

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2015

Present:

Selectboard Members: Nat Kinney, Doug Molde, Kyle Nuse, Eric Osgood, Howard Romero
Others: Duncan Hastings (Manager), Rosemary Audibert (Clerk), Steve Smith, Lois Frey, David Butler, Dan Perkins, Rose Warner, Mike Patch, Emma Marvin, Lea Kilvadyova

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:02.

2. Additions, Changes to Agenda

Duncan added notice of a public VTrans meeting on replacement of the twin bridges on 100C. The meeting will be July 20 at 8:00 p.m. He is also adding a request for issuance of a warrant to impound dogs and discussion of library budget issues.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Meetings Past

Howard moved to approve the minutes of May 18 and June 9, 2015, Kyle seconded, and the motion was passed.

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

Rosemary said to date we are at 96% of budget spent. She still needs to do an adjustment for equipment purchases. Income is at 105% of budget. She thinks we will be very close to budget this year.

The tax sale will be July 14. A board member should be there. Doug said he can go.

The amount delinquent on current taxes is \$185K. We are at 96% collected for taxes last year, very close to the prior 2 years.

Howard moved to sign the Highway Equipment Borrowing Resolution authorizing borrowing \$99,300 to purchase a new truck, Doug seconded, and the motion was passed.

Howard moved to sign the highway equipment note to borrow \$99,300 for 5 years at a rate of 1.45%, Doug seconded, and the motion was passed.

Howard moved to sign the tax certificate necessary for highway equipment borrowing, seconded by Kyle. Doug asked what the tax certificate is. Rosemary said it says we will follow all IRS rules and we don't have more than \$10 million in debt. **The motion was passed.**

Howard moved to approve a second class liquor license for Vermont Maple Sugar Company (Butternut Farms), with the usual letter to be sent, Kyle seconded and the motion passed. (Mike Patch arrived at 7:13.)

Rosemary asked if the board would like her to look into borrowing money to pay invoices for the College Hill project. Due to the timing of the project we may not have sufficient cash on hand. The engineer's cost estimate is \$119K. The interest rate would probably be less than one percent. Duncan said the project costs are 80% reimbursable but 100% of the cost has to be paid by us up front. **Doug moved to authorize Rosemary to secure a line of credit for the purpose of paying College Hill project expenses after comparing multiple banks, Nat seconded, and the motion was passed.**

Rosemary said listers Dan Perkins and Rose Warner have both submitted letters of resignation. Duncan said if the board accepts their resignations tonight we will have no listers. Rose said she and Dan agreed to finish any work for the current Grand List. Duncan said if their resignations have been accepted they can't participate in grievances. Rose said her effective resignation date is July 7. Dan said his is July 1. Duncan said we have had no responses to ads for listers. Rose said she is willing to continue for a while as 911 coordinator.

Rose said many towns are hiring appraisers. Duncan asked the listers if they would consider staying on if there were an appraiser and the listers just had to meet a couple of times a year. Dan said he would not. Duncan said most towns that hire assessors have listers who just review the list with the assessor and sign off on it. Rose said if that is all that is required she would be willing to do it. Eric asked when we would have to have an assessor on board. Duncan said at a bare minimum by next spring. Nat asked how an assessor is different from a lister. Duncan said it would be a paid position. The assessor would do all that the listers currently do, except that only the elected listers can legally sign the Grand List. Many towns with hired appraisers do appraisals on a rolling basis instead of reappraising all properties every 5 or 6 years.

Eric asked if the listers would be willing to withdraw their resignations until the whole process for this year is complete. Rose said yes. Dan said no. Eric asked if one lister can sign. Duncan said no. At least two listers are required for any action of the lister board. Rose said she will be gone through the end of July, but possibly reachable electronically.

