

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2016

Present:

Selectboard Members: Mike Dunham, Nat Kinney, Doug Molde, Eric Osgood

Others: Brian Story (Administrator), Casey Romero, Dave Barra

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:05.

2. Additions, Changes to Agenda

The board agreed to add possible items regarding the VASA membership requirement for those riding ATVs on town roads and posting on municipal building bulletin boards.

3. Skate Park Update and Request for Funds

Casey Romero said the Skate Park and Bike Track Committee is requesting an increase in funding for the next fiscal year. They also would like the town to provide brush hogging for the existing pump track a couple of times next year. She explained that for a good many years there have been no on-site personnel at the skate park. Two years ago they hired someone for about 67 hours, but that was too little time. This past year they had someone on site for about 340 hours and the difference was huge. They can't pay personnel for that many hours and continue to build a reserve fund towards improvements as they have been doing. Casey showed expense and revenue figures for recent years illustrating that. It is valuable to have a person there who can serve as a role model and get to know riders and families. They are asking for an increase in funding of \$800 to cover part of the cost of having someone on site. The total amount they are requesting is \$3800.

Doug asked what amount they have in reserve. Casey said cash on hand at the end of the year is \$9722. But that is all earmarked for future improvements. The amount they are requesting doesn't totally cover the additional personnel expense, but Casey wants to start with that amount and see how it goes.

4. Energy Planning

Brian remembered an item he wanted to add to the agenda. On Monday he went to the energy plan meeting with LCPC. If we are interested in developing an enhanced energy plan, LCPC would like to hear about it before January. The plan, if approved, would give us a say in siting of energy projects in Johnson. We need to think about whether we want to do it or not. It will be a lot of work. We would be one of the first places in the state doing it. There are still a lot of unknowns about how it will work. We could say we would be better off letting someone else go first, but it could end up being a missed opportunity if a project were to be sited in Johnson before we developed a plan.

Mike said he thinks anything we can do to give us more control is something we should be involved in.

Brian said the plan will involve land use policies similar to zoning. If we want to say there should be no wind turbines on a certain ridgeline, for that to have much weight we would

have to have a land use policy saying that we are conserving that land and won't allow private development there either. For anything we want to claim in the plan, we have to provide alternatives that meet the state's energy goals.

Mike asked what kind of costs would be incurred. Brian said he is not sure. He was led to believe on Monday that the village won't be eligible to do this – that the planning would have to be done at the town level. But he could not find that language in the bill. Those are examples of things he still has to get definite answers about. Developing a plan will involve some expense and a significant amount of time, but it will give us some say in a process where we have had none.

Doug asked if Brian could find out before the next meeting how many places in Johnson have been considered possible wind sites. Brian said he will see if he can get the map shown at the meeting.

Brian discussed some of the other unanswered questions about energy planning, such as whether we can partner with another town or say we have no suitable wind sites and want to site only solar projects.

5. *Marketing Plan Update*

Brian said he has been working on how to pay for a marketing plan consultant. There are Rural Business Development Grant funds available from USDA. A grant could cover all our costs and could be used for both planning and implementation, but we would have to complete all work in one year. It could be up to a 100% grant. Johnson is designated as a poverty area and therefore is one of their desired locations for Rural Business Development Grants. We might want to contribute some money. First he needs to send out a letter of intent, which will go out this Friday. Next we will develop our application using their scoring system. Grants that have a local match component are more competitive, but we get a bonus for being in a designated area so maybe we can do without a local match. (*Dave Barra arrived.*) Doug gave Brian suggestions on the letter of intent. The board agreed to pursue a Rural Business Development Grant with plans to involve the trustees, Johnson Works, etc. in the decisions made with the consultant.

6. *Compost Facility Discussion*

Doug moved to go into executive session to discuss compost facility negotiations, inviting town attorney Dave Barra and Brian Story to remain, Mike seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 7:57. The board came out of executive session at 8:51.

7. *Review of December 7th Joint Meeting*

Eric reminded the board that at the end of the joint meeting there was discussion about whether a moderator is needed for future joint board meetings. Brian said Kyle emailed to him to say that she would still prefer to have a moderator. Eric said he would prefer to have one in that case, and Mike and Nat agreed. Nat said he would be in favor of it even if Kyle did not feel it was necessary. Mike said just the moderator's presence keeps everyone on task and civil. Others agreed. Eric said he thinks there is benefit. Nat said he can't see any negative. Doug agreed. He said he feels the last meeting went so well because there was a moderator. Mike said someone has to be in charge and if it is a member of one of the boards there could be resentment from the other side. He feels it is good to have a neutral party running the meeting

8. VASA Membership Requirement

Mike said some people have talked to him about having to belong to the VASA four-wheeler organization to ride an ATV on town roads. If someone has a registered and taxed ATV, why do they have to belong to that organization to drive across town roads?

Doug said he thinks the Johnson ordinance is overreaching and has requirements not authorized by state statute. The VASA membership requirement may be one. Eric said VASA and local ATV riders wanted town roads to be opened up to ATV use but there were concerned citizens who were opposed. The thought behind requiring VASA membership was that VASA would police its own members, because realistically the police can't do it.

Mike asked if the selectboard might be agreeable to changing the ordinance. Eric said he is not sure we want to open up that can of worms. We are not enforcing it now. Doug said he thinks we should have Brian look up the ordinance and relevant state statute and see how they differ and then leave it alone.

9. Posting on Municipal Bulletin Board

Eric said Kyle had asked to have something posted on the bulletin board and Rosemary was uncertain about whether it was appropriate because the message was somewhat political. Brian said he thinks the bulletin board Kyle had in mind was the one in the lobby that already has a number of public postings. Nat asked who else posts there and what the process is for deciding whether a posting is allowed. Eric said it goes through Rosemary. Usually the postings are about community goings on.

Eric said he is not sure the message is appropriate for the town office. We are supposed to be neutral. Nat asked how we can be neutral if we don't already have a policy in place. We can't reject one posting arbitrarily. Eric said that is why we have never restricted any posting as far as he knows. We don't currently have a policy. Nat said he thinks we should have a special space where anyone can post anything as long as it is not illegal. Eric thinks there should be no political messages on town property. He asked, what if the Ku Klux Klan wanted to post something? We are a government body and can't even have a cross. If we are going to develop a policy it would require both boards. He suggested the board can discuss this issue further at the next meeting. He doesn't feel comfortable with any posting that has a political slant. Nat said he doesn't want to be in a position where we are policing what is acceptable and what is political in nature. Mike said it would be offensive if someone posted something pro-KKK. Would it be bad if we limited that? Where do we draw the line? Doug said he thinks we should see if there is a standard policy that has been vetted through lawyers. He would like to know what the standard is. Nat said his high school had one bulletin board where any student could post anything that wasn't illegal. The only requirement was that you had to put your name on it. He would like to see a policy in place before we turn down any posting. The board agreed to put off making any decision on this.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13.