

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

March 5, 2019

Moderator David Williams called the meeting to order at 9:09. He explained how the meeting would be run and asked those not on the checklist to identify themselves. He read the warning.

Article 5. To review the reports of the town officers and others as included in the Town Annual Report.

Eric Osgood asked for a moment of silence in memory of former selectboard member and chair Jim Gillen, who recently passed away. He presented a copy of the town report to Mary Sladyk. This year's report is dedicated to her. He said that in recognition of Casey and Howard Romero's contributions to the community, the loop road around the skate park has been renamed Romero Lane. Brian Story showed the street sign with the new name. Eric recognized Jan Perkins for 30 years of service to the town. This also marks Rosemary Audibert's 20th anniversary as town clerk, Eric's 20th anniversary as selectboard chair, and David Williams' 30th anniversary as moderator.

Article 6. To establish the rates of compensation for the Town Officers.

Linda Molde moved to make compensation the same as last year: \$1200 for the selectboard chair and \$1000 for the other selectboard members. The motion was seconded and passed by a voice vote.

Article 7. Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$2,709,614.02, of which \$1,819,504.74 shall be raised by taxes and \$885,109.28 by non-tax revenues?

The article was moved and seconded as written.

Eric said this year through oversight the budget summary page was left out of the town report. The summary page was requested by voters several years ago. There is a summary handout available. The board would like feedback about whether voters see value in the summary page. If so, it will be put in next year.

He explained that the board determines what expenditures are needed to support the town. The town gets revenue from various sources. If the revenue is less than the expenditures the rest has to be raised by property taxes. The amount to be raised by property taxes in the proposed budget is about \$180K more than in the previous budget. That is about 8 ½ cents on the tax rate.

Revenue is pretty much in line with previous years. A big difference from last year is that last year there was cash on hand of \$138K to apply towards reducing taxes. This year we estimate we will have \$5K at the end of the year. The difference in cash on hand represents about 6 cents of the tax increase. For years the board has been working on trying to tighten the budget, which

reduces the amount of cash on hand. Sand and salt expenditures in the current winter also reduce anticipated cash on hand. This is a responsible budget. There are no new initiatives. We are doing what we need to support statutory requirements and what the community in the past has identified as priorities.

There is a new line item for Development Review Board expense due to the form based code implemented a year ago. The \$500 in the line is a placeholder. We don't know what the expenses will be but we don't anticipate a lot of expense.

There is a new line item for the Conservation Reserve Fund. The voters established the fund last year. The board took \$250 out of the Conservation Commission's expense line item and put it in the Conservation Reserve Fund line as seed money.

There were some significant increases for public safety, mostly beyond our control. Public safety is a major part of our budget – a little under 28%. NEMS is seeing an increase of about \$11K. A lot of that is driven by less reimbursement from the federal government for Medicaid patients and by the need to retain their EMTs. There is a shortage of EMTs in the state. There is about a \$29K increase for law enforcement patrol. LCSD is trying to keep salaries competitive and their expenses are increasing. Dispatch services is level funded.

Eric pointed out a mistake in the way the budget was printed on p.23. Lines 327 and 328 should not be blank. The amount in line 332 should be pushed up 2 lines. The class IV Road Labor and Non Highway Projects lines should be zeroed out.

There is a new line item for mud abatement. Previously that was part of annual construction projects. The board decided to pull it out because it is an ongoing annual thing.

The total budget is \$2,709,614, a 3.6% increase. Without the expense for the Jewett property that the voters approved purchase of last year, the increase would have been about 2%, pretty much in line with the rate of inflation.

Duncan Hastings said he has a concern about the wording of Article 7. It says \$1,819,504.74 shall be raised by taxes. He thinks that binds the board to raise that amount in taxes and he doesn't think that is what we want. The board is predicting that there will be \$5K left over at the end of the year but we won't actually know the amount until after June 30. He thinks this wording commits the town to raising this amount regardless of how much money we actually end up with.

Duncan moved to amend the motion by replacing “shall be” with “is estimated to be.” That gives the board the ability to set the tax rate based on known dollar amounts at the end of the year. **The motion was seconded.**

Duncan said last year the budget had \$8200 for recreation coordinator salary. This year nothing is budgeted because there is a separate article about establishing a recreation coordinator. If this budget passes and the recreation coordinator article fails there is no money in the budget for a recreation coordinator, is that correct? Eric said yes.

Nat asked if we know what the language has been in previous years. A voter pointed out that last year's language is on p. 78 of the Town Report. Eric said the amount to be raised by taxes was part of the motion last year. The tax rate has to be set the first week of July. At that point Rosemary usually has not totally wrapped up the books and we don't know the exact amount left over. He doesn't have an issue with the proposed change. He thinks it is probably appropriate.

Scott Meyer moved to call the question and the motion was seconded and passed by a voice vote.

The motion to amend was passed by a voice vote.

Scott Meyer said he would love an update on where we are with the Jewett property and how much money has been spent for it. Eric said the increase in the budget for the Jewett property is for the note to pay for the purchase. Scott asked if we have gotten anywhere with moving the project there forward. Eric said we were denied the first round of grant applications to develop the site. We are trying to get a grant so the taxpayers won't have to pay to develop it. We will go for a second round. There has not been any movement or ground dug yet.

Beth Foy asked, if we get a grant, does that supplement the \$39K on line 234? Eric said no; line 234 is the principal being paid on the note. If we got a grant that would be to develop the site.

Eric Nuse said he is wondering how the town dealt with the motion at last year's town meeting to cut the overall budget by \$30K and if that had any impact on the surplus amount. Eric said it did not impact the surplus. The cuts that were made have all been identified in the Town Report. The bulk came out of mud abatement and paving. There were small cuts in a number of other things to add up to \$30K.

A voter said she believes we voted last year not to create another highway department position, correct? Eric said the additional position was built into the budget. That was one thing the selectboard could have eliminated but with the state requirements and workload that was not where the board chose to make cuts. The voter asked if another person was hired. Eric said yes. The voter asked, if that happened after the town's vote of no, what does that say about town meeting? Eric said the motion was to cut \$30K from the budget. The choice of where to cut was up to the selectboard. The voter said the selectboard chose to override the vote of the town. Eric said no; the direction from the town was that the selectboard should decide where to make the cuts.

Kyle Archer said the budget summary shows a 99.5% increase for line 237. He is wondering what the cause of that was. Eric said probably the biggest impact in that category was the payment of close to \$40K for the light industrial park.

Kim Dunkley asked if the town has ever looked into the cost of having our own law enforcement, even just one person. Eric said that has been looked at in the past. The sheriff is very aware and sensitive of the increase in cost for law enforcement. He doesn't have answers. He will be looking at a committee of citizens from all three patrol towns – Hyde Park, Wolcott

and Johnson – that can look at options such as not having 24 hour service or eliminating the detective position.

Scott Meyer said the ratio of warnings to tickets has always been around 50:50. This came up at a meeting with Roger Marcoux and deputies last year. We are trying to have a walkable community. There are people who speed recklessly through this town. He has asked for the sheriff's department to issue tickets, not warnings. He has provided examples of other communities where you know you will get a ticket if you speed. He is not seeing a huge change in speeding in this community. Clay Hill and Railroad Street are frightening to walk on. He feels service from LCSD is falling flat. Why aren't they giving more tickets to cut down on speeding?