Howard moved to accept Dan Perkins' resignation effective July 1. Dan said if something went to the BCA he would be willing to come back after July 1. Duncan said he can't do that if he has already resigned. He would have to be reappointed first. **The motion was not seconded.**

Doug moved to table consideration of the listers' resignations until the town's interest is protected, seconded by Howard. Eric said they will still be gone on their effective resignation dates. Duncan said you can't tell someone they can't resign. Doug asked, what is the meaning of our accepting the resignation then? Duncan said it means that the board commits to finding a replacement. **The motion failed.**

Nat moved to accept Dan Perkins's resignation as of July 1, seconded by Howard. Doug asked what the effect of this motion is. Eric said they will no longer be listers as of their effective resignation date either way. This just allows Duncan to start posting to fill the

position. Dan said he is willing to come back if something comes to the BCA after July 1. Duncan said if necessary the board could reappoint Dan for 2 weeks or a month. **The motion was passed with Doug opposed.**

Eric asked if Rose is willing to withdraw her resignation and submit a new one effective September 1. Rose said she could work until Thanksgiving if she really had to. She can write a new resignation letter with a different effective date. Eric asked Duncan to repost the lister openings, explaining that the town will probably be hiring an appraiser to do most of the work. Eric asked Duncan to write a formal letter to Dan thanking him for his service.

Rosemary said she has received a request to purchase a plot in Evergreen Ledge Cemetery. She has a copy of the map and price schedule, which has not been updated in quite a while. Eric asked if the need is imminent. Rosemary said no. Eric suggested that the board schedule a working session to discuss the cemetery.

5. Road Commissioner/Road Foreman Report and Action Items

Eric said he wanted to apologize to Steve, Jason, and Chris for his remarks at the last meeting about Jason not taking training classes. AOT is still building its training program. Many of their offerings seem to be geared to supervisory positions. There is a timesheet class. Steve said Jason will be taking that one.

Steve said since the last meeting we have had 6.6 inches of rain. The highway crew replaced a crushed culvert on Cemetery Rd. They did landscaping around the trailhead building. They are awaiting mulch hay so they can seed the area. They delivered 2-2.5 yards of crushed stone for the canoe portage. They have been grading, ditching, and hauling gravel. Steve wants to advocate again for giving Jason a pay increase to bring him up to the equal pay he deserves. Lois asked him about stone for Journey's End and will be getting more information for him about that. Duncan said the town crew repaired the damage left by Travis Hill when he had work done on his water line. He asked Steve to keep track of the time and materials for that work. We will get S.D. Ireland back here to deal with issues with last year's paving. *(Dan and Steve left at 7:45.)*

6. Planning Commission Report

David Butler said Paul Dreher should have form-based code ready to present to the Planning Commission by the end of the month. There has been extensive discussion on the steering committee about administrative authority. David told them to let the Planning Commission decide.

The Planning Commission invited the Agency of Natural Resources to come to a meeting they are going to try to coordinate with the Planning Commission, the trustees and the selectboard to talk about flood zones and river corridors and about our responsibility.

Skip Vallee is going to present his latest plan to the Planning Commission on July 13. Eric said if a quorum of selectboard members plans to attend the selectboard will have to warn it as a meeting. David Butler said he intends to run the meeting on a positive note and squash negative criticism from the public. He intends to talk to Vallee about using part of his parking lot as a bus drop-off and pickup location for public buses.

Nat said he doesn't want the meeting to be negative but he thinks David should be careful not to squelch public input. David said our input is limited. We don't have a say in things like the number of pumps he puts in. Nat said last time Vallee came to talk about his project he said he wanted community input, not just about what we can legally control.

David said he thinks the Newport Maplefields looks good. It is a 2-story building with professional rental spaces above. He could see something like that being a good addition to Johnson. Kyle said he was forced to comply with form based code in Newport. David said there was a law suit threatened but he decided it would be less expensive to accept some of the city's requirements and work with them. We aren't going to have form based code in place in time to affect Vallee's project. David thinks he will get his Act 250 permit application in not long after this meeting. He would like to get Vallee to bring the building forward so there is green space between the building and the street. He would like a 2-story structure. That corner is a gateway to the village and an eye-catching spot. It could be something incredible if there is green space between the store and the cemetery, maybe even with a welcome sign. Howard said the Studio Center would like Vallee's building close to their building because it would be quieter for their residents. David said it is unknown what the Agency of Transportation will do about ingress and egress from there.

