

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JULY 17, 2017

**Present:**

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

Others: Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert, Brian Krause, Lois Frey, Kim Dunkley, Rob Moore, Casey Romero, Lea Kilvadyova

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

**1. Call to Order**

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:00.

**2. Additions, Changes to Agenda**

It was agreed to add an update from Kyle on the Railroad Street area wide plan, scheduling of a joint meeting with the village and an update on cemetery service.

**3. Review and Approve Minutes of Meetings Past**

**Mike moved to approve the minutes of June 19, 2017.** Nat said the minutes indicated the vote on the bread oven was unanimous, but he voted against the motion and the minutes should be changed to reflect that. **Mike accepted a friendly amendment to approve the minutes with the change Nat requested, Kyle seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

Rosemary said we have spent 98.1% of budget. Revenue is 117%. She hasn't quite got everything done, may be more accounts payable and will be more revenue.

Almost 3% of taxes are uncollected. Rosemary asked for authorization to go to the bank for a tax anticipation note for a line of credit of up to \$150K. This is necessary because the school budget was so late getting approved.

The board agreed to meet to set the tax rate on July 31 at 5:00.

**5. Road Commissioner/Road Foreman Report and Action Items**

Brian Krause said the highway crew voted on whether to go to four 10-hour days and not all employees wanted to do that, so the work schedule will not be changing to 10-hour days.

Our share of the grant-in-aid pilot program has been increased from \$9600 to \$1200. The funds will be spent on Upper French Hill ditching.

Brian K. said we used to paint in the past. It is a big money saver for us and helps the equipment last longer. When he came here he stopped that because there were things we could have been doing better. He is working on trying to get a plan together to ensure we are compliant with all rules and regulations. He would like to return to painting as long as we can be in compliance. The board agreed that would be all right.

Brian K. said he put a stockpile of stone to line ditches at the transfer station, so it will be closer to the job site. It is out of the way of LRSWMD and no one from LRSWMD has said anything about it.

The water line and meter box have been installed at Legion Field. Brian doesn't know if the village has a meter and backflow preventer on it yet. Once the water is turned on, there should be a lock on the yard hydrant so kids don't turn it on and let it run. Brian S. said he will pick up a lock and share keys with groups that need them.

Eric asked what the mud abatement plan is for this year. Brian K. said he would like to extend the stretch that has been improved on French Hill.

Kyle asked what is happening on French Hill now. There are signs that say low shoulder. Brian K. said he left signs up because he made the road a little narrower. A lot of our roads have gotten a little too wide. It is better to have them closer to 24 feet. He left the signs up so people would understand there is something different. The ditches are wider now. He will hydroseed the ditches where they were disturbed.

Nat said he thinks we should be looking toward the future with the gravel pit. Brian S. said we have been talking with Bert Nadeau about doing testing on his property. There is someone else who would like us to buy a property that could potentially be used for a gravel pit, though he is not sure we would want to pay the asking price.

Nat asked about updating the capital improvement plan. Brian S. agreed that has to be done. The current plan has run out.

Brian K. said we put money in the budget to do boring on the Nadeau property. We have been waiting for Nadeau to make a couple of roads into the property. Ideally we would dig a couple of test holes with the backhoe and then if we were interested based on that we would get borings done.

Eric said we should get the testing done this season so we can get something to voters for approval. Brian K. said that is his hope.

Brian K. said he would like to spend around \$8K out of the construction budget for revegetating part of the gravel pit to address the erosion problem. Eric said he thinks that is a wise investment. Kyle asked what kind of vegetation. Brian K. said a conservation grass mix to start with; then the area will self-populate with whatever grows.

Brian S. said it might be helpful if Brian K. were allowed sometimes when it was convenient to have employees work over 8 hours in a day without getting overtime. He feels the change made last month to the personnel policy allows that. But there was direction from the board that either all employees or no employees should work longer days. Eric said that will be addressed later in the meeting. *(Brian K. left.)*

#### **6. Planning Commission Report**

Brian S. said the Planning Commission would like to invite the selectboard to their next meeting. There will be discussion about flood plains, river corridors and future planning.

The Planning Commission's public hearing on form based code will be August 2. Whether or not that is the final hearing depends on the input they get. It will be at 7:00 pm at the municipal building.

