

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
ALL PARTICIPATION BY ZOOM TELECONFERENCING  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2020

**Present:**

Selectboard Members: Mike Dunham, Nat Kinney, Doug Molde, Kyle Nuse, Eric Osgood  
Others: Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert, Hugh Albright, Robert Moore, Greg Tatro, Jessica Bickford, Olivia McGovern, Eben Patch, Kirsten Owen, Jennifer Burton, Lois Frey, Diane Lehouiller, Beth Foy, Howard Romero, Sophia Berard, Margo Warden, Kim Dunkley, Scott Meyer, Walter Pomroy, Lea Kilvadyova, Marla Emery, Neil Shepard, Noel Dodge, Marina Asaro

**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. *Public Information Session and Notice for USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Application by Jenna's Promise***

Eric explained that this is a public hearing that has nothing to do with the selectboard. The selectboard will convene following the public hearing.

Amy Tatro said Jenna's Promise is applying for a USDA grant that will allow them to purchase most of the equipment they need for the coffee house they plan to open. This is an informational meeting to give people an opportunity to ask questions.

Kyle asked if there is someone with expertise advising Jenna's Promise about what equipment they need, how to use it, etc. Amy said yes, they have worked with someone who has run a lot of coffee houses. That person traveled to Europe and due to COVID hasn't traveled back. They have also talked to locals with expertise and worked with a small coffee association.

Kyle recommended Carrier Roasting Company in Northfield. They have a lot of roasting knowledge and they consult and help set up new coffee shops. Amy thanked Kyle for the information and said she and Olivia McGovern will look into them.

Kyle asked, if Jenna's Promise gets the grant, what happens if the coffee shop doesn't work out as anticipated? Who owns the equipment? Amy said Jenna's Promise owns it. There is an understanding that they will be continuously trying to operate a coffee shop for about 10 years. They are allowed to move the equipment, for instance if the building is damaged. The USDA does not say that if the business folds the equipment goes back to them. A lot of the equipment has a useful life that is within 10 years. For some of the equipment it will be 5 years. She thinks they have to have a business in operation for at least 2 years.

Kyle asked who owns the equipment. Is it the non-profit Jenna's Promise, not the for-profit part of the organization? Amy said that is right.

Jessica Bickford asked if this grant has any match requirement that has to come from the community. Amy said there is a 20% match that has to come from Jenna's Promise. Brian said this hearing tonight is the extent of the town's involvement. The town is helping facilitate the hearing but Jenna's Promise is applying for this grant independent of the town. There is no community obligation. The town is not even serving as fiscal agent for this grant.

Amy said she thinks there is just one piece of paper the town has to sign stating that they know this is happening. Brian agreed that the town does have to sign a document stating that we know about this and this is something the community supports.

Kyle asked if there is a timeline for opening the coffee shop. Amy said they are hoping to get all the block grant paperwork through in the next month or so. That will allow them to start work on the inside of the building. They will have to wait for spring to get the addition up, then move equipment in over the summer. She will work hard to be able to open the coffee shop by September.

**2. Call to Order**

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:14.

**3. Additions, Changes to Agenda**

Eric said he wants to speak about events of the past week.

**4. Presentation of Draft Road Erosion Inventory**

Brian said the draft road erosion inventory report in the board packet includes the raw data the board saw before and more detailed information about what the raw data means. There is cost information about projects we might be interested in looking at in the next few years.

Rob Moore said LCPC got a grant to conduct the road erosion inventory required by the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP.) The MRGP requires conformance with best management practices for Class 1, 2, 3 and 4 roads. Different classes have different requirements. LCPC conducted an inventory with a grant from the Agency of Transportation. The inventory involves identification of what the state calls hydrologically connected road segments. Segments are 100 meters or 328 feet long. Hydrologically connected means that runoff from the road reaches a waterway ultimately connected to Lake Champlain or the Connecticut River. The MRGP is connected to Lake Champlain water quality. The overall status of the town was observed in a series of site visits to every mile of every road to verify if each segment was jurisdictional to the permit requirement and if so an assessment of conditions related to best management practices was conducted. The data is a snapshot in time. Conditions can and do change at a moment's notice if a big storm comes through or the highway department conducts a project that positively affects the situation. Conditions at a particular location today could be different than when the snapshot was taken but the inventory is a good indicator of the overall condition of the town highway network and the types of scenarios the town needs to pay attention to. More than half of the road segments in the town were not jurisdictional to the permit. More than half of those that were jurisdictional were in good condition as of the assessment. Less than 50% of jurisdictional roads in the town require some work over time to comply with the permit.

