

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JENNA'S HOUSE, JOHNSON  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2020

**Present:**

Selectboard Members: Mike Dunham, Nat Kinney, Doug Molde (via Zoom), Kyle Nuse, Eric Osgood

Others: Brian Story, Greg Tatro, Dawn Tatro, Amy Tatro, Barry Cohen, Daniel Franklin, Lisa Crews (via Zoom), Lois Frey (via Zoom), Diane Lehouillier (via Zoom)

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

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

**1. Call to Order**

Eric called the meeting to order at 6:03.

**2. Additions, Changes to Agenda**

No changes to the agenda were needed.

**3. Tour of Jenna's House**

Greg Tatro welcomed everyone to Jenna's House. Amy Tatro talked about plans for the coffee shop. She said right now they are near the end of their environmental review for the Community Block Grant. Once the information they submitted is approved, a 30 day waiting period will begin. Then they can start the bidding process and move forward. Seth Jensen is working with the prereqs that need to be handed in. That all has to be done before November 1. They got the green light from Community Block Grant to start work on the roof because it is leaking and they wanted to prevent further damage. That should be starting in about two weeks. There is a second recovery grant that will be for the sober living area upstairs. It looks like that will be announced for April of next year. It is also a Community Block Grant with a similar process and paperwork. They will be applying for \$200,000 to \$300,000. As soon as the 30 days are up they will demolish the back part of the building. There does not need to be a bid for that because it is an in-kind contribution from GW Tatro.

Kyle asked, the upstairs will be sober living as well as the other house behind the Barrows Building? Amy said yes, the back house is stage one sober living, which is more strict. Over the coffee house will be living that is the next step. People will have to pay rent and have a job and they will have more flexibility to start making their own decisions.

Kyle asked, is the hope that the people living upstairs will work in the coffee house? Amy said they can if they want to. They don't have to. Jenna's Promise also has a relationship with Smuggs so working there is an option.

Greg said they are pretty sure they are going to keep the Barrows Building roof slate. Amy said replacing it with shingles would take longer because more approvals would be needed. The whole idea is that the outside will remain looking historic.

Amy said she is hoping they can get started on construction by mid-November and have a soft opening by next summer and a big opening by fall.

Barry Cohen said Jenna's Promise wants to make the main floor of Jenna's House into a business center to rent out to businesses. It might be used for weddings. They also want the community to use it. They have talked to Kyle about using it for a community art show. They will have sound and ability to project to a very large screen. They will have internet access. They will be able to have movie nights. There will be wireless microphones. It will be pretty much state of the art.

Greg said a USDA grant of \$250K will help with the Jenna's House project. Jenna's Promise has a match of about \$113K. The Recovery Center is helping with that. Jenna's life insurance bought this church. New flooring has been put into the building. Handicapped accessible bathrooms are coming. The grant will pay for a lift. The building will be totally handicapped accessible.

Greg said Jenna's Promise has been working quite a bit with the Recovery Center in Morrisville. Daniel Franklin of the Recovery Center said downstairs they will build a Recovery Center satellite facility. Their staff has quadrupled in two years. They needed more space. They are already hosting some of their bigger meetings upstairs. A playground will be built outside. The USDA grant will cover the cost of renovating the kitchen downstairs. They will provide nutritional classes and make food. During the COVID period they have been feeding about 35-40 people every week. They are currently building a fitness center downstairs to improve access to health and wellness activities. They will be launching a support program for moms in recovery. There will be a play area and office spaces. There will be other meeting spaces and office spaces. It will more than double their capacity to deliver recovery coaching, support groups, and other programs and services to support people. The fitness center is just one part of a health and wellness program they will be offering. There will be bicycles to be used for transportation between here and downtown. Trails will be built. There will be lawn games. They will offer self defense classes, yoga, reiki, etc. They also provide support groups and coaches for families. They intend to add on dramatically to supports for families.

Kyle asked if the Recovery Center will be in charge of the downstairs part of the building. Daniel said they are occupying the downstairs space and using some of the other space. Their space will be sequestered, with controlled access, due to the need for confidentiality and safe record keeping. Through fundraising the Recovery Center does on its own and with Jenna's Promise, grants, etc. they plan to be able to fund this operation and sustain it long-term.