It was agreed to warn the July 13 Planning Commission meeting as a meeting of the selectboard in case at least 3 selectboard members attend. (*Lea arrived at 7:55.*)

7. *Highway Signs for Rail Trail and Related Ideas*

Lea said she had come to ask for support in producing a wayfinding sign for the rail trail and Old Mill Park. There is one that was approved by VTrans as part of the Main St. Project. She has been working with the rail trail committee on information panels for the rail trail building. They are on hold until VAST produces their maps and signage between Main St. and the rail trail. As a first step she would like this sign produced for Main St. She doesn't imagine similar signs would be all along Railroad St. She has worked with VTrans on identifying a location for the sign. There are two different potential places. We need to apply for a 1111 permit from the state. She spoke with the Planning Commission to get their approval before applying for the permit. The cheapest deal for signs seems to be the Department of Corrections program. They can produce the signs at a cost of \$103 each. We need two of them. A local graphic design company would charge \$400. She hopes the Recreation Committee and Friends of the Lamoille Rail Trail will contribute money but she also hopes the selectboard would support this financially. Nat said the Recreation Committee will discuss contributing money at the next meeting.

David Butler said it is a concern of the Planning Commission that our downtown is being bypassed by this trail because there is nothing leading people from the village to the trail or from the trail to the village. They approved this sign as a start but the vision is to have a "yellow brick road" from the trail to the village to make it easy for people to go between them without getting sidetracked or lost. Lea said the Planning Commission approved this sign and gave their support for signing all of Railroad St. The location she envisions for this double sign would be on Main St. right across from Railroad St.

Doug moved to approve the design of the wayfinding sign to be placed on Main St., seconded by Howard. Eric asked if this has been run by the trustees. Lea said no. Eric said he thinks as a courtesy it would be a good idea to tell them the selectboard has approved this sign and ask if they have any concerns. She said she will do that. **The motion was passed.**

Lea said she has done some research on marking the roadway with sharrows to indicate the road is shared with bicyclists. We can rent a template from Morristown. If the town were supportive, this could be accomplished sooner rather than later. The road is used now by bicyclists even though the trail is not open. David said if we don't advertise what we have to offer downtown and make sure people can get from the rail trail to the village we will get bypassed.

Howard said he thinks our trailhead building ought to say "Johnson" on it, like a railroad station building, for the benefit of non-locals who are using the rail trail. Has that been thought about? Lea said it can be incorporated into our strategy for information panels. Howard asked if there will be no portable toilet in the building until the trail is open. Lea said she read that the Rec Committee was going to place it. Nat said he will talk to Heather about it.

Duncan said the town highway department can probably mark the road.

Doug asked if Lea can talk more about travel lanes and safety for bicyclists on Railroad St. Lea said the state has rules about how far the marks need to be from the edge. They are in the lane, not marking a special bike lane, because we don't have the option of a bike lane on that road. There is an upcoming bicycle safety training. There will need to be continuous education. Duncan suggested that he and Lea put together a printed plan the board could approve that would have the standards and requirements laid out.

6. *Manager's Report and Action Items*

Duncan said David Jones was called in on a dog complaint over the weekend. There were differing stories about a dog attacking another dog and David was unable to determine the facts, but all the dogs in the area are unlicensed. David wants to impound them. He can impound a dog that is off its owner's property but he needs a warrant to impound an unlicensed dog that is on its owner's property. Duncan is asking the board to issue a blanket warrant to authorize an animal control officer and/or the sheriff's department to impound unlicensed dogs on the premises of the dog owner. The warrant has a 90 day expiration date. During that period the animal control officers or LCSD would need to make a listing of any dogs impounded. Owners can reclaim impounded dogs if they license them and pay the boarding fees. If they are kept for 10 days and not claimed they can be adopted out by NCAL. If any dogs are impounded, it must be reported to the selectboard. Doug said he wonders why we don't issue such a warrant on a continuing basis. **Doug moved to issue a 90-day Warrant to Impound Dogs authorizing animal control and/or Lamoille County Sheriff's department officers to impound unlicensed dogs found on the premises of the dog owner, Howard seconded, and the motion was passed.**

The library trustees noticed that the library budget as presented in the town report had two columns reversed. The estimated year end column and the proposed 2015-16 budget column

were reversed and no one noticed until now. The result is that the budget approved is about \$2300 less than what the library trustees had proposed. Their question is how they can make up that \$2300 without cutting programs, wages, or staff. Duncan recommends looking at the year end surplus and, if there is more than we estimated, earmarking part of that to make up for the \$2300 shortfall.