The MRGP concludes in 2036. The town must work towards compliance with the permit by 2036. Rob had many discussions with Brian Krause and Brian Story to come up with a list of

6 years worth of projects. The very rough total cost estimate for that work is approximately \$745,000. The cost estimates include some known capital projects as well as the cost of working towards permit compliance. The idea is that when the town tackles planned projects while the work is being done it is a good idea to make progress towards compliance with MRGP in the vicinity of the project. For example, the Scribner Bridge will be getting improvements and when that project is tackled the town might as well address road segments in the vicinity of the bridge. The ballpark estimate for that project is \$200,000 and much of that is for bridge and structural work that the town would plan on doing to protect the bridge that has nothing to do with complying with MRGP. But for relatively small cost the town can also include work addressing compliance issues related to the road permit. The list of potential projects is not intended to commit the town to doing specific projects in a specific sequence. It is intended to assist with understanding that every year between now and 2036 the town will be doing capital projects and at the same time doing water quality projects for compliance with MRGP.

Rob is hoping for the selectboard to accept the report with any changes suggested between now and the end of the year. Then he can submit it to the grant agency that funded the work. That will fulfill one obligation under the permit.

Doug said the road erosion inventory gets updated every 5 years. Would it be prudent to have a rolling list of possible impacts? If LCPC is out of the picture until 5 years from now, what does Rob suggest we do during that 5-year period with regard to the list? Brian said in between official cycles we will internally track where we have done projects or where we know there are problems. LCPC won't be involved.

Doug asked if the cost of work done on town roads to comply with MRGP is likely to exceed the money we receive for the roads. Will the work done be sufficiently beneficial that our costs will go down? How will MRGP affect our costs?

Brian said Johnson is one of the few towns participating in a study on effectiveness of mitigation efforts. Data should indicate whether work for MRGP compliance is effective or not and if it is saving us money. Rob said UVM and VTrans are working on an ongoing research project to assess efficacy and consideration of cost toward achieving the goals set out for Lake Champlain with these practices. Many towns have commented to him, and Johnson is one of them, that these practices are not only good for water quality but also help preserve town assets. If a road is going to wash out less frequently, that means less ongoing cost. But to keep these practices functioning to full efficiency will take ongoing maintenance. It will require time from the highway department to clean out ditches and catch basins, etc., so they continue to perform over time. He believes part of Doug's question was also about the availability of grants and funding, maybe related to the annual highway mileage money received from the state. Unfortunately these requirements are adding to the per mile cost for operating and maintaining the road network. As far as he knows the amounts of state funding are not increasing, but there are multiple grant programs that already existed and some new ones. Usually in those programs the town has a 20% local match. So a \$10,000 project would only cost \$2,000, leveraging local money. There are various programs that can help address these issues but the question of whether there is enough money to go around and the question

of what the money is providing in terms of progress are good questions, to be discovered as we move forward.

Eric said the areas identified as problem spots in the report are mostly ones we are familiar with. He is glad Rob brought up the six-year plan that was laid out. Even if you back out the Scribner Bridge and the hopes we have for mitigation money for that project, there is still a little over half a million dollars in anticipated cost. That is a huge amount of money for a town this size. He is hoping there will be a lot more grants available because we would need help completing these projects.

Kyle said she wonders if our mud abatement master plan ties in at all to this erosion mitigation. Rob said yes, there is a relationship to that work and an opportunity to capture efficiencies with mobilization of contractors and the highway department. Tactics to deal with muddy roads fit well with tactics used to address erosion.

Nat said our town planning commission has recommended turning some Class 4 roads into trails, which would release the town from the obligation to comply with MRGP on those roads. He is wondering whether other towns are doing that and if it is advisable. It seems like that gets us off the hook for the obligation to maintain the roads but the environmental issue is not resolved.

