

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2016

**Present:**

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

Others: Duncan Hastings (Manager), Rosemary Audibert (Clerk), Scott Meyer, David Butler

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

**1. Call to Order**

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:04.

**2. Additions, Changes to Agenda**

The board agreed to add the College Hill project, sale of Evergreen Ledge Cemetery lots, cleaning services, a catering permit, planning for Rose Warner's retirement recognition, and energy proposal discussion.

Eric said it is important to discuss job applicants tonight. He suggested addressing whatever other topics can be done in an hour, then going into executive session at 8:00. The board agreed to that.

**3. Evergreen Ledge Cemetery Lots**

Duncan said two couples are interested in purchasing lots in Evergreen Ledge Cemetery. The cost until now has been \$150 per lot plus the cost of setting corner markers, which is about \$150. One couple wants 2 lots and the other couple wants 4 lots. Is the board okay with Duncan issuing paperwork for them to buy lots now with the idea that the fee schedule will be revisited at a later date? John Clegg has agreed to meet Duncan at the cemetery to stake out the location of lots. If we keep running the cemetery it will need to be replotted and we need to have accurate information about where people are buried.

**Doug moved to authorize Duncan to convey the number of lots requested to those requesting them at a price of \$150 per lot plus the cost of corner monuments, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

**4. Cleaning Services**

Rosemary asked, with Rhonda's passing, does the board want to bid out for cleaning services? Rhonda's daughter came in yesterday and said she was in the process of getting liability insurance. But she does have a full time job. Rhonda cleaned the municipal building, the highway department garage, and once in a while the village garage. Doug asked if this is a joint hire. Rosemary said she thinks the town originally hired the cleaner and then the town and village split the bill. Eric said his recommendation would be that it should be brought for bid. Maybe it should go to the trustees as well. The board agreed to go out to bid.

**5. Catering Permit**

Rosemary said the town received a request for a catering permit from Champlain Valley Beverage Catering for a wedding on June 25 from 4:00 to 9:00 on Route 100C. **Mike moved to approve the catering permit requested by Champlain Valley Beverage Catering for a wedding on June 25, Kyle seconded and the motion was passed.**

**6. *Rose Warner Retirement Recognition***

The board discussed how to recognize Rose Warner on her upcoming retirement. **Nat moved to authorize Rosemary to spend up to \$300 to recognize Rose Warner upon her retirement, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.** The board agreed to Duncan ordering a plaque.

**7. *Energy Proposal***

Mike asked Scott if the trustees had discussed possible energy contracts in executive session. Scott said yes. Mike said then he would discuss them with this board in executive session as well.

**8. *Community Priorities***

The board reviewed the list of ideas generated at the April 26 joint meeting. Eric said the first 4 items listed under economic development are connected to the industrial park. The board is already working on that.

One suggestion was a tax incentive to attract more businesses. Eric said we have very limited power. He is not sure what more we could do. Nat said we could do a better job of letting business owners know about tax stabilization and the possibility of a tax incentive for fixing up their property. Eric suggested we could put information in tax bills. Duncan said the town has criteria for providing tax stabilization. The state also has tax incentives available to businesses within the designated village center.

Scott said the village is sending out a letter of welcome if a new business comes into Johnson. The letter talks about potential tax benefits.

Doug asked, the village is trying to expand the village center designation? Scott said yes. One thing they wanted to do was make sure Manchester Lumber was included.

Doug said he thinks if we send something out to business owners we should talk about the village center designation, too. We should provide a comprehensive listing of all programs, including village programs.

Duncan said the town can reduce the municipal tax rate and also can agree to mitigate the school tax rate if the business is bringing more jobs to town. Sterling Market qualified for both and he believes Butternut Mountain Farm just got stabilization on the municipal tax, as well as the state incentives.

Duncan said years ago he had a welcome letter for businesses. He doesn't think it included tax stabilization. Kyle said she thinks Lea may have had a letter she sent out to businesses. Scott said the trustees would be happy to share their letter so the two boards can be consistent.

Eric said there was one comment about supporting people who live here and want to start businesses rather than attracting businesses from elsewhere. He is not sure what more we could do to help with that. Rosemary said we could use community loan funds. We don't have much yet, but we could give out a couple of thousand dollars.

Doug asked who we can go to ask for help on this. He doesn't understand the steps we would need to take to reach our goals. Does the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation have people who could come in? Duncan said no.

Eric said as far as creating more high paying jobs we are looking at the industrial park. That is about all we can do. Duncan pointed out that there was also a comment that we should stop wasting time on the Jewett property.

One idea was an alliance for getting businesses to our area. Eric said he isn't really sure what that is. Duncan said that is what LEDC is supposed to be doing in the state. Doug asked how we get them to work here. Duncan said they were interested in working with us on the Jewett property. They would be willing to help us take it to the next step, which would be doing a cost benefit analysis. But Lea is gone and Duncan doesn't have time to work on it. Mike said years ago there was a business alliance in Johnson. Does that still exist? Others said that is what Johnson Works is.

