say we are going to start logging the property. Nat brought up an area where trash had accumulated that he thought we needed to clean out. Brian said the area has been cleaned and people have brought more trash and suggested that maybe in the future that could be a parking area and it would resolve the issue.

Mike asked, why would we just have authorized paying for an attorney to look into Act 250 for the trails if we were not committed to the project? We are committed to it.

Walter said if the board was committed then when someone brought up logging, the response should have been, "No, we are going to do something different." He keeps hearing mixed messages. He will probably ask volunteers to put in hundreds, if not thousands, of hours. Before that he wants to know that logging will not happen a few years from now and destroy trails. He wants a firm commitment.

Mike said he thought the board made a firm enough commitment by spending money on an attorney. He said Walter should not feel as if the board is not committed.

Doug said logging came up and we said we would discuss it in the future. He doesn't think we are backed off at all from the idea that the trail project is good. He thinks, as we said before, we want to give Walter the go-ahead but would like definition of the project along the way. He doesn't think there is any conflict. He thinks Walter has 100% support. The property is much broader than just where Walter's trail might be.

Walter said he just heard a mixed message from Doug. He heard the message that the board is still evaluating and deciding what they want to do. He doesn't want to start on trails if the board is still evaluating what they want to do. The town might sell some of the property. A lot of people are going to be putting in time and effort. He wants a reasonable assurance that nothing will happen to this land. He realizes he has to bring maps and get a plan approved but he wants assurance before asking people to do work.

Doug said logging came up but he doesn't see that as meaning it will happen. If we have committed to having trails, if Walter says he doesn't want a trail to go through logged land, it seems to him that logging would logically be off limits except where needed for a trail.

Or for the ash tree plan, said Kyle. We have to come up with a plan for dealing with the emerald ash borer. We have to look at the big picture and Walter's trails are definitely part of it.

Walter said he takes that as a mixed message. To him, hiking trails mean trying to preserve the natural environment. He feels if there is a dead ash tree and it falls it should just be moved off the trail and left there. His vision for this is different from the board's vision. Bureaucracy is coming out of the woodwork and the board is starting to look at different directions.

Eric said some of the logging question came when VAST approached the board about making improvements to their trail. Before they made any improvements they wanted to know, because of the size of some of the timber, if we would be logging, because it might affect their improvements. That is a question the board has to decide about. He can't foresee the board deciding to log if trails are there.

Mike said he doesn't think Walter should think any issue is going to encroach on the trail system.

Gordy said he will do what he can to facilitate addressing the Act 250 and environmental testing questions as quickly as possible so Walter knows what he can do.

Casey Romero said in the municipal world the board has to work in, until they get an Act 250 permit, it's not real. Walter said an Act 250 permit isn't needed. Casey said the town will get an answer and then go to the next step. Eric said we are making sure we don't need it. Doug said we want to green light it. He is concerned with not wasting volunteer time. He feels Walter is not reading the board's intent on this issue correctly. Mike and Kyle agreed.
(Walter left at 8:24.)

12. Update on Community Development Block Grant Application

Seth Jensen said Brian had asked him to give an update on a Community Development Block Grant opportunity. There has been a lot of work with the Tatros and Jenna's Promise. Greg Tatro organized a meeting with the Agency of Commerce and other agencies to talk about funding opportunities and potential redevelopment of the house that used to have the coffee shop and other properties on Main Street. One funding option the Agency of Commerce said we would be competitive for is a Community Development Block Grant. There is still some discussion with the Agency of Commerce about what components would be most competitive. The grant application is required to go through the town. If that is a direction the selectboard is supportive of and it looks like it fits, public hearings would be required prior to the application. LCPC would be able to assist with applying for and administering the grant. The application would potentially be submitted around February. (Daryl West left at 8:27.) It is a fairly substantial application so if there are any concerns about applying it would be better to know before work on the application starts. Greg said he has already started putting the application together. He reached out to a group Seth told him about that is willing to help with the grant application. He has been working on environmental study and review. He is having a Phase 1 assessment at the end of the month. He has a builder putting together estimates.

Eric asked, this is a modification to what the board previously approved? Greg and Seth explained that what was previously approved was an application for a different grant, the Robert Wood Johnson grant.

Doug asked what this grant money is for. Greg said it is to totally renovate the Barrows Building. He plans to put in new insulation, wiring, plumbing and heating and fix the slate roof. When he is done he thinks it will be almost like new. He would like to get it so it will last another 100 years. That building could be the centerpiece of Johnson if renovation is done right.

Doug asked if any contribution is needed from the town. Seth said the grant can only be awarded to a municipality but all that is being asked of the town is to apply on behalf of the non-profit. Then funds will be transferred to them. Some administrative oversight has to happen and LCPC would be available to assist with that.