Rob said many towns have raised the idea of changing a Class 4 road to legal trail status. It is a conversation a lot of towns have had even before MRGP. There are all sorts of different reasons a town might consider doing that and he would agree that this is one more consideration to put on the scales. Some towns have picked up the pace with changing classifications of some roads. For the most part they are talking about changing roads from Class 4 to legal trails. He can only think of one instance in the county where a town is thinking of reclassifying a Class 4 road to Class 3. MRGP only applies to Class 1, 2, 3 and 4 roads. Erosion on municipal property that is not a Class 1, 2, 3 or 4 road is not jurisdictional to this permit.

Doug said we have 24 Class 4 roads and only 3 have hydrologically connected segments that don't meet or partially meet MRGP requirements – Coddling Hollow, Mine Road and Hoag Road. For the most part we don't have a financial obligation under MRGP for our Class 4 roads.

Rob said some road segments were not able to be assessed by the field crew for various reasons. There might have been a locked gate or no trespassing sign or the road may no longer be present or not present on the alignment mapped. So there are a handful of locations in Johnson where we don't know the current status because they weren't visually inspected by field crew. Reservoir Road is one where the mapped road followed a certain alignment and the visible road on the ground went in a different direction. He believes the field crew also reported there was a gate there. He agrees that most Class 4 roads are either not jurisdictional or don't have issues, but a handful were not assessed and he did provide a list of those to the Planning Commission. That list is not in the report but he can forward it to Brian.

Kim Dunkley asked if the Champlain Basin committee distinguishes between little roads in the boondocks with a little erosion going into a small stream vs. a road like Clay Hill where runoff goes into a stream that flows directly into the Gihon. Do they get that there are bigger impacts in some places – for example, the college parking lot, which has nothing to do with this study?

Rob said the permit is very specifically related to roads. There are other permits and rules regarding parking lots, roofs, etc. on public and private property. They are under different regulatory jurisdiction.

**Nat moved to accept the draft road erosion inventory report pending any further questions or edits directed by Brian Story to Rob Moore, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

5. *Review and Approve Minutes of Meetings Past*

**Nat moved and Doug seconded to approve the minutes of December 7, 2020.** Kyle said she wanted it noted in the minutes of this meeting that at the December 7 meeting when she was talking about additions to meeting minutes she brought up the fact that Jasmine Yuris' request to speak was denied. **The motion was passed.**

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

Rosemary said we received our PILOT money in the amount of \$398K, which was about \$44K more than what we budgeted. We received our land records grant money today. As of today we have 40 years of records on the site.

Eric said he is assuming Rosemary is not one of the town clerks being sued. Rosemary said we are not being sued. Eric explained that an attorney from Connecticut is suing some town clerks for not providing access to records.

**Mike moved to authorize Eric to sign warrants on behalf of the board, Nat seconded and the motion was passed.**

7. *Public Works Supervisor's Report*

Brian shared the written public works supervisor report, which was written by Jason before Hugh arrived. Brian noted that there has been an increased amount of graffiti and vandalism. We will get in touch with the sheriff's department and keep an eye on it. Eric asked if there is any particular area where it is happening. Brian said it is pretty much across the community. There is quite a bit downtown and on Railroad Street. Kyle said this is the first time she is seeing it on private property. That feels new to her. Eric said a lot of it has been symbols that he can't even read. Brian said it looks like a lot of it is the same color. He imagines it is the same person or people but it doesn't make sense to him. Kyle said part of the graffiti artist MO is to be incognito and have a tag and a specific look. She thinks this is mostly the same person but it seems random, without a consistent tag or type of work. It feels spontaneous and unfortunately not very interesting. Eric asked if there have been any issues removing it. Brian said not too much. Employees climbed up the bridge and cleaned what they could reach because the village bucket truck wasn't available. They just painted over it because the bridge was painted black already.

Kyle said she wonders if we could look into what other communities are doing to deal with graffiti artists or vandals as an alternative to just getting the police involved. She doesn't think the police have time and it is an ongoing thing so if there are creative ways to channel that energy into the right places that would be the best case scenario. She would be willing to research that a little. Brian said he thinks he and Kyle could both research it a little and talk to other communities.