Brian S. said he believes the Planning Commission is interested in having Kim Cotnoir appointed to the Planning Commission as discussed at the last meeting.

**7. Administrator's Report and Action Items**

Brian S. said not all public works employees were in favor of working four 10-hour days and the board had set a condition that all must agree to it. But Brian K. feels there would be value in having flexibility to work more than 8 hours, especially when working with contractors.

**Mike moved to allow Brian Krause flexibility to schedule employees to work longer than 8 hours per day when necessary, Nat seconded and the motion was passed.**

Mike asked what happened to Bob Hoag as a candidate for the open Planning Commission seat. Eric said he withdrew his name. **Nat moved to appoint Kim Cotnoir to the Planning Commission, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

Brian S. said currently the only person appointed by the selectboard as an LCPC representative is Duncan Hastings. Howard Romero is on it but he is not appointed by the town; he is elected at large by LCPC. Meredith Birkett represents the village. **Nat moved and Mike seconded to reappoint Duncan Hastings to the LCPC board.** Mike asked Brian S. if he would like to be on it. Brian said he would if he had more time but it would be difficult for him to make time for it. **The motion was passed.**

Eric said raises are typically approved in June to take effect July 1. The board budgeted for 2% raises, so 2% raises were given to employees, but the board needs to retroactively approve those raises. **Mike moved to approve 2% raises for employees, retroactive to July 1, 2017, Nat seconded and the motion was passed.**

Brian said he plans to buy a new fire extinguisher for the Historical Society building. He also would like to bring in a contractor. The apartments need some work. He will bring in a contractor and bring an estimate back to the board.

Brian said we have received all the Better Roads grants we applied for. The last one we got was for the box culvert on Upper French Hill. Because of the late date it is unlikely we can get the work done this year. The casting for the box culvert needs pretty significant lead time so we will order it this year and probably do the project next year.

Brian S. said he and Brian K. looked at the St. John's Street intersection that was discussed at the last meeting. A 3-way stop sign was requested. They have a different solution that they think may adequately address the problem – moving the existing stop sign a little to make it more visible, having a stop marker painted on the road and painting a double yellow line to make it more obvious that the road turns. That will be less costly and more intuitive than putting up a 3-way stop sign.

**8. Skate Park Committee Update**

Casey Romero said Seth Jensen at LCPC is trying to set up a meeting with the state archaeologist. She will look again for the original report on the skate park property. She sent in the state recreational facilities grant application. After doing fundraising the skate park committee was able to request \$15K from them and show that they had the match. She will

apply for a Concept 2 grant and ask the Lamoille Economic Development Board for some money.

Casey said by the end of fall the skate park committee should know what they paid for Act 250 work. She asked the board to consider putting that cost or some of it into the FY19 budget to pay the skate committee back. There is a possibility that the committee will need about \$4K to meet the match for the federal grant. They have to show the match in order to start the work. It is possible there will be a funding gap in August or September, though she doesn't think there will be. If there is, she would be looking for a bridge loan to get the work started.

**9. Administrator's Report and Action Items (continued)**

Brian said the rec coordinator position has been posted. He has gotten some resumes and letters of interest. He didn't put a closing date on applying. The hours are low enough that we might have trouble getting candidates. Soon he will check resumes and do interviews and then he will repeat if necessary until we find someone.

The board signed the ambulance service agreement.

Brian said all the grants for the wood fired oven have come in. The pad for it has been laid.

The monthly sheriff's department report was sent out.

We were denied the branding and marketing grant. Brian will have a meeting with the USDA to help improve the grant application if we want to apply next year. We planned a relatively high match and we could use that money to get started if want to. We won't be able to do everything we wanted to at once but we can do some. The town and the village each had \$5K set aside.

The host benefit agreement for the compost facility has been signed and returned to LRSWMD. They are working on making the necessary improvements to the property.

**10. Proposed Arts Grant**

Lea said she is here to talk about a grant proposal. LCPC is looking for communities interested in participating in this effort. The idea is to develop a master plan for public art. Johnson has pedestals on Main Street for sculptures and has formed an arts council. Those are a couple of the reasons she believes there are ideas in Johnson to put into a plan with the understanding that it would strengthen our downtown and also strengthen the connection between the rail trail and downtown. LCPC had applied for a similar grant that was denied. This is an opportunity with the National Endowment for the Arts. We don't know if the funding will exist next year. It is currently slated to be eliminated from the federal budget. This program depends on partnerships with local government and local arts organizations. LCPC would like to be involved as a supporting entity. They would provide the cash match. There is a 15% match, which can include some in kind contributions. The range is \$25K-200K. LCPC is shooting for the low end of that range. They are thinking of a total cost of about \$50K. She is asking whether the board is interested in concept. If so, she would come back with details in September.