We got 4 bids for the recreation trail at Old Mill Park. Gary Tatro bid \$25,400. Mike Patch submitted a base bid of \$36K as per bid specs and also submitted a bid for an alternate option, which is to remove just the first 4 inches of gravel on the existing trail and replace it with 4-inches of sure-pack (\$21,500.) H. A. Manosh bid \$41,985 and Dale Tatro bid \$59,000.

This is a grant-funded project. The grant will pay \$19,500. With our town match, there is a total of \$23,750 available to do the project. All the base bids are over that amount. It was pointed out to Duncan by a couple of the bidders that the bid document shows a path distance of 2700 ft, when in reality the project is about 3900 total linear feet. Duncan doesn't know whether Gary Tatro assumed the bid figure was right or measured it as Mike Patch did. Mike said Manosh thought they were bidding on 2700 ft. Duncan said he thinks Gary Tatro's bid may also be based on the incorrect low figure, in which case it isn't accurate. Duncan said Mike raised a concern about the total depth of the project, which was supposed to be 10 inches. We were told there was 18 inches of soil on top of the entire area, but several people, including Steve Smith, have told him there is not that much. In some places if the contractor dug down 10 inches they might run into talc tailings. He is not sure what would happen then. Mike thinks it is hazardous material and would trigger a process, but Duncan is not sure. We would need to find out. Under Mike's proposal to go down only 4 inches he doesn't think there would be any issue of running into tailings, but he isn't sure how our funding entity would view that change. He thinks we need to get that squared away. Mike's alternative proposal would be our lowest cost option. And it would be within our budget, noted Howard.

Mike said 14 years ago his company put in the trail for the town. They put in 12 inches of gravel. He said taking off 10 inches means removing 1500 yards of material. It would take a week and a half just to truck it. If he took 4 inches off he could use the removed gravel to build the additional 200 feet.

Eric asked, if a foot of gravel was put in, why are we removing that? Mike said that is what the plan says. Howard said he copied USDA specifications without knowing any better.

Eric said we can reject all bids and see if our funder will allow something along the lines of Mike's proposal.

Nat asked if Mike would recommend putting fabric under it the gravel. Mike said there is no need; it's like concrete under there. The town could go over it every year. Duncan said it would be good to put sodium chloride on it every year.

Duncan said he would suggest contacting the funder and telling them the base bids are too high but we have an alternative, if the board is willing to authorize approving the alternative

bid pending the funder's approval. Doug asked if we have an obligation to the other bidders. Aren't we letting a different project than what was put out? Duncan said we have a right to reject any or all bids. There is one contractor who decided to offer an alternative, guessing we wouldn't be able to afford the project otherwise. If the funder is comfortable, it is not unusual to reject bids and waive formalities. He thinks the wording we used gives the board latitude to make that decision. Howard said it is common to have alternatives at a bid opening and they can differ from bidder to bidder. Duncan said the only question is whether Gary Tatro bid the project based on the real trail length. If he did, then his bid is still above the grant amount and our match. The town would have to pay the extra amount. But we would get a 10-inch depth. However, he doesn't think he based his bid on 3900 ft. Howard said he would argue strenuously against accepting a bid based on false information. Duncan said if it turns out Gary was bidding based on 3900 ft he will come back to the board and ask if we want to kick in the extra \$1200 and do the project according to the original bid specs.

Doug asked what difference it makes if the depth is 10 inches or 4 inches. Is 10 inches needed? Duncan said one of his concerns is the impact of excavating 10 inches and running into talc tailings. Mike is concerned it is hazardous material and is reportable but Duncan isn't sure that it is. Mike said if Gary's number is true, he would give the project to him, but he wouldn't dig down 10 inches. The gravel that is there now is beautiful stuff and taking out that amount of material and taking care of it would have a big impact. Duncan asked, if it's that good, why couldn't we run it back through our crusher and use it for road gravel?