Jeff Bickford asked if Eric could clarify his earlier comment about the town not having control over the sheriff's department line item. Eric said the bulk of the LCSD budget is salaries and to some degree vehicles. They have built-in costs. They need to stay competitive and not get so much turnover. We pay to send officers out for training and then they leave for places that pay more.

Nat Kinney said the three towns have representatives to a sheriff's budget advisory committee. He and Brian Story are members. They meet throughout the year to look at the budget and try to influence it where we can. He feels it is important to move forward with Roger Marcoux's suggestion to create a summer study committee on law enforcement in the three towns and look at potential options. He thinks hiring our own force would be prohibitively expensive but it should be looked at, along with options such as using State Police or reducing coverage.

Geoff Corey said he is seeing a salary increase proposed that is higher than inflation and also several substantial equipment expenses. Is it possible to amend the amount we allocate to the sheriff's department? Eric said we are pretty much locked in at this stage. The same is true for NEMS. Any adjustment made for Johnson would have to be made across the other communities as well.

Jon Gregg said he wonders if the town could hire a retired policeman and fund a car. If that cost \$100K a year that would be equivalent to six \$50 tickets per day. He is wondering if that could be looked at separately to address the issue of pedestrian safety in a way that doesn't connect to the other two towns. Eric said the committee should look at that. Today might not be the best place to decide it. Jon said the problem with the committee is that it gets into a lot of things. He is asking if there could be a committee just to look at the cost of speeding tickets being issued by the town.

Offie Wortham brought up potholes. Is it a problem with the budget that we can't come up with enough money to cover some of the holes?

Eric said he is guessing Offie is referring to state highways, particularly Route 15. That is a state issue; the town has nothing to do with it. With all the rain and freezing this winter, potholes have become a huge issue all over the state. It is recognized.

Robin Story said as far as making the village more walkable, she thinks the best we can do is put in sidewalks. She feels the village trustees should be trying to improve sidewalk infrastructure. It is a shame there is no sidewalk leading to the library. She thinks crossing the street to get to a sidewalk is what puts her in the most danger.

Mary Sladyk said Rocky Hooper was a very good policeman but that was in the 70's. One person can't do it now. She does like the proposal to investigate a retired policeman policing Railroad and Main Streets and some side streets.

A voter said he thought this was the year the state was repairing the highway from Morrisville to Johnson. Eric said a handout from legislators was distributed that identifies which highways in our area will be worked on in which year.

John Leavitt asked how we know we are getting what we are paying for from the sheriff's department. Eric said that is the community's decision. The selectboard sees a monthly report showing how many tickets were issued and how many calls to Johnson were made. He believes we are getting our money's worth.

John said if we make a deal with the State Police they will guarantee a certain number of hours. He is wondering if the sheriff's department does that. Eric said we find out how much time they spent in Johnson. From the State Police we would get a set number of hours for patrol but we would not get 24 hour service. We would not get a response for something like a simple break-in with no one hurt unless an officer was in the area. They don't have the manpower to support some services we get from the sheriff's department.

Kyle Archer said he has some knowledge of the inner workings of the State Police. He thinks contracting with them is a practical solution. But the State Police officers' hours are mostly volunteer. We would not have 24 hour service. We would possibly get a 40 minute response time in an emergency, especially after 2:00 am. It would seem to be very practical and less expensive option but would be lesser service.

Greg Stefanski said he has been impressed with the response the sheriff's department provides to Laraway and has provided to him personally. Laraway interacts with law enforcement agencies in other communities and the response time and quality of response are better with LCSD. The towns of Cambridge and Eden rely on State Police support. There have been conversations about them being part of our contract with LCSD. He believes the sheriff's department provides some support to them even though they are not in the contract so we could be subsidizing that to some extent. Data on that could be worth looking at.

Casey Romero said, addressing whether we are getting our money's worth, she can tell about one instance. There was an incident in the skate park involving a complicated set of problems and the sheriff's department stepped right in. They were responsive. The skate park absolutely got the service they needed. She has heard anecdotally of people getting the help they needed quickly. She believes we are getting what we need.

Nat Kinney said we are paying for a minimum of one officer 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. At any given time that one person on patrol could be in Wolcott or in Johnson but they are on the road somewhere. We get 911 response and foot patrols as deputies are able. We also get a detective position. The detective works full time investigating sex crimes, burglaries, drug activity and other serious criminal activity in the county. A lot has to do with children and families and out of respect to them the crimes are often not on the front page of the paper. In the last 12 months we had a serious flood situation in Johnson. For weeks we had a risk of flooding due to an ice jam. LCSD services during that time were critical for Johnson. They helped monitor the situation and helped the fire department with emergency services. If we contracted with the State Police he thinks we wouldn't have gotten that level of service. LCSD did a great job working with the organizers of the festival at Willow Crossing last July to make sure everyone stayed safe. They had extra patrols that weekend.

Nat said he is really upset about Route 15. He has spoken about it with state legislators and people at AOT. He understands that the part between here and Wolcott will not be resurfaced until 2021 or 2022. He has expressed dismay to state legislators. He encouraged others to make some noise about it.

Offie Wortham said he doesn't know why the town can't take it upon itself maybe once a week to fill potholes. Do we have enough money for that in our budget? Eric said we are not authorized to work in the state right of way. And the cost of any work we did would come out of our taxpayers' money.

Eric said Laraway has been a very responsible citizen. They recognized a few years ago that the sheriff's department might be helping Laraway more than their share and they have contributed \$12K a year to offset patrol costs. The sheriff's department does respond to Cambridge and Eden as part of mutual aid. Morristown or Stowe or State Police may assist Lamoille and Lamoille may assist back. If there is a life or death situation in Cambridge LCSD will respond to assist. That is something we do monitor and if it looks like it is being abused we address it. Fifteen years ago or so we felt Eden was abusing the asset and we addressed it with them and State Police had to take a greater share of the workload. A few years ago the same thing was happening with Cambridge. They were automatically calling LCSD and they were getting there before the state police. When another town is using LCSD too often that has been recognized. A lot has been alleviated because they have their own State Police outpost now in Cambridge.

Greg Tatro asked if the town has looked into speed bumps or humps on Railroad Street or School Street. He doesn't think they can be put on hills where they would make it hard to stop and start in winter. He thinks that would be a good way to reduce speeds. They work 24-7, 365 days a year. He has been working some with the sheriff's department and he feels we are getting our money's worth. The detective is swamped. There is a lot of crime we don't hear about. They are working as hard as they can. He fully supports the sheriff's department in Lamoille County.

Eric said we have looked into speed bumps. Our insurance carrier recommended against them because we would assume a certain liability.

Duncan Hastings said he has the greatest amount of respect for Roger Marcoux. In 15 years of working for the town he never had a negative experience working with any LCSD officers. Roger Marcoux is overseeing a really good department. Having said that, their budget is almost 18% of our total budget. That is a lot of money. Nat is probably right that we couldn't do it as efficiently ourselves. He fully supports establishing a committee directed by the contract towns. It is important to understand that Roger is willing to execute a contract with the town but he won't always be the sheriff. If someone else is elected it is not guaranteed they will continue the contract with the towns. He strongly supports the idea of a committee. It's time to think out of the box a little about law enforcement.