Nat asked if Hugh has Brian Krause's old phone. Hugh said he does. He is not a fan of carrying two phones so he forwarded the town number to his personal cell phone. Nat asked if he has access to the town highway foreman email address. Hugh said yes.

Nat said he wanted to make Hugh aware that a couple of years ago a group in town got together to make an emerald ash borer preparedness plan. He encouraged Hugh to pull up that report and familiarize himself with it. He thinks the emerald ash borer will be a major issue for highways. Hugh said he is pretty familiar with the issue because he has discussed it with a forester with regard to his personal family land

#### **8. *Town Meeting Planning***

Brian said Act 162, passed at the end of the last legislative session, gives us some options for how to conduct town meeting. It allows us to temporarily opt in to using Australian ballot for one year without a town vote. It would be temporary only and could not be binding for future years. There are discussions about other possible changes like allowing us to delay town meeting, but those have not been voted on yet. Both he and Rosemary would recommend that we make a decision about how we are going to do town meeting sooner rather than later, rather than waiting for whatever changes the legislature might make.

Doug said he thinks we should use Australian ballot. Nat said he thinks that is the least bad option. Kyle asked if we could have a virtual Zoom town meeting and conduct floor votes that way. Brian said we could try to. He thinks it would be difficult to run but it is an option.

Kyle said she agrees that Australian ballot is the safest and best way, but she is lamenting giving up the back and forth dialogue that happens at a regular town meeting. She is wondering how we can keep that piece alive and well. We have seen that there is increased participation with Zoom meetings. She is wondering if we could use that to our advantage with a virtual town meeting. Brian said we still have to conduct an informational meeting, which presumably would be conducted electronically, but votes will happen by ballot. Eric said there can be questions and answers at an informational meeting, we just can't make changes to ballots that have been mailed out. Eric noted that some articles would have to be reworded a little for Australian ballot voting. An article we have had in the past asks if the town will give compensation to the officers and how much. We wouldn't be able to ask that question. We could ask people either to vote on a specific amount or to authorize the board to set its own compensation. We will have to use yes or no questions.

Mike said he would like to know how long we could delay town meeting. Brian said that option hasn't been passed yet. We could wait and the legislature could end up deciding not to pass it. Mike said he would like to wait and find out what they are going to do. He asked if we would do a bulk mailing like during the presidential election or if people would have to

request absentee ballots. Brian said that is left up to towns. He believes we could send ballots to everyone if we want to but we would have to pay for it. Mike said he would prefer to wait a little while to see what leeway the state will come up with. He would like to have a town meeting where everyone gets to see each other. He thinks a virtual meeting with 500 people would be a nightmare to try to manage. And we would have to pay considerably more. We only pay for Zoom meeting for about 100 people right now. Brian said he thinks we pay for about 500 people right now.

Nat said he hears what Mike and Kyle are saying. There is a lot of value in having a traditional town meeting. The problem with delaying is that we have we only have 3 months between the normal town meeting date and when we need a new budget. If the budget were voted down we would have to go through the process of crafting a new budget and holding another meeting. He prefers to have more time for that. He doesn't think the general population will be vaccinated even by late June. It is not a safe to assume that the legislature will allow delaying town meeting. He doesn't think we should delay it.

Eric said if we waited a little longer we probably won't know much more than we do tonight. The legislature will not come back into session until early January. Any change has to go through both chambers and be approved by both and then get the governor's signature. We need to get things out by late January if we go with our regular town meeting date. He would encourage the board to come to a decision tonight. Mike said he doesn't see any harm in waiting a couple of weeks. Eric said he doesn't think we will have much more information then than we do now. Nat said the first day of their next session is January 4, two weeks from today. Mike suggested meeting in 3 weeks then.

Kyle asked if we have any idea what other communities are doing. Brian said several others in Lamoille County have opted to use Australian ballot already. Eric said he believes Cambridge has. Brian said administrators he has talked to are anticipating their towns would probably go to Australian ballot.