Nat moved to approve Mike Patch's alternative bid contingent on funding approval and contingent on determining that Gary Tatro's bid was not based on a trail length of 3900 ft., Doug seconded, and the motion was passed.

Nat said the fields at Old Mill Park are used heavily in September and October. Would this construction interfere? Mike said Steve told him he could stockpile materials offsite. He will probably do his work during the week rather than on weekends. He thinks it can be done in 6 days. Howard said he should not run his equipment on the ball fields.

Doug said he and Kyle have been working on finding beautification committee members. He asked Lea about her availability for extra hours and what her participation could look like. She is a strong supporter of the beautification committee but felt she couldn't talk about her hours yet. She is willing to participate in start-up of the committee. He and Kyle are thinking about having a meeting next week and he wants authorization for Lea to participate in start-up of the committee.

Eric asked if he is looking for additional hours for Lea over what was budgeted. Doug said not that he knows of; he is just looking for her to use some hours for this rather than for whatever else they might be allocated for.

Duncan said some time ago it was agreed the Lea would establish a work schedule that would be reviewed by the Planning Commission, the selectboard and the trustees and then solidified as a task list for the year, so there would not be too many different competing demands on her time. While he supports what Doug is proposing, he is not sure how it fits

with that established process. He is not sure we have followed that process in recent years, though we were doing it for some time.

Doug said he thinks it would be good for the boards to go back to developing a schedule and allocation of Lea's hours. Eric said maybe she should brush off the task list and see what she has for availability with this in mind and bring it back to the 3 boards. Duncan said he thinks the process allowed for boards to assign tasks to her in addition to what was on the work schedule, so what Doug is suggesting may not be inconsistent with the process. Eric said we asked her to take over dealing with the Jewetts and she will also be busy with School St. Is there anything else we have added for her? Duncan said he thinks if she didn't feel she had capacity to be involved with the beautification committee she would have said no. Doug said he thinks she wants to assess how much time it will take and then she will be able to see if she has time for it.

Doug moved to authorize Lea to work with members of the beautification committee in the start-up of the committee, Howard seconded, and the motion was passed.

Duncan had previously sent out Emma Marvin's request for tax stabilization for Butternut Mountain Farm. He distributed copies of the tax stabilization policy and a spreadsheet he had put together. Butternut Mountain Farm qualifies for a tax stabilization agreement for the municipal portion of the tax under the policy. There are two types of stabilization that could be offered. One is a 50% reduction for 5 years and the other is a graduated reduction where they would pay 25% of taxes the first 2 years, then 40%, 60%, and 75%. Duncan's spreadsheet showed the savings over 5 years under each plan. The non-graduated plan would result in savings of \$3,619 over 5 years. The graduated plan would yield total tax savings of \$3,091 over that period. The previous appraised value was \$119,800 and the new value is \$202,700. If they had not made improvements, they would have paid \$12,910 in taxes over 5 years at this year's tax rate vs. \$21,843 with the improvements. Taking into account the difference between the old value and the new value, he showed their actual savings over 5 years. They would save \$658 with the 50% plan and \$1020 with the graduated plan. The town's policy doesn't allow adjustment of the statewide tax unless the property has a value above a certain amount or will create more than a certain number of jobs.

Eric said if we provide tax stabilization we will make more money at the end of 5 years. He thinks it would be win-win for everyone. Howard agreed. Eric said he supports the graduated plan more, because it starts working toward paying the full tax towards the end of the 5 years. Duncan said the policy allows the board to modify the percentages at its discretion to make them more or less favorable. Eric asked how we did it on Pomerleau's stabilization for Sterling Market. Duncan said that property had a Grand List value of more than \$500K and the store created 18 or 20 jobs, so they qualified for stabilization of statewide property tax as well. The municipal piece is a pretty small part of the tax bill.

Doug asked Emma if she has a preference for the graduated or the 50% plan. She said she doesn't. She is willing to defer to the board's judgment. She said both the downtown tax credit program and support from the community stimulated the store's investment. She said

visitors to the town are impressed by what a little gem it is. They comment on the downtown's vibrancy.