Nat said Roger Marcoux just got re-elected to a 4-year term. But it is true that if the next sheriff doesn't want to continue the contract the service could go away. There are people in Montpelier who are looking to get rid of contracts between municipalities and the State Police so if we relied on the State Police that could also be yanked out from under us.

Linda Molde said she has a friend in Burlington who lives in a community that formed a neighborhood watch. Ordinary citizens go out and patrol. She doesn't know how they coordinate with police or what they do but perhaps that would be something to organize here.

It was moved and seconded to call the question and the motion was passed.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Legislators were given an opportunity to address the voters. Rep. Matt Hill said he is on the Commerce and Economic Development Committee. This year he thinks the committee will put a lot of effort into workplace initiatives and economic development initiatives like broadband.

Rep. Dan Noyes said he is on the Human Services Committee. They have started digging into how the state funds childcare and how it is administered. There are a lot of federal guidelines we have to abide by. He and Rep. Hill put together a town meeting report with contact information and information about what they are working on.

Sen. Rich Westman said his morning committee is Health & Welfare and his afternoon committee is Appropriations. He wanted to be on Health & Welfare because he thinks there is a crisis here in childcare. It is hard for young families to afford childcare and college loans and make enough to stay here. He thinks that is a crisis across rural America. In this state, outside of Chittenden, Lamoille and Franklin Counties, our population is stagnant or dropping. Places like Springfield are affected; it is on the verge of losing its hospital. It is hard to maintain a small rural health system. Lack of internet service and road maintenance are other issues. There seems to be less and less commitment at state and federal government levels that rural places should survive. In the 1930's there was a commitment by the federal government that everyone to the last mile would have electricity. We haven't seen that with broadband. He is not sure why there is that lack of commitment. It is very concerning to him.

Beth Foy said she totally agrees about the problem with high speed internet. What are legislators doing to address that?

Matt Hill said on the house side, it's an economic development issue but also the Energy & Technology Committee is supposed to handle broadband, etc. That committee is really dedicated to putting money into places where it makes sense to have cell towers. In some areas wifi makes more sense than wire. The house has been committed to making big steps. The governor also allocated some money to that, but Rep. Hill doesn't think it is nearly enough.

Rich Westman said he would say this problem has been going on for some time. When they did the stimulus package during the recession the federal government put millions into internet but the commitment was not to the last mile; it was to creating competition in urban areas. Vermont put money into competition in urban areas like Burlington.

Dan Noyes said the Energy & Technology Committee will have something coming out. There will be some action in the house on this.

Robin Story said Vermont wants younger people to move here but without rural broadband they will move to higher density areas that are more expensive. Satellite and DSL are not broadband solutions for people who work at home. If we really want to attract younger people and grow our tax and economic base we need better broadband and we need to get it out to rural areas where young professionals can telecommute effectively.

A voter said this is a real issue. In a lot of rural America people are trying to get health insurance through the internet but are unable to because their internet connection is too slow.

Lynn Sibley said Johnson's poverty rate is 26%. This is twice the number of most communities in our district, which means our needs are a bit different from those of our surrounding communities. Poverty has a huge deleterious impact on our educational system. It relates to crime and tragic social issues. She thinks it will also impact our discussion on recreation needs.

Rich Westman said 35-40% of Paul Rogers' patients were on Medicaid. The Medicaid reimbursement level was about \$71-72 per hour and his cost to run his office averaged \$120/hr. His Medicaid patient percentage was higher than the rest of the county. In Stowe it is 7%. It is part of why he couldn't convince a young doctor to take his place. Sen. Westman feels this community needs a healthcare facility.

Matt Hill said issues of poverty are connected to transportation costs, healthcare costs, and stagnating wages. The legislature constantly battles with those issues.

Dan Noyes said one thing he is working on is creating an older Vermonters caucus to bring together legislators who are concerned about providing services to older voters. A lot of the older population lives in poverty.

Geoff Corey said our town needs tax money. It would be nice if the face of the university could change with some industry going in there that could create a lot of jobs and work along with college students.

Rich Westman said he thinks Northern Vermont University is moving in a positive direction. He thinks Elaine Collins is doing a good job.

Elaine Collins, Northern Vermont University president, said the university is in good shape. Enrollment numbers this year have grown more than historically. She credits that to the movement to a university structure and consolidation between Lyndon and Johnson. The university is a very strong economic workforce development motivator. They created a coworking space in Lyndon that provides young entrepreneurs with broadband. They could also do the same in the industrial park in Johnson. More universities are in trouble – not necessarily public systems, but private universities. Recently Green Mountain College closed and some others may close. That impacts community quality of life and social/cultural wellbeing. She doesn't want to see the same thing happen here. She wants to make sure NVU continues to provide this community with great service. Enrollment numbers are up to historically unprecedented levels. Inquiries, acceptance rates and deposit rates are up. NVU is currently ahead of all its peers in the state college system.

Matt Hill said some legislators met with Union Bank and the bank said they rely on NVU for their workforce. Taking money from the university sends the wrong message to our youth.

Beth Foy said it is not just about what legislators are doing; it is about what everyone here is doing, about us all having the same vision and knowing we need to grow our community. We need infrastructure, education, and community involvement. Studies have shown that people in poverty who are moved into nice housing grow their economic status just from changing their surroundings. We all have to be involved not just in fixing right now but growing long term for the future.

Doug Molde said the selectboard has appointed a broadband committee. Charles Gallanter is going to drive it. He and Rob Rodriguez were the first people appointed. It is very clear that economics and housing are tied together. It might be expensive to go the last mile but that is low hanging fruit for improving our community.

The legislators left at 11:09.

Duncan Hastings let everyone know about the Historical Society raffle.

Article 8. Shall the Town of Johnson raise an additional \$45,000 to be used for total compensation of a Recreation Coordinator to administer municipal recreation activities?

Howard Romero moved the article as written and the motion was seconded.

Nat Kinney said he strongly supports this article and asks people to vote for it. He has served on the Recreation Committee for 6 years or more. We have strong recreation programs in Johnson, which is great for kids and families and for Johnson's reputation as a good place to raise a family. There has been a big spike in participation in recent years because of a dedicated group that has built programs kids and families are excited to participate in. Old Mill Park is getting a

lot of use. It is used by NVU, Cambridge Youth Soccer, and corporate groups from other communities. Old Mill Park is open 4 seasons now. We offer more activities than ever before. With growth and success the Recreation Committee runs into challenges. More registrations means more coaches to recruit, more rosters to prepare, more work with equipment, uniforms, and coordination with neighboring teams. Fields need more maintenance. Overall the volume of work is huge. Volunteers are getting burned out and need support. The town is asking to establish a part-time recreation coordinator position at a cost of up to \$45K for salaries and benefits. The position would be about 25 hours a week at about \$18/hr. This is 25 hours of work that is currently being handled mainly by volunteers. That is not sustainable. It requires a dedicated and skilled person. This is an important investment for Johnson. He asks the voters to support it.

Eric Nuse said he would like to speak in support of the article. One important point is that the recreation coordinator won't replace the volunteers but facilitate and encourage them. A paid person can make it much more easy and enjoyable for volunteers. He thinks it will be synergetic. The number of volunteers may even increase.