Walter Pomroy said he thinks with COVID we need to adapt and do something different. He strongly urges the board to send ballots to all voters in Johnson, just as in the November election. We had record turnouts for that election. He thinks this is a chance to have a good experiment. Let's see if we can revive some participation. He thinks we have to do Australian ballot and if we are going to do it, let's do it right and send ballots to everyone and see what the turnout is.

Howard Romero said that is a great idea.

Mike said he wouldn't say that the November turnout was a record turnout. It was not much more than the general election of 2016. He thinks to save the town money it would be better to have people request absentee ballots or show up in person to vote. He doesn't think we necessarily need to send out 2,200 ballots with postage and return postage.

Doug said with the extra \$44K in PILOT money Rosemary mentioned, he thinks we can ask the public to vote however they feel on these issues.

Nat said first we should decide whether to go to Australian ballot or not, then decide whether to send ballots to all voters.

**Nat moved and Kyle seconded to forgo traditional town meeting in favor of Australian ballot voting this year and to have at least two informational meetings in preparation for the vote.** Kyle said she thinks it would be great to have two informational meetings. People may not be able to make one but hopefully could attend the other.

Nat noted that we will have more people attending budget work sessions this year.

Beth Foy said she is all for Australian ballot voting and informational sessions. With regard to articles like the officer pay article Eric mentioned, she would suggest whenever possible referring to what was approved last year.

Brian said he attended a VLCT seminar for towns that have not used Australian ballot before. One recommendation was to have our ballot reviewed by the town's attorney.

**The motion was passed in a roll call vote with Nat, Doug and Kyle voting yes and Mike voting no.**

**9. Accommodations for Petitions**

Brian said as part of Act 162 the legislature changed petition requirements for candidates seeking office. Candidates only need to file a consent form, not collect signatures. Act 162 does not affect requirements for collecting signatures for petitions other than for candidates. That is left up to selectboards. Do we want to make any accommodations to that procedure?

Eric said the selectboard has the ability to put articles on the warning at our own discretion without a petition being raised. We could have very frivolous petitions submitted that would not normally be able to get the required number of signatures but we probably don't want people going door to door soliciting signatures. Any accommodations we make would also probably apply to nonprofits looking for allocations. They could just provide a request to increase their allocation. In the past we have asked them to get signatures if they want to increase their allocation or if it is a new group that has not previously received an allocation.

Nat asked how many signatures are needed to get on the ballot. Rosemary said 125.

Kyle said she wonders if we could waive the requirement for signatures but still require a screening process of some sort. Brian said the board can do that to a limited degree. We are on firm footing if we say that a proposed article is not town business, but if it relates town business it will be hard to distinguish good town business from bad town business. That gets into judgment calls. Eric said we could reject articles about things that are not in our power, but if someone wanted to cut the highway department in half, that is in our power and could go forward.

Nat said he thinks the petition process is really useful and productive. He wonders if there is an alternative. Could we allow an electronic petition process or maybe a postcard campaign?



Kyle asked if it is hard to do an electronic petition. There must be some way to collect signatures where a person has to log in with their own email. Brian said there is nothing that allows us to easily tie a signature to a physical address and real person.

Doug asked, could we hold a meeting on Zoom where people present articles they want on the warning and we ask them to have ten voters participate on zoom to say they favor the proposed article?

Rosemary said the petition deadline is January 14. Nat said he has heard of at least two people actively soliciting signatures at the moment for ballot initiatives.

Walter said he thinks the board ought to allow electronic signatures but require the full 125 signatures. He doesn't think it would be that difficult to check to see if signatures were valid. Voters will determine whether something is a valid action item or not. Let the voters decide and let the questions get on the ballot. There are a lot of online tools that can be set up easily to solicit signatures and can request all the information we need.

Beth said usually she is all for technology but in this case she is not. There are a lot of hackers out there. She thinks collecting electronic signatures is not a great method unless people use verified software that not all have. She likes Doug's idea of having multiple residents speak for proposed articles. Ten might be too many people to speak but maybe they could just raise their hands. She also agrees with Walter that whoever petitions to get something on the ballot should have their item on the ballot. If it is a five-page ballot, so be it. Town issues will be listed first and a lot of people won't vote on all the other issues.