Doug moved to approve a graduated schedule for tax stabilization as presented for Butternut Mountain Farm, Nat seconded, and the motion was passed. (*Emma left at 9:14.*)

Duncan said he got the final bill from Gilles Lehouillier for the Holcomb House project. The total bill exceeds the total loan funds available by \$3,531. The Historical Society has indicated they could contribute an additional \$1500 towards the overage. Rosemary has paid Gilles \$23,604.53, exactly the amount she had left in the checkbook, so we still owe \$3,531.21. Duncan would like board authorization to pay the balance owed. Factors contributing to the overage included having to do more work than expected on the foundation, putting sheet rock to meet fire code in the storage area, and handicapped ramp sub base issues. There isn't enough money left to put a roof over the handicapped ramp or paint the existing roof, two things the Historical Society wanted to do. The additional money owed Gilles could come out of the buildings and grounds capital reserve fund. Rosemary said there is around \$50-70K in that fund. Eric and Duncan noted that we still have to pay for the municipal building roof.

Howard moved to take money out of the buildings and grounds capital reserve fund to pay Gilles Lehouillier the balance owed him, seconded by Doug. Nat asked why the Historical Society is planning to contribute only \$1500 and not more. Lois said that amount is what they put in the budget to pay the town for being in the building, but they are not in the building yet so they have not spent it. They are continuing to raise money to pay off the loan. **The motion was passed.**

Duncan said we never got a detailed estimate from Gilles for painting the Holcomb House roof, but his ballpark estimate was \$3000-3500. If the board wants to pay for that out of the buildings and grounds capital reserve fund he could get quotes. Eric said he thinks we would want to paint it for esthetics and to prevent leaking. Lois said that is the Historical Society's concern. The board agreed Duncan should get quotes.

The board needs to sign the contract with CAI for the parcel mapping software the town uses. There is an \$1800 annual fee due upon signing of the contract.

Doug moved to sign the GIS internet services maintenance agreement with CAI, Howard seconded, and the motion was passed.

Eric asked VLCT for an opinion following a meeting of the search committee where a third member of the village trustees showed up for the meeting, stating he was attending as a citizen and not as a trustee board member. VLCT's opinion was that if there is a quorum of a board at any other duly warned meeting that constitutes a meeting of that board and should be properly warned. The Secretary of State's office concurred with VLCT opinion. The VLCT opinion went so far as to say that if there were a quorum of a board at the village's or

town's annual meeting that should be warned. Eric said if we even suspect there will be a quorum of selectboard members at a meeting we should warn it.

The listers have issued a change of appraisal for the Holcomb House for the addition of Apartment 2 in the amount of \$8800. If the board wants to challenge that it needs to be done by June 17.

The Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District recertification has been approved.

The rail trail building is complete.

An Emergency Health Order has been issued for Cathy Duncan's property located at 276 Lower Main East. The property is in the process of foreclosure. Duncan is working with USDA, the mortgage holder, to get them to clean it up.

Mitchell Tillotson came and talked to Duncan about the new requirements for fireworks permits. He has not provided additional information for his permit application.

Lyle Baars' dogs have been licensed and fees paid. Sharon did a great job dealing with the situation. Eric asked Duncan to thank her on behalf of the board.

The Lamoille County Sheriff's Department monthly report for April shows 7 arrests, 22 traffic tickets written, and 44 traffic warnings written. Duncan said he has had people ask why there are so many more warnings than tickets.

Eric, Lea and Duncan met with the Jewetts and they have agreed to lower their asking price to the higher of the two appraised values we got. Lea is looking into funding sources. Doug asked if the change in asking price will be reflected in a change in the option. Duncan said yes; they will sign a revised option agreement.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development sent a note of thanks for the town's \$125 membership contribution.

A lease agreement has been signed between the Town of Johnson and Holcomb House tenants Shelby Rivers and Richard Delancey Jr.

Duncan has heard no news about our Better Backroads Grant application.

He has not gotten the roofing bid spec back from Steve Pitkin yet.