Charles Gallanter said he supports the concept of hiring a rec coordinator but he has a problem with the numbers. There is a salary of about \$22,800 and with payroll taxes and insurance that goes up to about \$27K. Then it is proposed to add benefits that cost from 57% to 82% of salary. Going through the town budget he sees that benefits are a lower percentage of salaries for other positions. Twenty-five percent of the salary figure is about \$8K. **Charles Gallanter moved to amend the motion to make the total cost \$35K instead of \$45K. The motion was seconded.**

Jeff Bickford asked for a more detailed explanation of where the \$45K number came from. Brian Story said there are certain fixed costs that are predictable – pay of \$18/hr, workers' comp, unemployment, and social security. Without workers' comp and unemployment insurance the cost is about \$26K and with those added in the cost is around \$27K. The remainder of the cost is insurance. Our contribution for insurance depends on the person's need. We pay the same percentage (91%) of a gold plan for everyone. A single plan costs less than a family plan. If they have a family plan, then the total cost rounded up is \$45K. The article asks for authorization for an amount not to exceed \$45K. If the person signs up for a lesser plan we wouldn't spend the entire \$45K but we can't know in advance.

Linda Hill said it is a part-time position. Does it get full benefits or are they pro-rated? Brian said benefits are pro-rated.

Casey Romero asked about the impact of lowering the potential hours of the position. Her concern is that lowering the hours could affect our ability to attract quality candidates. We have had experience having fewer hours for a similar position and the candidates who came forward were not great.

Jessica Bickford said she was a recreation director for 8 years. She doesn't have interest in applying for this position. She feels if we are trying to recruit a qualified person we don't want the position to be less than 20 hours. The more hours we can provide the more desirable the position becomes. She feels 25 hours a week is ideal. This is a good pay rate to attract someone

and benefits may also be attractive. We need someone qualified. It is of the utmost importance to make this a desirable position.

Kim Dunkley said she thinks this is a great idea. Johnson really needs it. She would like a cap so it doesn't continue to grow and she would like the recreation coordinator to look into being a grant writer in order to be able to keep their department funded with grants. And she would like the coordinator to run some events to benefit the adult population. She would love a sap run in the spring where people would come for a run that would end at a maple syrup place. That would be a way to raise money to keep recreation programs going without taxpayer money.

Kerri O'Halloran, chair of the Recreation Committee, said part of the job description talks about seeking and managing grants.

Duncan Hastings said he fully supports the concept of a recreation coordinator. He can live with Charles' proposal. He was going to propose a smaller number. His belief is that we should start out a little smaller and work our way up. His initial thought was 20 hours a week at an hourly rate of about \$22/hour. In his opinion that is a figure that would attract a decent pool of candidates. Twenty-five hours triggers a requirement for benefits. If we lowered the maximum amount to \$35K we could go with fewer hours.

Will Jennison asked, the town is asking for \$17K just for insurance for a part-time employee? Brian said yes, it could be that high.

Lea Kilvadyova said it is a little sad that we have to have a discussion about whether to provide benefits. She feels it is really important to provide benefits in order to attract a good employee. She struggled with the proposal of 25 hours but reasoned that a good, resourceful hire will be able to do what is in the job description effectively and potentially more. One area where Johnson is seeing economic benefit is recreation, mostly related to the rail trail. We could potentially harness resources by helping recreation. She will vote against the amendment. She added that many parents are concerned about screen time. It is good to diversify children's interests.

It was moved to call the question. The motion was seconded and passed by a standing vote.

The motion to amend failed by a voice vote.

Jessica Bickford brought up the economic impact of recreation. She said there were 72 home games in spring. Those bring people into Johnson where they get gas, go to the supermarket and see the businesses that are here. Many of them will spend money in town. She works for Healthy Lamoille Valley. Recreation builds protective factors, which she described. It helps create a positive community and helps with youth development. We will be creating better citizens by supporting this article.

Denise Krause said she teaches archery. When she asked archery participants on the last day of one session if archery had changed their life in any way, responses included "I feel calmer inside," "I feel happy," "I'm nicer to my sister," and "I can focus much longer." She believes

recreation has a ripple effect into academics. We are talking about investing a relatively small amount of money for something that enhances character development and sense of belonging. There is so much pulling young people in directions that might not be favorable. She believes if we have someone working for 25 hours and the town is careful to choose the best person out there (she is not applying) the recreation program can really grow and maybe Johnson can become the representative in our area for recreation. She can see having a rec center eventually. She sees a lot of possibility for growth.

Sue Lovering said she agrees with the last 3 speakers. But taxes keep going up. People on fixed incomes are looking at a future of taxes becoming so high they can't live here. Her question is how we can make the cost pay for itself by developing more income. Also, it has been many months since the Rec Committee has posted minutes. It is the law and they spend a lot of town money. Some people wonder why we don't hear about their meetings. Will the new person write minutes or if not will someone do it?

Nat said that has been a problem. He doesn't think the Rec Committee has had a quorum of committee members for a number of months, which is why they have not had meeting minutes. Would the rec coordinator do that or help support volunteers so they can be better organized to get minutes up? He doesn't know but he agrees it needs to happen.

Shayne Spence said someone brought up that \$8K was budgeted in the past for the recreation coordinator job and that doesn't exist in the budget now. What happens if this article fails and we don't have anything in the budget?

Eric said he is correct. Money for a recreation coordinator is not in the budget approved by the voters. If this article fails there would be no money for the rec coordinator position.

Shayne asked if an amendment could be made to this motion to add that back in. Or are the only choices no funding or the position as described in this article?

David Williams said he is not aware of a way to make a motion introducing a contingency, which is what he thinks Shayne is proposing. He discussed the question with the board for about five minutes, then said he does not believe there is a way we can build a contingency into this but what he believes isn't necessarily all the truth.

Rhoda Vis said she is in complete support. She was on the Rec Committee years ago. She raised 3 foster kids. The rec program is very important for socialization to damaged kids coming out of foster care. She has seen the work the Rec Committee puts into their programs. She feels less than 25 hours for this position is not possible. She encourages everyone to vote yes.

Jackie Stanton said she supports this article 100%. The rec department is fantastic. She wants to recognize the Rec Committee members here today who have been holding down the fort.

Duncan asked if there is any way a straw poll on the main motion could be taken in order to give us a sense of whether it will pass. If it seemed it would not pass then someone might make a motion for a different sum of money.

Several people asked to call the question. David Williams said to his knowledge in Robert's Rules there is no suggestion for a straw poll. He thinks we are bound by that. He asked for unanimous consent to proceed to a vote on the motion as it is. There was an objection to proceeding to a vote.

It was moved and seconded to call the question and the motion was passed by a voice vote.

The original motion was passed by a voice vote.

The meeting was recessed for lunch from 11:58 to 1:11.

Article 9. Shall the Town vote to collect property taxes to the Town Treasurer in four equal installments (32 V.S.A. § 4792), as listed below; with delinquent taxes and assessments have charged against them an eight percent (8%) commission after the fourth installment (32 V.S.A. § 1674) and interest charges of one percent (1%) per month or fraction thereof, for the first three months; and thereafter one and one half percent (1 ½%) per month or fraction thereof from the due date of such tax? Such interest shall be imposed on a fraction of a month as if it were an entire month (32 V.S.A. § 5136). Payments are due in the hands of the Treasurer by 4:00 p.m. on the below due dates.

