

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, MAY 23, 2016

Present:

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

Others: Duncan Hastings (Administrator), Ron Rodjenski (Hyde Park Town Administrator)

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:06.

2. Additions, Changes to Agenda

It was agreed to add discussion of a letter from the trustees and a written complaint Mike received and to change the order in which items are discussed.

3. Compensation Plan

Ron Rodjenski said he had been asked to look at wages and job descriptions. He distributed some comparative information. Johnson's wages appear to be competitive, maybe at the high end of the middle range for this area. There was discussion about wages and overtime in Johnson and in other nearby towns.

Duncan said we pay overtime in increments of 8 hour days rather than 40 hour weeks, which doesn't make sense to him. That makes overtime harder to manage.

Ron suggested that Johnson's pay rates are competitive enough that it could be reasonable to expect more from employees, such as specialized training.

Duncan pointed out that if our highway employees come in early to deal with snow they stay until their normal leaving time instead of leaving early, which contributes to overtime. Ron said that doesn't happen in Hyde Park. Duncan said changing that would be a huge culture change.

Eric suggested that July 1 might be a good time to make some changes. We could make sure employees understand that some of their 300 hours of overtime for the year will be in the summer and that the expectation is that if they come in early they will leave early. Doug said he would be in favor of having employees leave early if they come in early and having overtime based on the number of hours per week rather than per day. But that leads to unpredictable hours for the employee. He thinks predictability is beneficial. Ron said Hyde Park's employees enjoy being able to take a day off if they have worked 3 long days that week.

Ron suggested including the highway crew in the process and asking them for comments.

Eric said he would like a pay scale that would give employees a financial incentive for completing classes.

Duncan said we don't currently offer callout pay. That could be an incentive that could be used to help control overtime. Employees get paid for a minimum of 4 hours when they are called out, even if they have to work less than that. But it is rare for them to be called out and work less than 4 hours. They are not paid to be on call. Eric said if we were to pay employees for being on call we would probably reduce the minimum hours paid for callouts. Duncan said another way to do it would be to have different work weeks for different employees so there would always be someone available on weekends.

Ron said he would be willing to meet with the road crew to discuss possible changes.

Doug asked Brian if there are any problems with getting the labor needed with the current on call system. Brian said no. People tell him if they are not going to be available on a weekend. And all come in within half an hour if called in.

Ron suggested board members review the 10 ideas and questions he had listed, add their own, and then discuss them before involving employees in the discussion.

One of the things Ron had listed had to do with plowing private roads. Duncan said we don't plow any private roads. Mike pointed out that there are some public roads that just lead to one person's house. He suggested that those should no longer be town highways.

Ron suggested the board should first review his questions, then perhaps formulate an incentive program, then reach out to the road crew. Doug said he thinks we should figure out what changes will be needed based on Champlain Basin requirements. He thinks we should address the basis for overtime, call-ins, and having some overtime used in summer. Eric said he thinks it would be good if everyone identified a priority. A formal wage policy with incentives that improve skills would be his.

One of the documents distributed was an example of a pay schedule with steps. Duncan said he doesn't personally think steps should be guaranteed but should be based on evaluation.

Nat said he would like to see employees making continuous improvement. Duncan said we would pay for any training we required. It could be an annual requirement.

Ron suggested that Duncan collect thoughts from selectboard members and send them to him. Eric asked if Ron could then come back with a suggested wage plan. Ron agreed. Eric said he thinks the board should review and discuss it before going to the highway department employees.

Duncan said he doesn't think village positions should be in the equation. His position is strictly a town position so he sees no harm in including his position. The selectboard and trustees will be discussing shared employees so he doesn't think we would want to include them now.

4. *Gravel Pit Operation and Loader Purchase*

Duncan said he and Brian tried to come up with a cost for processing sand and gravel from our own pit. If we include the cost of having GW Tatro do work in our pit to help us access

the remaining gravel and the cost of having crushing done, then gravel from our pit would cost us about \$10.20 per yard compared to \$15 per yard to buy crushed gravel. Sand would cost us \$10.18 per yard, compared to buying sand at \$11.63 per yard. But you could argue that if we screened the sand we wouldn't need to crush it. In that case, it would cost us \$7.81 per yard.

If we purchased all our sand and gravel instead of getting it from our gravel pit, the impact to the budget would be about \$20K. The highway crew now spends about 350-400 hours per year in the pit processing sand and gravel. That is 10 weeks' worth of time, which could be used to work on the highways in the summer. The additional time spent on highways wouldn't impact the budget because the employees are being paid anyway, but we could see a definite benefit in improvement to our roads. Duncan thinks if we start using processed gravel and put proper crowns, etc. on the roads our maintenance costs will go down and public perception will be good.