Brian S. said the Johnson Arts Council might also be a supporting entity but this wouldn't directly involve the Johnson Arts Council. There are requirements that the arts entity has to have existed for a certain amount of time and have a certain track record and the Johnson Arts Council can't meet those requirements at this point. Lea said one way to meet the partnership requirement could be to have a partnership between Johnson and Cambridge with Johnson as the lead entity. That would mean Johnson would have full responsibility for administering the grant but Cambridge would provide support. If that is not an option then LCPC would try to make it work separately in Johnson and in Cambridge and try to make the Johnson Arts Council a secondary partner. LCPC wants to make sure this would not be a financial burden to the town.

Eric asked if this is the same funding source that supported the silos. Lea said no. This is a planning grant. The follow up to it would be implementation. It would give a solid footing for implementation. She would love to involve Vermont Studio Center. She is not sure what their role would be and she doesn't know if that is possible. She would like to speak with Gary Clark to see if they could at least be a supporting partner. That could lend credibility.

Mike asked for clarification about the town's contribution. Lea said if the project costs \$50K LCPC would ask for a grant of \$25K and the rest would be covered by cash or in kind contributions. LCPC would take care of the cash part. She would envision that Johnson could provide in kind contributions of people's time. Eric asked if the Johnson Arts Council's and Brian's time could be counted. Lea said she thinks so.

Lea said she would love it if as part of the process the community could speak up about general concepts.

The board is in full agreement in concept with Lea pursuing this grant. *(Lea left.)*

#### **11. Information on Scenic Byways Program**

Rob Moore said he was invited here by Brian to answer questions on the Green Mountain Byway. The existing byway was established under federal highway guidelines. It goes from Waterbury to Stowe. It is not just one road. It is a corridor that encompasses the entire towns of Waterbury and Stowe. Federal highway money is no longer available so moving forward the byway is not a transportation infrastructure project. It is now a tool for marketing and tourism development.

The existing committee is made up of representatives from businesses, non-profit organizations and municipal government from Waterbury and Stowe. After the federal grant money ended the committee decided they needed to update the byway brochures. At the same time Morristown and Morrisville and the Town and Village of Hyde Park all submitted letters of interest in joining the byway. There is a residual transportation-related formality. There is a Transportation Board that has been charged by the legislature with carrying forward the obligations related to the past highway funding. They have said an expansion of the byway is possible and it does not have to be contiguous. We just have to show there is broad community support. The first formal requirement is to rewrite the byway plan. The committee is a grassroots organization that has no funding. Several businesses have expressed interest and indicated willingness to pay. Four municipalities have expressed formal interest in becoming part of the byway and 2 continue to participate in committee

meetings. Brian and Meredith have been attending those meetings and so have representatives from Cambridge. The committee is working on ideas to update the byway and fold in the new municipalities. If the Town and Village of Johnson are interested the committee will need letters of support.

Rob doesn't have capacity to write the plan. The committee has a preliminary estimate from a consultant that they strongly feel proposes providing far more than they need. It hasn't been decided yet if municipalities will formally be asked to contribute toward paying a consultant. The committee is wondering about grant opportunities. Maybe donations can be solicited. If the cost were divided equally among all the communities – Waterbury, Stowe, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Cambridge – it would be divided five ways. Some of the communities have both a town and a village and could cost share between the two. And local donations by businesses will be sought. The initial estimate that provides more than we need was \$20K. That divided by five is \$4K. He would suggest cutting that amount in half, making \$1000 and then the town and the village would each have a contribution of \$500. One business could provide that.

Rob is not asking for money tonight. If the idea of including Johnson in the byway moves forward, letters of support from the selectboard and the trustees will be needed. There will be some public meetings. The committee is also interested in providing a more casual setting for people in the different communities to interact and learn what the byway is about and what the advantages are. It will probably be after Labor Day at the tech center.