First Installment to be paid on or before Monday, August 12, 2019.

Second Installment to be paid on or before Tuesday, November 12, 2019.

Third Installment to be paid on or before Monday, February 10, 2020.

Fourth Installment to be paid on or before Monday, May 11, 2020.

Dean West moved the article as printed, seconded by Duncan Hastings.

Barry Cohen asked why the interest rate is so much. Eric said that was voted on previously by the town years ago. Barry said it seems like it would be a burden for a lot of people struggling to make payments to add 8% interest. Has there been discussion about lowering that? Eric said not in recent memory.

Barry said he would like to offer an amendment because townspeople believe it is a burden, but he would like discussion first.

Doug said it is his understanding that we treat the money we assess as income. The 8% is the collector's penalty. It is important that there be a compulsion to pay so the community can pay its bills. We count on the money raised through taxes coming in to pay bills.

David Williams said there might be some confusion between the 8%, which he understands becomes due on delinquency, and the interest, which is above that, is that correct? Rosemary said yes.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.**Article 10. Will the voters of the Town vote to exempt the Masonic Temple from the Municipal Town Taxes for a period of five years?****Duncan Hastings moved the article as written and the motion was seconded.**

Eric Osgood said the town brings this article to the voters every 5 years. The Masonic Temple is a landmark in the village. The clock is town-owned; there is some question about the clock tower.

Steve Engel said he is a member of the lodge, which is located on the corner of Pearl St. and Route 15. A couple of years back he gave a presentation on the tower and what was needed to repair it. It is pretty stable, even though it doesn't look it. The Masons hired structural engineers to check it out. They said a big hurricane might take it out but otherwise it would last a while. But work needs to be done to the tower and the building. The Masons don't have vast resources. Pretty much their only source of income is dues. They have a minimal portfolio and interest from that pays most of their bills. They make donations to charities and organizations. They have a scholarship fund. The building is old. It was first built in 1832 on Clay Hill as a one story building. In 1850 it was disassembled and moved and reassembled as a two story building. Later the tower was built. The tower belongs to the town. The clock needs some help. There is a problem with the rod that drives the hands. Since the Masons have limited funds being tax exempt helps them keep the building up. They would like to have the community use it more. It isn't heated in winter, just May through November.

Carl Powden said he is wondering if the town has ever discussed with the Masons some sort of option to purchase if they ever gave up ownership. Eric said as far as purchasing the building, no. There has been preliminary discussion on the tower question. There isn't good documentation on ownership of the tower. Eventually we have to get that question answered. An old building like that is probably more than the town would want.

Carl said we are foregoing taxes on it on a regular basis. We may well have bought it by now. It would seem too bad for it to be sold to another entity after the town foregoing taxes all this time. Maybe the town could get assurances in exchange for tax exempt status. That may be a question to address before the next 5 years is up.

Peter Moynihan said in the past when the post office was flooded it temporarily moved to the basement of the Masonic Temple. He is in favor of giving them tax exempt status. He remembers hearing that the land the building is on is not owned by the Masons. If that is true, who is the owner? Steve Engel said the Masons own the land. He described the boundaries. They have granted Marvin's a right of way to use part of their land for access.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.**Article 11. Shall the Town establish a reserve fund to be called the "SkatePark Reserve Fund" for the purpose of funding the operation and expansion of the**

SkatePark to be funded by unspent funds annually allocated to the SkatePark in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804?

Casey Romero moved the article as written and the motion was seconded.

Charlie Gallanter said he understands that any money in the budget for the skate park that is not spent goes to an unelected, unaccountable committee to spend as they see fit. Is that correct?

Casey said the Skate Park Committee is accountable to the selectboard. The committee's accounting had a growing gap between the way they were doing things and the way Rosemary and other town committees account for their money. For example, the Skate Park Committee was going by calendar year, not the town's fiscal year. All skate park improvements are always grant-funded. Grants often have a requirement to do a specific thing by a specific date. If construction hasn't been finished by that date the committee might get approval to extend the time to do construction, but that doesn't work well with how the town has to do the books. The money belongs to the Town of Johnson. This is a bookkeeping improvement that lets Rosemary deal with the money.

Nat Kinney said any money put into reserve funds can only be allocated by vote of the selectboard, not spent directly by the Skate Park Committee. The committee would make a request and the selectboard would need to allocate the funds.

Kyle Archer said it says there is \$3500 currently in the budget. He assumes that is because it went unspent. Is that correct? Eric said it probably was grant funding. It has to be used for whatever the grant was approved for, so it becomes restricted. We are trying to allow crossover between the calendar and fiscal year. If a job is not accomplished in the fiscal year in which the money came in, the article allows the money to still be there after July 1 so the committee can use it.

Beth Foy asked how this differs from the other committees. She was formerly on the Rec Committee and she knows the Rec Committee has a reserve fund they have to get approval to spend from. Is this establishing a similar fund for the skate park?

Eric said by and large yes. It would require selectboard approval to spend money out of it.

Duncan Hastings said his understanding about the establishment of a reserve fund is that it is for the specific purpose of doing capital improvements. It worries him a little the way the article is worded. This article describes funding operation and expansion of the skate park. Capital reserve funds are not intended to be used as operating funds. Operating funds are annually budgeted and the reserve fund is for capital improvements. He asked for clarification on whether the intent is to provide operating funds or fund capital improvements.

Eric said he thinks some grants are more operational than capital. He thinks it is right that the intent would be more for capital improvements.

Duncan said grant funds would still show up in the financial report as restricted funds which are held back as part of year end surpluses. The Skate Park Committee would have authorization to expend them as long as they are shown as restricted. That is different from establishing a capital reserve fund. He wants to be clear that what we are voting on is a capital reserve fund. If the committee wants to develop a new bike track, for example, they would request money from the capital reserve fund for that purpose. Eric said yes, that was the intent.

Duncan said the way this is worded bothers him because once it is established by the voters no funds can be spent except by authorization of the voters. "Operational" in the article confuses him. Should there be an amendment?

David Williams said there could be a motion to amend or the people who made and seconded the motion could agree to a change in wording. Probably an amendment is better.

Casey said it makes sense to her and the committee to keep the word "operation" in there in that in the future they would love to get grants to fund a coaching program or skills clinic. She calls that type of use operational. Work in the calendar year may mean carrying funds over from one fiscal year to the rest of the summer. She would love to keep the word "operation" in there for programming purposes.

David said if he understands correctly, operational money left over at the end of the town's fiscal year could be carried over so it would be available in the following fiscal year but the capital could be put in a reserve fund, which is something different and that would be for capital expenses only. Duncan said yes, there is a difference between operating funds and capital funds. What Casey referred to would be operating funds, which could be restricted by the board and carried over to the next fiscal year. His understanding of the statute that authorizes creation of a capital reserve fund is that it is only for capital purposes.

Duncan moved to amend the motion to strike the words "the operation and expansion of" and replace with "the purpose of funding a capital reserve fund." Dean West seconded.

David requested unanimous consent to grant the amendment but there was an objection.