Eric said the industrial park and a notice in tax bills as discussed would address a number of the items listed.

Doug said when he thinks of higher paying jobs in Johnson, he thinks of the commuter professors at JSC. We don't just want jobs; we want the people who have the jobs to live here. He knows that is one of the JSC's president's goals. He thinks contact with her on that would be a good idea. Eric said he doesn't think the problem is not having high paying jobs. The problem is that the people in the jobs aren't living here.

David Butler said he thinks there are jobs that would create themselves if higher speed internet access were available, such as website hosting or a store in town going worldwide.

Doug said there are many things that are desirable about our community. What isn't desirable is the school system reputation and the economics of our population.

Eric said a theme under housing is going away from multi-family units and having more single family units. He is not sure what tools we have to do that. He is not aware of any. Nat said it would be interesting to make contact with knowledgeable people like the Champlain Land Trust. Duncan said he has had some conversations with Lamoille Housing Partnership based on board discussion about having them focus on acquiring some of the less desirable properties, with the idea of helping people with home ownership. That model has been very successful in the Burlington area. They were interested but Duncan doesn't have time for it. That is an area he thinks could be looked at that could help with the transient situation. However, we probably can't completely get away from having college kids who need housing and a certain number of people who need low income housing.

David said he thinks form based code would be helpful. With that in place, as properties changed hands or changed use they would have to come up to snuff.

Doug said he thinks we should think about this by area and focus on something like gentrifying Railroad St.

Nat suggested engaging with landlords and telling them we have concerns about how things look on Railroad St. Kyle said the beautification committee was talking about, rather than shaming, trying to do positive reinforcement and offering a little financial incentive. Nat said the value of all the rental properties in the same area will increase if they all get together and make improvements. Doug said he thinks Duncan's replacement should move ahead on the derelict building ordinance. David said monthly profit on rental properties is negligible. When landlords make money is when they sell the building to capture the equity they have in it. Because their profit is low they are not putting much money into upkeep of their buildings.

Doug asked if the trustees are addressing this. Scott said yes, specifically Railroad St. Doug asked how the selectboard can coordinate with them. Scott said the village manager has been tasked with figuring it out.

Eric said a derelict building ordinance and form based code are some ways to deal with appearance issues.

David suggested not allowing people to have non-registered vehicles on their property. Duncan said there is already an ordinance addressing that, but it is not enforced. People are allowed to have one or two unregistered vehicles but having more than that is a ticketable offense. The constables would enforce it. Doug said he thinks we should put that ordinance on our agenda to discuss. We should take a look at it and see if we want to keep it and if we want to use it. Duncan said it is part of the open burning and solid waste disposal ordinance.

**9. *Police Services Priorities***

Duncan said the advisory committee has another meeting soon with the sheriff. Roger Marcoux asked each community to bring back priorities for policing services. He talked about his priorities for the department. One major one is dealing with prescription and/ or opiate use and abuse.

Duncan said Roger Marcoux indicated that the detective position has not been successful. He has had a hard time filling it. He hasn't been able to fill it full time for any length of time. The Lamoille County sexual assault and domestic violence position was eliminated so he has been assigning domestic assault issues to the detective. Duncan assumes those are cases related to Johnson, but that isn't clear. So the detective has been part-time, with a primary focus on domestic violence issues. Eric said he is concerned that the 3 patrol towns are paying for this position and the person in it might be covering the whole county. Duncan said that is his concern too. We need to clear that up. Duncan said the detective position has done nothing to free up patrol officers.

Duncan said one idea thrown out at an advisory committee meeting was that the patrol towns would tell LCSD what they were willing to pay and LCSD would tell us what they could provide for that amount. Nat said Roger Marcoux had also mentioned the possibility of a community resource officer. Eric asked how the cost would compare if we eliminated the detective position and had a community resource officer position. Duncan said he would

guess it would probably not be significantly different. Nat said we share the detective with 2 other towns but he doesn't think we would share the resource officer. Duncan said he thinks all the towns will have a need for someone to handle animal control and other ordinance enforcement. A shared resource officer could provide that service.

Eric said he is ready to get rid of the detective position. He would like more information on a community resource officer. Nat agreed.

Duncan asked board members to email him their highest 5 (or more) priorities for police service in Johnson.

**10. Other Business**

Scott asked if he should tell the trustees that the selectboard would like a joint meeting to discuss the list of community priorities, because the town and village lists are similar. The board agreed that it would be best to discuss priorities more first, but that they should be discussed in a joint meeting eventually. *(Scott left at 8:05.)*

**11. Executive Session**

Eric said he invited Rosemary to participate in selection and interviewing of candidates. She was valuable when the board hired Duncan and whoever is hired will be working with her a lot. Her input is valuable.

**Mike moved to go into executive session to discuss the village College Hill project and the applicants for the town administrator position, inviting Rosemary and Duncan to remain, Kyle seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:07.** The board came out of executive session at 9:13.

**Doug moved to authorize Eric to sign the letter to the trustees that had been discussed, with all the changes that had been agreed upon, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

**12. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*