A community member asked what it might cost to print brochures. Rob said the state Department of Tourism pays for that. They also put the participating communities on their website. Country Living magazine recently asked for information about the Green Mountain Byway and it was featured in an article. The existing Green Mountain Byway brochures were originally printed using federal funding and have been reprinted using LCPC and Central Vermont Planning Commission funds. The state prints statewide brochures for the entire byway system and local communities print brochures specific to their own byway. Marketing experts say the world is moving towards digital and printed brochures are becoming obsolete. Many people feel there is still a need for paper brochures in this area.

Mike suggested it would be more equitable to share costs based on grand list amounts, since some towns have less money. Rob said he will bring that idea back to the committee. But towns like Waterbury and Stowe have multiple things promoting tourism and don't really need the byway. Waterbury and Stowe are only looking at minor updates and would have the capacity to do that themselves in-house if no new communities were joining. They are interested in supporting their neighbors and see value in expanding the byway. Brian said he brought up the idea at a previous meeting of apportioning the cost based on grand list or something similar. The committee didn't vote on it, but the response he got was that some other towns were a lot further along in the process than we are. If we say we want to pay based on grand list they may say they want to pay based on how much work is needed in their town. It might be a can of worms. Rob said thinks they all want it to be equitable.

Lois Frey asked about the time commitment each community has to provide. Rob said the existing committee has been working monthly for years. He estimates they have put in

hundreds of volunteer hours. The consultant would facilitate several public meetings and work with a core group of town people to pick out information. The Historical Society, Recreation Committee, college students, etc. could be involved. The consultant would just write the plan approved by the transportation board. The content of brochures would be up to the committee. LCPC has funds available for printing.

Eric said what Waterbury and Stowe get out of this is enlarging their scenic byway. What Johnson gets out of it is some of the traffic from people coming to the scenic byway. Rob said taking a drive is one of the main activities for people visiting from out of state. The byway is one tool to draw outsiders to our community. We would have access to state tourism and marketing efforts and would be listed when people ask about scenic drives.

Nat said it is an exciting opportunity. Whether the expense can be justified depends on what the expense is. Rob said there are several fairly large businesses in town that he is guessing would be willing to contribute. Mike said he thinks we should move this forward as quickly as possible. Eric said he thinks the whole board is strongly in support in concept. Rob said he will come back in the future and ask for a letter of interest.

**12. Administrator's Report and Action Items (continued)**

Kim Dunkley said she noticed people who were planning to use the rail trail parking in the Parker and Stearns parking lot. She thinks there should be a sign telling people where rail trail parking is. She also suggested a sign telling people that overflow parking for the rail trail is in Old Mill Park. That would draw more people in to see Old Mill Park and its resources. *(Kim left.)* Brian said we also want to make some other improvements around Lendway Lane. We might want to do all the work at the same time or we might want to start with the signage Kim suggested. Eric said based on what Kim said about people parking in the wrong place he thinks we may want to put up parking signs sooner rather than later.

Brian said he learned from VLCT that we can implement a derelict building ordinance without getting into zoning. If we want to do it without zoning it has to apply uniformly across the town, so it has to be compatible with rural residents. He likes the idea of a vacant building permit as a mechanism, but how would we deal with barns, etc.?

Kyle asked if we should talk to the village about this in a joint meeting. The derelict housing we are talking about is really more village related. Brian said he doesn't know that there is a lot of opportunity for partnership. We could tell the village we see it as a village issue. It is an expensive prospect and he doesn't know that they have an appetite for the expense it would take. Brian will keep looking at it. It will be tricky but he feels it will have a big upside.

Kyle asked, what if form based code gets implemented? Brian said we could implement a derelict building ordinance alongside form based code. We could implement it just within the village if we were willing to make it a zoning regulation. But he got the idea that wasn't the way the board really wanted to go about it.

The board previously signed guidelines on the Johnson revolving loan fund. Brian has been speaking with Cassie Bell with the state and finding out more about what kind of rules we have and how we are allowed to work with the fund. The guidelines we have look like good,

compatible ones. Cassie Bell suggested we might want to find a non-profit organization to administer the loan fund for us. That would free us up from having to do credit checks and be loan officers. Brian thinks Lea and Duncan investigated that possibility but didn't like it because we would give up local control. But now it would just be Brian who would administer it so he thinks that idea bears a second look. Reporting requirements are very strict. He thinks his time might be too limited to administer the federal loan program. He would like to reopen the idea of partnering with a non-profit. The board agreed to explore that possibility.