The motion to amend was passed by a voice vote.

Casey said the word "for" seems to be needed in the sentence to make the replacement wording "for the purpose of funding a capital reserve fund." Duncan and Dean agreed to that.

Diana Osborn said she is confused about why the reserve fund has to be restricted to capital expenses. Can't a reserve fund be established for other reasons?

Duncan said at the end of the town's fiscal year the skate park committee would tell Brian and the selectboard they had only spent \$2500 of a \$5000 grant so \$2500 needed to be restricted into the next budget year. That is operating funds, not the unexpended funds envisioned in this motion. If there is going to be \$250 left over unspent after the work is done, that is not the skate

park's money; it is the town's. The board looks at the entire surplus and decides what to dedicate the funds to. They would see \$250 unspent from the skate park budget and roll that into the fund. Capital reserve funds are authorized by statute. They have to be approved by voters and can only be spent for the purposes we allowed them to be by this article. They are not intended to be for operating expenses by statute. The statute states they are for capital funds.

Diana said she doesn't understand why we had to make the switch to it being capital only.

Beth Foy said if we go with what it says here we are talking about all unspent or unreserved funds. If there is a specific purpose it rolls into reserved funds. Any unspent funds not reserved at the end of the fiscal year, according to this article, would automatically go into capital reserve. To her it means the selectboard cannot disagree; it automatically happens if this article is passed. Does Duncan agree? Duncan said he does. Beth said all non-reserved funds will go into capital reserve so they can't be used for things like painting or new signs. She is hearing that the intent of the article was to allow the skate park committee to use a calendar year budget. Casey said no; they want to be aligned with the town's bookkeeping. Beth asked, and the committee also wants to make sure its funds aren't taken away at the end of the year? Casey said yes.

Beth said she is understanding that to be a proper reserve fund the fund has to be for capital expenses. Is the skate park committee good with that? Casey said yes, because she is hearing that there is some way to carry over unspent funds for operating expenses.

Beth said she thinks this is different from all other programs in that if they don't spend all their funds it doesn't automatically roll into a reserve fund. The committee has to request it. This would automatically go into the fund, is that correct?

Eric said by and large that is correct. There are a couple of line items where unspent money allocated in the budget automatically rolls over into a reserve fund. For instance unspent money allocated for small equipment in the office rolls over into a reserve fund to help support the building. But by and large it is correct that unspent money does not automatically roll over into a reserve fund.

Charlie Gallanter moved and Will Jennison seconded to amend the motion by inserting the word "capital" between "unspent" and "funds."

Charlie said the skate park has a budget of about \$8K, of which only about \$1700 is for capital expenses. The unspent portion of that can roll into capital reserve.

Duncan said some unexpended funds might need to be restricted, like grant funds. Another type of funds is for normal operating expenditures, like putting up signs. The skate park committee could come to the selectboard and say they had money in the budget to put up signs but didn't have time and ask the selectboard to reserve the funds to apply to next year's budget. The selectboard has the ability to reserve an expense from this year to next year's budget. Every year they assign surplus funds to a specific purpose. What was just proposed presents a little difficulty. There are two ways we can establish a reserve fund. We can use unexpended funds or allocate money by line item. But the budget doesn't have a line item for capital expense or a

capital reserve fund. If the board established a line item for a capital reserve fund that is a different way of funding capital reserve than what is in this article. He is not sure Charlie's proposed motion works unless it includes instructing the board to establish a line in the budget.

Eric asked, if the article indicated that remaining funds in the site improvement line item were to roll over into the capital reserve fund, would that be allowable? Duncan said he would argue that a site improvement could be a small item which in his mind wouldn't necessarily be a capital improvement. He believes this board has a policy on what capital improvement is, based on dollar value and life expectancy. He feels the term "site improvements" doesn't necessarily indicate capital improvement. If the line item were changed to "capital reserve fund" that would make it clear that everything in that line item would go to build the capital reserve fund. He thinks it makes more sense to take unspent money at the end of the year and roll it into the capital reserve fund than to dedicate a certain amount.

Scott Meyer moved to call the question and the motion was seconded and passed.

The second amendment failed by a standing vote.

Cindy Hennard asked how this is different from the Rec Committee's reserve fund. Beth Foy said in her view it differs in that the Rec Committee's unspent funds are not automatically rolled into a reserve fund. The committee has to request that any remaining balance be rolled into the reserve fund. Otherwise it is similar in that the Rec Committee has a capital reserve fund used for capital expenses. They have a discussion with the selectboard asking permission to use the funds and justifying it as a capital expense.

The amended motion passed by a voice vote.

Article 12. Shall the voters advise the Selectboard of the Town of Johnson to change the Inclusivity Statement to read: "The people of Johnson embrace inclusiveness and together we will build bridges to understanding, ensuring that all who live, work and visit our town feel welcome and safe. The things we embrace are kindness, gentleness, understanding, neighborliness, peace, tolerance and respect for and toward all. Together we can have a cooperative, sustainable and thriving community where everyone is honored and valued."?

The article was moved and seconded as written.

Kyle Nuse gave some background information. At the November selectboard meeting a diverse group of citizens presented the selectboard with an inclusivity statement in hopes the town would adopt it. After hearing comments from that group and from major town institutions such as NVU, the elementary school, Laraway and Vermont Studio Center, the board did end up adopting it. She read the statement:

The people of Johnson embrace inclusiveness and together we will build bridges to understanding, ensuring that all who live, work and visit our town feel welcome and safe. We reject racism, bigotry, discrimination, violence and hatred in all its forms. Together we commit to growing a cooperative, sustainable, and thriving community.

She supports this statement because it is a true example of an inclusivity statement as adopted by many communities. She feels there is a need to reject all forms of hatred. That is what the original statement says which is different from what is in Article 12. She hopes voters say no to Article 12 and keep the original statement as is.

Jackie Stanton said she was one of the people who helped write the original statement adopted by the board. She is proud of it and stands by it. This newer one is good, too. It basically copies the original statement except that it deliberately removes one line: “We reject racism, bigotry, discrimination, violence and hatred in all its forms.” Those who wrote the statement deliberately put that in. Inclusivity statements are new for a lot of us but they exist everywhere – colleges, businesses, towns, cities, churches, etc. They all include language that is welcoming and inclusive and talks about what is embraced and they include language about what is rejected and denounced. She pulled up a few on the internet. UVM’s has very strong language about what is rejected, stronger than ours. She read from that statement. She wanted everyone to be up on what these statements typically include. Ours is typical. She hopes we keep the original statement. She really values the “We reject” sentence.

Lorenda Dunham said Jackie had used the phrase “fighting words” to describe the “We reject” sentence. That is not what we teach in our classrooms. When we discuss what our classroom is going to be we say positive things. But that statement of rejection has very negative fighting words. She has lived here a long time and that is not what she wants it to be. As a pastor who shares Jesus every day, she does not want the word “reject.” She doesn’t like fighting words. Of course we don’t want intolerance or bigotry but we want to express what we are on a positive note. She respects everyone who is pushing for us to come together as a community. That is important. We need to come together and work together and do it in a positive way. Rejection is not a positive way, so she supports Article 12.