Mike moved and Nat seconded that the town be the applicant for a Community Development Block Grant for the proposed development of the Barrows Building.

Nat said the Block Grant Sterling Market got was a loan they had to pay back to the town. This is not like that? Seth and Greg said they believe this is a straight grant, not a loan.

Kyle said the business community is very relieved that Greg has taken on this project. This is huge.

The motion was passed.

13. Light Industrial Park Update and Discussion

Eric said we have not been officially notified on the two grants we went for but it appears we did not get them because a list was released that we are not on. But he sat in on a phone call Friday with Brian S. and the EDA. We appear to have a strong application for an EDA grant for \$1,038,000. We should be able to get a proposal submitted within a couple of weeks. They will let us know within 30 days if we are a strong candidate and then we have 90 days to fill out the full application. There are three factors that make us qualified with high marks for potential approval for the grant – having received FEMA disaster assistance, being part of an Opportunity Zone and having low per capita income. If the regional director gives the green light the application goes to D.C. They can't predict how long before D.C. makes a ruling but they have never seen an issue when something they put forward was not approved by D.C. The grant is an 80-20 match and the EDA representative did caution us that they do not like to see in kind contributions. We have been using those a lot for state grants but this would be a federal grant. When in kind contributions are identified a flag goes up because in other parts of the country there may be associated corruption issues. The EDA representative suggested that we be prepared to have to make the 20% match (around \$200K) but said that if the grant were issued we could do some in kind work that would reduce the amount we would have to contribute.

Eric said he had sent out an email to the board about his idea that perhaps the board should hire someone – maybe Duncan Hastings – who would be dedicated solely to looking for funding opportunities for the light industrial park project and working on grant applications. This would take a lot of the workload off Brian, who would still be involved and would supervise. One of the first assignments would be look for gap funding grants, possibly at the state level. The EDA representative said if we could find other grants that would complement the EDA grant that could reduce our match. We don't have to decide tonight about hiring someone for this.

Doug said he thinks it would be a good idea to have someone, based on Brian's workload. Eric said Seth Jensen from LCPC and John Mandeville from LEDC are looped into this. Kyle said she thinks Eric's idea is smart. We have to be very proactive.

Doug said he is very concerned that the idea of contributing \$200K is contrary to what we promised the voters. Eric said we would have to go back to the voters to get that money.

Nat asked, this grant would be not just for updating plans but for infrastructure? Eric said he understands that it includes infrastructure. Nat said we would have to update plans first, so the grant needs to include that.

Seth said the EDA funding Brian has been pursuing is a significantly larger pot of money than what the EDA usually has for the eastern region. It is marked for communities with a history of flood impacts and demographic challenges like low incomes.

14. Skate Park Appointment

Casey asked the board to appoint James Whitehill to the Skate Park Committee. James said he just moved to town. He has spent a lot of time here in previous summers. He reached out to Casey and said he would like to work on refreshing dirt jumps at the skate park. He has been going to committee meetings and Casey asked him to be officially appointed to the committee.

Kyle moved to appoint James Whitehill to the Skate Park Committee, Doug seconded and the motion was passed. (James, Greg, Seth and Casey left at 8:48.)

15. Health Officer Appointment

Doug moved to accept Tracy Myers' resignation as deputy health officer, Kyle seconded and the motion was passed.

Nat moved to appoint Tracy Myers as health officer, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.

16. Outlook on FY21 Sheriff's Patrol Budget

Nat passed out the proposed Lamoille County Sheriff's Department patrol budget for the next fiscal year. The sheriff is partnering with DEA to bring on someone to help with drug investigations. That will be very significant. In the budget, there is a proposed increase of 2.63% but because of the way funds are being reallocated for the resource officer, our contribution would go up \$49K or 10.5%. The Lamoille Union resource officer in the current fiscal year brings in revenue of \$81K, but the money that comes in goes out again to pay the resource officer. That money is in the patrol budget currently because the resource officer has been used to fill in as needed for patrol. The officer has worked as a resource officer only during school. In the next budget, that position will be completely separate from the patrol budget. That is the reason there is only a 2.63% increase overall but a 10.5% increase for us. The cost for the health insurance benefit is up 69%. Roger Marcoux attributes that to more of his staff having families than in the previous year. In the past he has borne a significant share of the vehicle patrol cost and had said that we would be paying more of a share, which is happening. Nat doesn't think we could get support for this budget from the town voters.

Eric asked what the other towns' reaction was. Nat said quiet and somber. Everyone said they would take it back to their boards. He doesn't see Wolcott going for it. We are the biggest town in the contract so we have an outsized say. We could potentially be looking at a reduction in service.