Brian said we can form a committee to start working on the loan fund. Eric asked if we need to form a committee if we are going to have a partnership. Brian said we can hold off on forming a loan committee. Eric said the loan fund will eventually have a quarter of a million dollars. That is a lot of money. He is not a banker. Brian said he was interested in administering the funds originally and he hates to give up local control but there is less risk if we work with a partner organization. Eric said the money will be loaned according to our guidelines if we partner with a non-profit. Brian said he is not sure to what degree our guidelines would be applied. Nat said he guesses they would still listen to our desire for that money. Brian said Cassie Bell described us having a fairly limited role. Eric said some of our guidelines are strings attached to the money. Brian said they would comply with those. Brian said if we administered the loan fund ourselves we would be the smallest or one of the smallest communities to do so. He will research the options.

### ***13. Update on Railroad Street Area Wide Plan***

Kyle said the Brownfields committee met recently. The committee includes Meredith, Kyle, Dave Goddette, Bobbi Rooney from Johnson Works and Lea from LCPC. They invited Sharron Scott from JSC. A woman from the state was there, John Mandeville was there, and so was the firm hired to do the studies and give us a plan. The main objective of the meeting was to identify the 3 sites we want to clean up and hopefully develop into economically viable places. They decided on the talc mill site, Manchester Lumber and Bob Hoag's property on the corner of Main Street and Railroad Street. The firm will narrow in on those sites and start writing a viable plan that includes environmental cleanup and economic viability of those properties. There will be a public meeting piece to get public input. The consulting firm plans to set up a booth at Tuesday Night Live as well as maybe having a more formal meeting here. They were interested to hear about the light industrial park opportunity in the future.

Sharron Scott mentioned that JSC is desperate for a hotel in the community for visiting parents, sports teams, etc. They are also very interested in anything to do with beautifying the town. Housing doesn't seem to be an issue for them except for their staff and faculty. They realize it's a big issue that their faculty and staff aren't living here. Finding quality homes that are affordable is a problem.

The economic consultant who is part of this firm talked to stakeholders in the village and got input from individual businesses. Laraway is the fastest growing organization in this town because they are both health services and education and those are two of the fastest growing areas in Vermont. His recommendation is that we follow Laraway's lead and go with what is working. He also recognizes this is a huge art community. His opinion was that we should take hold of our strong arts culture and market ourselves as the art capital of Vermont. He



said hospitality and recreation are other areas growing the most in Vermont. We have a wealth of recreation and a deficit in the hospitality area. They said it seems morale about the town is a little low among people that live here but people outside the community all have positive things to say about it. The firm sees the potential of Johnson. Their landscape architect did nice signs for the rail trail in Hyde Park. She said they were inexpensive. They did research and found Johnson was not on any tourism brochure.

Nat said Rob had mentioned that some feel pamphlets are old school. He asked what Kyle's thoughts are about that. Kyle said she likes something in her hand. She always picks up brochures when she is in the Waterbury train station.

Nat asked what part of the talc mill property they are talking about. Kyle said the area with contamination.

**14. Scheduling of Joint Meeting**

The village has suggested August 28 or 30 as potential dates for a joint trustee-selectboard meeting. They wanted a meeting to discuss joint employees. The board agreed August 28 would be preferable. Brian asked people's feelings on having a moderator. Board members agreed they would prefer a moderator. It was agreed to schedule the meeting for 6:00. Brian said he will coordinate with Meredith.

**15. Other Business**

Brian said Duncan didn't get a proposal for cemetery work in before the end of the last fiscal year so we didn't spend the remainder of the money budgeted for that year. We have a proposal from him for work going forward. Brian got a bid from Clegg and he will be getting a bid from a group out of Barre. He would like to wait for all the bids before making a decision.

Brian said the board needs to decide whether to renew his contract. Does the board want him to write his contract for next year? He would take the existing contract and take out the reference to the probationary period. That is the only change he would anticipate.

Nat asked if it is a one year contract. Brian said yes. Nat asked if it has always been a one year contract. Eric said he thinks so.

Eric asked Brian to write a new contract taking out the probationary period and bring it to the August meeting.

Brian's contract expires July 30. The board agreed to continue his contract.

**16. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08