Kate Westcott said she likes both statements. She likes the positivity of the positive one but it is also important to add in what we are rejecting. Those are things we should reject and she thinks that deserves to be in the statement. We could add the sentence about what we reject to the other statement.

Kyle Archer said it seems very hypocritical to include what we reject in an inclusivity statement. If we are going to say we are inclusive, the statement should be like the new one, saying what we embrace rather than what we reject.

Molly Zapp said has been a part of a group working for racial justice. She is hearing that many people are on similar pages. Nationwide we are seeing statements like this, usually in smaller or more chosen communities like a university, business or nonprofit. She agrees with all the things in both statements and would really like them to be reality but she questions that they are. She feels statements like these, particularly the new one, are saying we have already done this work. To her, it sounds like we are branding ourselves as people who have already done the hard work of racial justice when it takes decades. She thinks there is positive movement, but what are we doing to show it? Or are we just patting ourselves on the back?

Jasmine Yuris said she is a mother and an aspiring teacher. She believes it is right and just to teach all children to reject racism. Rejection can be a negative thing but rejecting racism, discrimination and bigotry is very positive. She will continue to instill these thoughts and ideals in her kids and she hopes to teach them in the classroom.

Glo Webel said we need to keep in mind what we are rejecting in light of the fact that things aren't getting any better in the world. She proposes a compromise – combining the two statements. We have to talk about the things that are not okay, not just sweep them under the rug. We have to keep in mind what we reject and also point out the vision of what we want to embrace.

Glo Webel moved to amend the motion to insert the sentence “We reject racism, bigotry, discrimination, violence and hatred in all its forms.” The motion was seconded.

Rhoda Mingleorff said the definition of bigotry is intolerance of people who have different opinions from oneself. If we adopt this, people would have to be tolerant of her. Maybe people would have to stop doing what she calls bigotry – protesting with signs on Tuesday nights. Is that what is intended by saying we reject bigotry and intolerance?

Jeff Bickford said keeping the statement about what we reject is to acknowledge that those are real issues that exist in our community. Not to say that work has been completed, but it says what boundaries we believe in as a community. Boundaries are important. He has worked in education for 17 years and understands the importance of clear boundaries of what is acceptable and unacceptable. He supports keeping the language about what we reject. To do otherwise is to pretend those are not problems in our community and that is woeful ignorance.

A voter said it is important for us to realize that “no” is not a negative thing in this statement. She wants to emphasize that it is a double negative. She unapologetically rejects racism, bigotry, etc. It is significant that the statement plants that flag.

Kim Dunkley said she agrees with the last 2 speakers. We are naming what we don't want in our town. If we don't name it, how do we go to the next step? Hopefully this is a baby step to lead to what we do next. She hopes we keep the language about what we reject.

Greg Stefanski said this is obviously a concern for this many people to stick around for this discussion. It says a lot about the heart and soul of our community. Some of these conversations really represent the best of who we are as a community. We have to be careful with words like “We reject.” Are we rejecting people or certain actions, harmful words etc.? Wedding vows sometimes include statements about things the spouses don't want to see happen. At Laraway there is language in a lot of documents for kids and staff that says, “We are not going to harm you.” There can be a level of mistrust so they felt it was important to make very clear statements about what kids and families will expect. In sports there are statements at most games that set clear expectations about how fans will act, treatment of coaches, players, etc., including specific things people can't say or do. Making statements is easy but the work that comes from those statements is what matters most. Whatever statement we adopt we need to think about what we

will do to promote and support it and what we will do when that aspiration hasn't been met. Making statements is easy compared to actually changing actions.

Rhoda Vis said the only problem she has is the word "reject." She prefers "We do not accept." She has foster children from damaged homes. The word "reject" has a shameful connotation. None of us want bigotry or discrimination. But if you reject someone, how can they change?

Rhoda Vis moved an amendment to change the wording of the statement by substituting "We do not accept" for "We reject." The motion was seconded.

Margo Warden said the word "reject" is the word that got her attention and she feels strongly about keeping it. Through raising two young men of color she and her husband have learned about the systemic nature of racism and the ever-presence of implicit bias and white privilege. Her sons and other people of color face these every day. We have an opportunity to not quietly speak against racism but really denounce and reject it. She has served as a godparent and as part of that had to vow to reject Satan and all of his works. There is a difference between rejecting Satan and not accepting him. She would vote for the power behind the message of rejecting.

Dean West said Barb Backus was not able to be here. He read a statement she had written. The statement said she was the one who submitted the petition for this article. She strongly supports that if we have a statement it should be in the form of "we embrace" rather than "we reject." It focuses on where we want to be. She is not dismissing incidences of hate, cruelty or disrespect. She acknowledges that they happen and she agrees that they are unacceptable. As a community we have to work together on being accepting and tolerant. The word "reject" goes against the point of having an inclusivity statement. It triggers people to feel the opposite of what the statement intended.

Dean said he would like to expand on that with his own statement. Barb grew up in Johnson and has a strong passion for making Johnson a good place to live. She thinks the statement should promote Johnson as a good place to settle. The statement is more to promote Johnson to people who are looking for a good place to live. We hope only good people will choose to live in Johnson.

Jackie said in Jeffersonville there is a huge banner on the outside of a church with bulleted statements. One is "Reject racism." This in on the outside of a church in a tourist town. That shows that the word "reject" isn't rejected by so many other people.

Linda Molde said she thinks we need to be clear about what we are rejecting – bigotry, racism, etc., not the bigot. The bigot needs correcting. They could be confronted, rejecting the bigotry and not the person. Eight out of the Ten Commandments say "Thou shalt not." In trying to encourage kids in the way you want them to go, sometimes you have to say "Stop it." We are not rejecting a person who thinks differently; we are rejecting the behavior that doesn't fit in with who we think we are.

Sue Lovering said this is a wonderful place to live. She feels few are racist. She has no sympathy with racists but that person has a right to say their feelings and hang that flag. When we have a

sign at the town line saying if you are racist or doing something I don't like you can't live here, that sounds like Adolf Hitler. He started the same way. If we are having ordinances or laws against certain types of people she wants no part of it.

Denise Krause said once the verbiage is chosen each of us will perceive the words chosen a little differently. It sounds clear to her that all of us are talking about behaviors, not the person. Many of us believe each person can be loved. She is excited that we are encouraging one another to have courage and strength to step in when we see someone treated unfairly. She feels there is power in the inclusivity statement regardless of the word choice we make. More people might be encouraged to step in to change how we can potentially hurt each other so we can feel safer.

Will Jennison asked if this inclusivity statement been accepted by the board. Eric said the one on the piece of paper that had been distributed is the one the selectboard adopted. Will said a small group of people presented it to the board and the board accepted it. A larger group is here. Why is this article non-binding? Brian Story said state statute limits which articles can be binding. This isn't one that can be binding. Will asked, if this body comes up with a statement, what is the board's intent to move forward? Eric said he thinks the board would be committed to abide by the wishes of the voters.

Scott Meyer said he flew back into the country a few days ago. He spent two hours in Immigration and was questioned on his nationality by someone who was obviously not born in the U.S. He thought, "This is crap," and then the inclusivity statement went through his head like lightning and he realized he was a bad representation of what America should be. The statement works. He used it on himself and it improved him.