Kyle asked if Beth really thinks a little town like this will have many hackers. Beth said she thinks it doesn't matter if it is a little town. There could be someone who doesn't want a certain person to win something. There are plenty of easy opportunities for hacking. The probability is low, but if it happens, then what?

Nat suggested we could do some spot checking, just calling a few people on the list to see if they have signed the petition.

Jen Burton suggested using Google Forms. It collects email addresses. And then she suggests doing what Nat suggested – choosing 5% or 10% and checking to see if they really signed.

Scott said he echoes Beth's comments. We also have a lot of elderly people who are not engaged with technology. If we get too far down the road with electronic filing they get left out. That is not okay. We need to make sure they are able to have input.

Kirsten Owen said she doesn't think it is really fair to have people collect 125 electronic signatures. Not everyone uses the internet and it is easier to contact people in person. She likes the idea that if someone gets a group to support their proposed article then the article could be accepted. The selectboard could agree on some parameters that could be in place to decide if a proposed article should be on the ballot. She also agrees with the person who said some people don't use the internet and that could cause a loss in voice.

Kyle asked if it is possible to have both options. Someone who is tech savvy could get 125 electronic signatures and if someone feels their base is not as electronically savvy they could do as Doug suggested. But the problem is that if they're not technologically savvy they can't join a Zoom meeting.

Eric said he thinks it would be cleaner if we just decided to waive the requirement for any signatures.

**Kyle moved to waive the requirement for signatures on petitions for proposed articles for the town meeting warning, Doug seconded and the motion was passed in a roll call vote with Kyle, Nat and Doug voting yes and Mike voting no.**

Brian noted that the board's action did not change the date petitions have to be submitted by. They need to be submitted to the town offices by January 14.

Nat asked, the person submitting the petition does have to be known, right? Brian said yes. The only change we made is that the number of signatures required went from 125 to 0. People still have to submit a formal petition.

Kyle asked if Nat meant his motion about Australian ballot voting to include mailing out ballots to all voters. Nat said no, that is still unresolved. Rosemary said the legislature needs to act before the board can vote on that. Currently it is not allowed.

***10. Presentation and Signing of Final Agreement for Trailhead/Welcome Center Improvement***

The proposed final agreement for what we are now calling the Ted Alexander Welcome Center at the rail trail trailhead was sent out in the board packet. All the board's requests have been met in this document and it is ready for signing.

Brian shared the proposed design for the new trailhead building. It takes our current railhead building and expands it in every direction, especially parallel to the rail trail. There will be more covered space for benches and picnic tables and display areas for the Historical Society. There has been discussion about displaying public art as well. Expanding the building will involve clearing more of the opening around the building for greater visibility. We are being provided with \$45K to complete the construction in exchange for naming the building the Ted Alexander Welcome Center. The \$45K and our in-kind contribution of labor will be enough to pay for the project.

Howard said the floor plan shows a full ADA compliant restroom but we are not going to build that initially. We will put in an ADA compliant portable toilet. We will probably rough plumb for fixtures but not install them at this time.

There was discussion about what the sign welcoming people to the building might say. Doug said his thought based on conversation with Deb Alexander is that the Jeffersonville side might say Ted Alexander Welcome Center and the side towards the rail trail would include the name of our town.

Kyle asked, who will be restocking toilet paper in the bathroom? Howard said the portable toilet rental company is responsible. He thinks they supply one or two rolls in between their scheduled cleanings. He suggested it would behoove us to get a couple of cases of toilet paper and have them around. A number of people will have keys and can add toilet paper.

Scott thanks the Alexander family, Doug and Howard for getting this moving. He thinks this will be a wonderful asset for our town.

**Nat moved and Kyle seconded to approve the pledge agreement for the Ted Alexander Welcome Center as presented and to authorize the chair to sign it on behalf of the board. Mike suggested the friendly amendment of authorizing Doug to sign it on behalf of the board and Nat and Kyle agreed to that. The motion was passed.**

The board thanked Doug and Howard for their work. Doug thanked the rest of the committee, who provided wonderful input

Beth encouraged everyone to put local features, including the new welcome center, onto Google Maps.