Eric asked if there is a ballpark number for the amount of money that is being put into this community from grants, fundraising, etc. Greg and Daniel said the Recovery Center number is about \$200,000. The USDA grant Jenna's Promise got was \$250,000. Jenna's life insurance was close to \$300,000. Jenna's Promise is contributing a \$113,000 match. Greg and Dawn have committed a million dollars of their own money. Greg said close to two million dollars must be coming into Johnson. They keep applying for grants. They have gotten a lot of donations. One donor wrote a check for \$100,000.

Daniel said the Recovery Center on this site will probably have about a \$300,000 operating budget and 3 or 4 employees. Then there will be all the people employed at the coffee shop, Smuggler's Notch, etc. They should continue to foster more people returning to the workforce. They will provide returns to the community in the form of taxes and helping people be contributing members of society and reducing costs for law enforcement, etc. Barry said the programs will bring people to Johnson and then they may spend money while they are here. Greg and Daniel said someone from Johnson was just hired as a support person for the mothers' program. Someone from Morrisville was hired to run the health and wellness program.

Kyle asked about the plans for keeping the facilities operating. Is the plan to keep applying for grants and getting donations, with some money coming in from the coffee shop, etc? Greg said they hope some of their donors will donate every year. They feel Jenna's House can support itself. The Recovery Center will need to keep seeking grants to keep its programs going. He thinks the coffee shop can sustain itself. The people upstairs will pay a small rent. He and Dawn are committed to this project. It will not fail. Daniel said businesses funding nonprofits is a proven model. He thinks people will be willing to spend a little more for a brand that is funding something great. Greg said they think businesses will come here to use the meeting facility.

Greg said they knew it would be a year or so before they could open up much here so they established a financial assistance program for people coming out of inpatient treatment or incarceration. By the time they get into an inpatient program some people have nothing left but the shirt on their back. They have helped about 60 people so far. The ADAP program made a grant to help these people and some of it went through Jenna's Promise. There is a program they are doing through VTARR, a recovery housing group. They named a \$100K grant after Jenna.

Greg asked Barry to describe their process for helping people. Barry said Jenna's Promise gets a call from someone who is about to get out of inpatient treatment or the prison system and has been accepted at some sober home in Vermont and they have no money. He goes through a brief interview. He asks if they are from Vermont, if they can work and if they have substance use disorder. Some people are just alcoholics and that is not part of their mission right now. If they answer yes to those questions then Jenna's Promise offers to help them. The sober home has already done screening. Jenna's Promise pays the sober home directly. The person has to check in with Barry once a week. He checks if they are happy with the house and makes sure they are following the rules and looking for work and he works on budget issues for them. He wants to convince them that they can take any job, even minimum wage, and be self sustaining.

Greg said Dawn is a certified recovery coach now and she was a part of pioneering the family coaching program. Dawn spoke about the recovery house behind the coffee shop. It will have 6 women. An RN will live there with them and take them to meetings and doctors, make sure they get to life skills programs and nurture them back into society. Then hopefully Jenna's Promise will get jobs for the women, such as working in the coffee shop.

Dawn said Jenna's Promise has been working with NVU-Johnson about doing internships at Jenna's Promise and helping them to design a counseling program with some unique classes that would be a draw.

Greg said the federal prosecutor's office paid a doctor to come up with the program for the people living in the sober house behind the coffee shop. The federal prosecutor's team has been up here working on the house.

Greg asked anyone who has suggestions or wants to be part of this to reach out. They welcome suggestions or help.

Daniel said the Recovery Center works with people who have any type of addiction, not just substance use disorder.

Greg said Jenna's Promise has harm reduction packages to give out to people who are actively using. They have fentanyl test strips and Narcan. Daniel said the packages also have information about community resources. They can attribute at least 8 people since July 1 as being alive because of those packages.

Greg said he hopes the community is understanding and supports what they are doing.

Nat said costs of substance use disorder – law enforcement, ambulance, healthcare, loss of business and real estate value, etc. have been very devastating to this community. Having someone doing something about it is important to the community.

#### **4. Adjourn**

The Zoom broadcast ended at 6:53.

The group went downstairs and Daniel showed where the gym, offices, reception area, and moms' area will be. Then the group toured the sober house.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*