Eric said the patrol budget is still 2.6% above the current year without the \$81K expense that was taken out. We can see that some goes to health insurance and having a full crew. But he would think there would be an offset with not paying as much overtime.

Doug asked how many full time employees are in the budget. Nat said 6 officers and a detective. Our budget includes part of the sheriff's salary. We don't pay his whole salary.

Nat said the work LCSD is doing around drug enforcement right now is significant and valuable, as is the work they are doing around sexual abuse.

Kyle asked how the collaboration with the DEA affects us financially. Nat said financially it has no impact on us, at least for the first 2 years. The DEA is putting up part of the expense and Roger is putting up part from his other funds. There is nothing in our budget for that but in two years when DEA funding runs out then we would potentially consider whether we want to keep paying for it.

Nat said this wouldn't be a great time to cut the detective because of the drug work he is doing. We need that position. Doug said a lot of times criminalizing or policing behavior isn't the best approach with drugs. It's clear there is a big problem in our community. He wonders if Jenna's Promise is more of a solution than the criminal or police aspect. Nat said that is a good question. Eric said he sees Jenna's Promise as a long-term solution but we have to deal with issues that are on St. John's Street now.

Eric said what is concerning is that typically when we go through our budget process we come up with something close to the rate of inflation. Taxes usually go up but hopefully somewhere near the rate of inflation. It seems like every year patrol comes in with very significant increases. There is always a reason for them and we absorb them in our budget somewhere but he doesn't think they are sustainable. Their increases should be closer to the rate of inflation.

Kyle said there is not a lot any of us can do about the health insurance increase. Nat said he would like to dig into the insurance increase a little more. Roger has to have a somewhat competitive salary and benefits package to compete with towns around us. Mike said there is not much room in the budget to cut.

Doug said it is hard to say we don't have policing if we want to make our community welcoming and invite people in. Nat said he is not sure we need policing from 1:00 to 6:00 am. But Roger always bristles at that. Eric asked, if he cut policing during those hours, could Roger reduce to 5 officers? Other than making cuts in the number of officers, how else do you cut the budget? There is no large line item other than salaries.

Mike asked, Cambridge is happy with their State Police, aren't they? That is a pretty large community. Doug asked, don't the State Police have a satellite location there? Eric and Nat said they believe they do.

Kyle asked, weren't we going to get the community together to talk about alternatives? Nat said yes. Mike said he thinks we should get a price from the State Police. Doug said he doesn't think we will find they have capacity. Nat said their capacity for contracts with towns is based on officers willing to work overtime. The legislature will have to sort out this whole thing. There are towns that pay little for policing and get a lot and those that pay a lot and get little. There is no equity in the state. There are portions of the state that are very badly covered. We can contract for patrol services from the State Police, but that won't get us the detective.

Eric asked what the voters' appetite would be for not having police service. Mike said he thinks everyone thinks there is a need for police. Eric said there was a report on WCAX about a woman who called the State Police because she could see her place being robbed on surveillance video and it was hours before a state trooper responded. What would the voters of Johnson do if someone had an active burglary going on and the State Police took that long to respond? Doug said the voters need that example at town meeting when they are looking at the budget.

Kyle said we are paying for a personal connection to the sheriff. We can communicate with the sheriff's department and we get quick response time. Doug said LCSD has a very well-trained force handling everything from social services to criminals. Nat and Kyle agreed that we get a lot for our money.

Mike said we do a good job of keeping our budget down but the school budget, which we have little control over, has a big effect. Doug said by the time the budget comes out we will have a revised appraisal. He expects it will be substantially increased, maybe redistributed somewhat. We will be busy with hearings.

Eric said he would like to hear from the public. He asked Lois Frey what she thinks the reaction would be to a \$50K increase for sheriff's department services. Lois said she thinks there would be concern. There are good questions to consider, such as whether we need 24-hour patrol. Nat said Roger would say that criminals figure out when there is no patrol coverage. Lois said the idea of reducing staffing by one officer was also mentioned. Nat said that would be related to cutting the hours of coverage. Lois asked, does the sheriff have any control over the 69% increase in health insurance? Could that happen in Johnson if employees decided to have families? Eric said if employees had a lot of kids it could happen. Lois said maybe something could be done with their benefits. Doug said there is the question of whether they would leave for better benefits. Nat said we are already behind the envelope for benefits. Our retirement package is much worse than those of municipal departments.

Nat said he will ask the sheriff to take another stab at the budget.

17. Selectboard Issues/Concerns

Eric said Wednesday is the statewide disaster recovery exercise which is being held here. He will be here. He is planning to have a backseat role. He also invited all of the highway and office crew to come up and go through the tabletop exercise. He encouraged board members to come for as much of the day as they can.

18. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22.