***11. Annual Certificate of Highway Mileage***

Brian said the Certificate of Highway Mileage is up for renewal. There are no changes from last year. **Mike moved to approve the annual Certificate of Highway Mileage with no changes from the previous year, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.**

***12. Beautification Committee Appointment***

Brian said Carrie Watson attended the last Beautification Committee meeting and would like to join the committee. Eric asked if the opening was posted. Brian said it has been posted for a while. **Mike moved to appoint Carrie Watson to the Beautification Committee, seconded by Kyle.** Kyle said she will be a great asset to the committee. **The motion was passed.**

***13. Conservation Commission Resignation***

Brian said Eric Nuse has submitted his resignation from the Conservation Commission. **Nat moved to accept Eric Nuse's resignation from the Conservation Commission, with a letter of appreciation for his service to be sent to him, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.**

***14. Sheriff's Communication Budget Report***

Brian said the sheriff's proposed communication budget is available for review. It has an overall 6.6% decrease and a 6.43% decrease in Johnson's assessment. Eric said he suspects the decrease is due to retirement of a couple of long-term employees. Brian said it could be due to people taking different insurance plans.

Kyle asked if we will have an opportunity to talk to Roger Marcoux before we get into our budget. Brian said we can invite him to a meeting. The board agreed he should be invited to the January 4 meeting.

Brian said our increase for the county budget, which is not yet finalized, is \$2,368, a little less than 10%. Eric said over 50% of the county budget is paid by Stowe.

Kyle asked if the financial advisory committee is meeting yet with Roger. Nat said no. Last year, with this board's approval, we entered into an informal agreement with the sheriff's department for 3% annual increases for 3 years. This upcoming budget is for the second year of that. With COVID the financial advisory committee has not met in person or over Zoom. Nat reached out to the group and they agreed that we should stick with the 3% as previously agreed.

Eric said no action is needed on the sheriff's communication budget. It just goes into our budget.

**15. Support for USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Application by Jenna's Promise**

**Doug moved to authorize the appropriate designee to sign the acknowledgment needed by Jenna's Promise for their USDA Grant application that the town is aware of and supports the grant application, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

**16. Law Enforcement Study Committee**

Nat said the committee on sheriff's department contract affordability with Duncan Hastings and Diana Osborn on it has hit the ground running. They are really digging in. Their meeting minutes are available on the town website.

**17. Events of This Week**

Eric said Gordy Smith has resigned from the board of village trustees and from the emergency management coordinator position. Eric asked Nat to take the first post on the emergency management team and Scott to take the second and they both accepted. Gordy is not being replaced on the emergency management team at this time. There is not a lot of work going on right now for that team.

Eric said Gordy has put himself out there for the community for almost 50 years. He was chief of the fire department for almost 30 years and led the department on many fire and rescue events. He served on the trustee board for close to 20 years. Eric always respected him. He knew Gordy was fighting for what was best for the village. He appreciated his wisdom, his contributions and his help with emergencies.

Eric is troubled. He thinks Johnson is in some dark times. He is disheartened by the hate and division in our community, the harassment and threats to public officials. We can do better than that. Johnson is better than that. He expects Scott will be the new chair of the trustee board. He is the only member who was on the board at the beginning of the year. Will was formerly a member of the trustee board but he is still getting caught up. What the trustee board needs now is support from the whole community. They have a lot of things to deal with. They are going into their budget season. He thinks it is time for the community to come back together and support the trustees. They will need it.

**18. General Information Items**

Brian said he doesn't think any groups are requesting changes to their allocations.

Sterling Snow Riders is working with the Lanphears to get trail access back on their property and they let us know what is going on. The Lanphears were having problem with noise violations unrelated to snowmobiles and they became frustrated and closed their property.

That is relevant to us because of the noise violations. We encourage the sheriff's department to enforce our noise ordinance.

Brian said Healthy Lamoille Valley has a helpful planning toolkit available on their website about youth substance misuse.

***19. Executive Session to Discuss Employee Evaluation***

**Mike moved to go into executive session to discuss employee evaluation as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), Doug seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 9:20.** The board came out of executive session at 9:44.

***20. Adjourn***

**Mike moved to adjourn at 9:45, Doug seconded and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*

UNAPPROVED