Brian said there is about 20K yards of gravel left in our pit. Duncan said that is about 2 years' worth.

Eric asked if what Duncan had suggested previously was that we could extract the rest of that gravel and then start closure of the pit. Brian said that is a lot of work. Duncan said that sounds good in theory, but the loading, transporting, unloading and screening would be very labor intensive. He is not sure the value of the gravel is enough to warrant putting the work into it. It may be better to spend money on processed gravel.

Mike asked if Duncan would recommend closing the pit down now and starting to buy processed gravel. Duncan said yes, that would be his recommendation. Mike said he agrees. Brian said he would like to see us get another year out of the pit, but we don't have the proper permits or training. He believes a 40-hour course is required for MSHA certification.

Ron suggested maybe the town could lease the pit to someone who would extract the remaining gravel. Duncan said we don't have an Act 250 permit, we don't have MSHA certification and we don't have the necessary training. We could look into leasing. We would have to look into the deed. There are some codicils that could limit our ability to lease.

Eric asked if Duncan could follow up with Nadeau to make sure the Nadeau pit can support our needs and follow up on developing a closure plan before the next meeting. Duncan said he would also like to follow up with the owner of the MSI pit.

Nat moved that town employees are to stay out of the gravel pit until authorized by the selectboard, seconded by Mike. Nat explained that his intention is to pause operations just until the board can get next steps sorted out. **The motion was passed.**

Duncan said he asked on his email list about loaders other municipalities are using. Out of 17 respondents, a majority are using John Deeres and a majority are using sizes ranging from 524 to 544. Only two – Johnson and Stowe – are using a 624. Stowe also operates a pit. If we are not operating a pit he doesn't think we need a 624. Brian agreed. Duncan said he thinks

we could put a new loader purchase on hold until we make a decision about what to do with the gravel pit.

Brian said he would like to see us get a set of forks and a broom when we downsize. Now we just have a loader. There are a wide variety of attachments now for loaders. It would make sense to get a quick coupler, forks and a broom. A broom would help us all summer long. Duncan said now the village is sweeping the streets with its Bobcats. That is probably not the most efficient way to do it. Brian said he would go with a 544 with a 3-yard bucket.

The board agreed to defer a final decision on a tractor purchase.

5. ***Paving Plan***

Duncan said his recommendation for 2016-17 paving, which Brian agrees with, is to pave Hogback Road in its entirety and Clay Hill up as far as the JSC entrance. Both roads would get one pass overlays with an average thickness of 1 inch. Eric said if we end up short of money, he thinks Clay Hill would be the first to let go. Duncan said there is also some maintenance money in the budget that he would like to use for crack sealing on the upper section of Clay Hill and for line striping, but some could be used for paving.

Kyle asked who pays for crosswalk striping maintenance. Duncan said the village.

Mike moved to plan for 2016-17 to pave Hogback Road and the section of Clay Hill up to the JSC entrance, seconded by Doug. Eric asked if it would make any sense to coordinate paving with Hyde Park. Ron said with some planning if there is a continuous pave in both towns it could make sense. **The motion was passed.**

6. ***Animal Control Ordinance and ACO (Shared Concept)***

Duncan said he and Ron have talked about the concept of a shared animal control officer. Ron said Hyde Park's animal control officer resigned. They don't have enough hours to make the job of much interest. Ron feels ideally the job would be shared among Johnson, Hyde Park and Wolcott.

Nat said we would want to be really clear on the chain of command, who is responsible for hiring and who they work for. Doug said he thinks we should start with a uniform animal control ordinance. Then it gets easier. Eric suggested that if it wasn't a full-time job maybe it could be combined with the community resource officer position.

7. ***Community Priorities***

Eric suggested deferring this to a future meeting.

8. ***Police Services Priorities***

Eric suggested deferring this to a future meeting. *(Ron left at 8:53.)*

9. ***Executive Session***

Nat moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel issues and a possible legal matter, inviting Brian and Duncan to remain. Mike seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:55. The board came out of executive session at 10:23.

10. Proposed Job Posting and Projector Use Policies

Doug moved to inform the village trustees that the selectboard feels the job posting policy they submitted is not currently necessary as the personnel policy contains provisions for hiring shared employees, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.

Doug moved to accept the projector use policy proposed by the village trustees, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

UNAPPROVED