Eric Hutchins said he is a teacher in this community. He thinks the debate is about one sentence and a problem with the word "reject." He gets that it is negative. It is great to tell kids to be healthy but we need to tell them that means not eating unhealthy food, smoking, or drinking. He thinks a lot of us are thinking in terms of how the statement makes us feel – people who generally are not the victims. If you were a victim of racism, homophobia, etc., you would want a strong, not lukewarm, rejection of those things. It is important to send a strong statement rejecting these things. At the high school we teach kids this. We don't teach both sides of the Holocaust, we teach that it was wrong. Having a goal for what we want and what we do not want to see is a good starting place.

Rick Aupperlee said before Vermont was admitted to the Union its constitution outlawed slavery. Slavery was a popular idea in America then but not so popular in Vermont. In 1860 our nation was at war over slavery but it took another hundred years for Martin Luther King to march on Washington for civil rights. We are at a tough point in our evolution right now. We stood here this morning and recited the pledge. The last 3 words were "justice for all" – not some, but all and we agreed to that. Justice isn't always popular but it's usually right. He supports what the selectboard did in its decision to stand up and reject racism, bigotry, etc. He was part of the movement to get the inclusivity statement going. It has evolved over time. He supports the selectboard's decision and encourages people to go to selectboard meetings. If you have something to say the selectboard will listen. They do their best to represent the town. If

people want to add something to the statement they should go to a selectboard meeting and express themselves.

Mike Dunham said he was the only dissenting selectboard member when the inclusivity statement was adopted. He did it so all of us could discuss it. We have discussed it. What has not happened in American politics is compromise. What he heard from Glo is a compromise. She echoed Barb Backus's statement and added the "We reject" sentence. To him, that is a good compromise. As a town we should compromise. We compromise with our family members and friends and neighbors. If we do not compromise, by the end of the day there will be an inclusivity statement. If we leave it the way it is, there will be winners and losers in people's minds. If we compromise we will all be winners.

The question was called by unanimous consent.

The motion to amend by substituting "do not accept" for "reject" failed by a voice vote.

Jon Gregg asked what the relationship is between the statement proposed in Glo's amendment and what the selectboard approved. Are they the same thing?

David and Glo said no. Glo's amendment adds "We reject racism, bigotry, discrimination, violence and hatred in all its forms" between "safe" and "The things" in Article 12.

The motion to amend was passed by a voice vote.

The amended motion was passed by a voice vote.

David said at town meeting in Johnson we have dealt with a number of contentious issues over the years and every single time we have a hard question to answer it is his observation that people who had argued the point often leave together. Let's keep up that tradition.

Article 13. Shall the voters of the Town hear a report from the Johnson representatives on the Lamoille North School District?

David Williams said this article will not require a vote. He invited the representatives to give a report.

Mark Nielsen addressed the voters. He said he didn't prepare a report. Cambridge Elementary still has its own school board. The state doesn't know what is going on with Act 46 so he won't talk much about that. The middle school and high school are starting a proficiency-based reporting system. Students are able to explore their strong points. They get a chance to write a plan that exploits their talents to the fullest. People have asked if Johnson's bond funds are the property of all the LNMUUSD communities. They are not. We had a heating issue at JES and we used bond money here in Johnson to fix it. There is about \$25K left in that fund and it will be spent right here. The board has spent money on school security. At the high school doors will be closed and ID badges will be needed to get in. He welcomes comments and concerns. A number

of people here have come to meetings and expressed concerns about the budget. The board appreciates that.

Beth Foy said if we have a topic to bring to the school board it is hard know when the appropriate time is. She thinks often bringing it to a subcommittee is more appropriate. More information on that would be helpful. She has heard rumblings about a bond for the high school floor. When should we look for information meetings on that?

Mark said people can email him at the address on the Lamoille North website with questions or comments to come to the board. As far as the gym floor and that bond, when he first joined the Lamoille Union board around 4 years ago there was a price tag of about \$500K to redo the gym floor and bleachers. Now we are looking at about million and a half or three quarters. Interest rates are low now. He feels that sooner or later we will pay for this and if we kick the can down the road it might be more expensive and interest rates might be higher. He doesn't know when the information meetings will happen. The board decided to push it off to get the best price we could. Some of the other representatives from Johnson are penny pinchers even more than he is. They represent the board well. After this budget is voted then the board will take a look at the bond issue.

Dean West said he seems to remember that when we had information meetings on consolidating, the sales pitch focused on how this would add to efficiency and supposedly reduce increases in taxes. He heard very little about what it would do for education. That disappointed him. We voted to join and we contributed about \$300,000 we had in the reserve fund to the new board and gave them all our school property, and then when he got his first tax bill after we were in the new union he found his school tax had gone up by over \$400. He is having trouble understanding how that could have happened.

Mark said his taxes have gone up too. He was involved in developing the budget. He is not sure where all that money did go. Things didn't go quite the way they said they would. We were supposed to start out with a 10% tax break but we didn't start out that way. The Johnson budget was up about 6% but the tax increase was about 3.2%. Other areas have absorbed some of what would have been our taxes. That is one benefit of consolidation. We realized some money from busing pieces. But he can't say that consolidation was all it was promised to be.

Lois Frey said she attended recent budget meetings and the information meeting about Cambridge joining and attendance was dismal, in part because people have no idea what is going on. Communication is lacking. Senior citizens with no kids or grandkids have no way to know what is going on. It is important to do better. At the annual meeting, attendees couldn't see who the school board members were. They were mixed in with the rest of the audience. She hopes that can get changed.

Mark said the board got a clear message about the communication piece.

Lois said people she talked to about the Cambridge vote didn't know what she was talking about.

Mark said he is going to work on fixing that this year. He needs to get more involved in what is going on here in town. He sat down with Dave Manning once and he will continue to do so.

Ed Raymond said the tax rate was so high last year. As the board looks into the future and into possible savings it seems closing of several schools could be possible. Is the board looking at that, and if so when would it happen? Also, why did the Cambridge vote happen a week before town meeting and not at the same time as town meeting?

Mark said the issue of school closings has been brought up. There has to be a time frame to go along with it. That community has to be involved. It is not being looked at currently. It was explained to the board that the Cambridge vote had to be 10 days before town meeting based on the law.

Heather Rodriguez said she knows that last winter there was a budgeting issue related to facilities. The recreation department worked with the board and with David Manning. She understands that is taken care of for next year but how will the board move forward? Will we always have access to these buildings for recreation programs?

Mark said he thinks the point was vividly made by the public at information meetings. As long as he is on the board the school will be available.

Jeremy Baker said he would encourage the board to try to get students more aware of wet lab and biology work.

Eric Hutchins said there are a lot of programs going on that get kids out of school to do projects and learn life skills and interpersonal skills.

Article 14. To transact such other business as may properly be brought before this Town.

Jessica Bickford said there are mail-back envelopes at the back of the room that people can use to discard medicine.

Greg Stefanski said he wonders if in the future there could be a monitor that could show motions and amendments so they would be clear to everyone.

Duncan Hastings moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and passed by a voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 3:46.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

Meeting videotaped by Green Mountain Access Television. GMATV info: <https://greenmountainaccess.tv/>; PO Box 581, Hyde Park, 05655; info@greenmountainaccess.tv or 802-851-1592