He has not heard back from the state or FEMA on Coddling Hollow. He believes we have supplied them with everything they need to make a decision. Nat asked if there is any chance the construction will happen this summer. Duncan said we will run out of opportunity to do that soon if we don't get a decision. The plans are 95% complete and could be completed quickly along with the bid spec.

The Journey's End easement agreement between the Town of Johnson and Glenn and Renate Callahan has been signed.

Lois said the Historical Society talked about taking over management of Evergreen Ledge Cemetery but decided they just can't take on anything else now.

Duncan handed out copies of the revised road foreman job description. (*Lois left at 9:34.*) He had previously sent out copies of the town administrator job description. Eric said he is comfortable with both of them. Howard said he is too.

Nat moved to accept the town administrator job description, effective September 1, 2015, seconded by Howard. Howard asked if there is anything missing from it that Duncan is aware of that would make him uncomfortable with the board adopting it. Duncan said no. **The motion was passed.**

Duncan had previously sent out an email explaining how we got to where we are with regard to town highway employee salaries. Eric said taxpayers would not want us to have the highest paid highway department in the state. Nat agreed. But he thinks we should have had this discussion in September when we made the motion to hire Jason. Kathy, Nat, Eric, and Howard were at that meeting. The board set an expectation with that motion and he thinks we should follow through with what we said we would do, which was to increase Jason's wage to be the same as the other highway employees after 6 months with a satisfactory performance evaluation. Eric said we are not bound by a prior board's decision. A prior board promised we would not cut highway department salaries. Nat said he understands we are not legally bound, but as a matter of principal he feels we are. Duncan said he understands that, but the offer of employment made to Jason was not based on any expectation he would receive any increase in pay. When Duncan sat down with him he was clear that bringing him up to that wage should not be his expectation.

Eric said what troubles him is that even the newest highway department employee is making more than those in other highway departments in Vermont. Nat said he thinks that is a problem. He would be in favor of not giving a bump to highway workers until they are in line with the state average. Doug asked, so he would want to bump up Jason and leave everyone else flat? Nat said he would want to put Jason at parity with the other workers. Duncan said that puts him well above the highest salary elsewhere in the state. Nat asked why this conversation didn't happen in September. Eric said it should have.

Nat moved to increase Jason's salary to be at parity with Chris's and Ray's. The motion was not seconded.

Howard moved to increase highway department employee salaries by the 2% that was budgeted. He said if that motion is defeated, then there will be no increase. He hopes it is defeated. **The motion was not seconded.**

Duncan said the first year after the board reduced highway employees' hours he thinks all the other town employees got a 2% increase and the highway department got 1%. Then no

increases were made for anyone for the next two years. After the first couple of years we went back to the same increases for all town employees. Eric said we thought we could give them a small increase and the other highway departments would eventually catch up, but that didn't happen.

Duncan asked if it sends a bad message to the employees to give no increase. Howard said last month when he talked about having to figure out how to get caught up, he thinks Chris understood. Doug asked if it was our expectation that other towns would catch up to us but they ended up pulling back as much as we did. Eric said before 2008 cost of living increases were around 3-6% and we thought if we gave smaller increases than that the other towns would catch up. But it never happened. Duncan said no one else was giving increases either.

Duncan said when we changed the hours for the highway employees from 45 to 40 per week we gave them an hourly rate that would keep their yearly pay the same when combined with 250 hours of overtime. We were going to try to bring that down to the average rate for highway employees over time by not giving adjustments for a period of time.

Doug asked if Duncan is aware of what raises other communities are giving now. Duncan said he is not aware of anyone giving more than 3%. Most are giving the cost of living increase, which was around 1.8 or 1.9 this year.

Duncan pointed out that our employees get a lot of overtime and it is paid on an 8-hour basis, not on a 40-hour basis.

Nat said he doesn't think we can justify a 2% increase. Duncan said he thought we should talk to them to explain that it's not that we don't value their work. Eric said he is willing go with Duncan for that conversation.

Doug moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel retirement information that is appropriate for executive session because it is a matter of attorney-client privilege, Nat seconded, the motion was passed, and the board entered executive session at 9:58. The board came out of executive session at 10:20.

8. *Adjourn*

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths