

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD/VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD JOINT MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2016

Present:

Selectboard Members: Eric Osgood, Howard Romero, Nat Kinney, Kyle Nuse, Doug Molde
Village Trustees: Walter Pomroy, Gordon Smith, David Goddette, Scott Meyer, Bob Sweetser
(by phone)
Others: Rosemary Audibert

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 by Eric and Gordy.

2. Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda

Eric said selectboard members felt the two boards were starting to move apart. They thought it would be a good idea to talk about that issue in addition to the calendar policy and change in job description for the CEDC. It was agreed to add discussion of this issue to the agenda.

Gordy said he would like to add 3 items: an executive session to discuss employees, possible purchase of an overhead projector, and a job posting policy. He also would like to add an item just for the trustees: authorization to vote for Ken Gibbons for VELCO.

3. Overhead Projector

Gordy said Sandy had suggested purchasing an overhead projector. It would be helpful when boards are discussing budgets. A laptop could be hooked up to the projector and then everyone could look at the same document at the same time and numbers in a spreadsheet could be changed and everyone could see the result right away. Eric said it would also be work well at the annual town and village meetings. Walter said committees could use it for public presentations. Eric said it would be for the whole community.

Gordy said projector costs range from around \$350 to \$1000. Sandy thought a decent setup would cost about \$750. Rosemary asked if that would include a screen. Gordy said he doesn't think so. Howard said he may have a screen he can donate.

Walter moved to authorize the village to pay for half of a projector, with the village's share to be no more than \$400, seconded by David. Nat moved to authorize the town to pay for half of a projector, with the town's share to be no more than \$400, and the motion was seconded. The town motion was passed. (Kyle was temporarily out of the room and did not vote.) The village motion was passed.

4. Job Posting Policy

Gordy said the village has been working on a job posting policy and they wanted the town to know about it in case the town wants to add anything to it. Eric asked if there would be flexibility in the policy so that it would be possible for the town or village to hire someone in an emergency situation or for a part-time position without posting the position. Gordy said yes. The village would adopt it and then the selectboard could adopt any policy they wanted. Eric said he thinks the boards should probably try to develop a joint policy because of the joint employees.

5. *Vote for Ken Gibbons*

Gordy said he got a phone call from Ellen Burt, the manager of Stowe Electric, asking that the village vote for Ken Gibbons as a public at-large member of the VELCO board. Other neighboring towns and Vermont Electric Coop have voted for him. He needs one more vote.

Walter said he has gotten many emails about this. There is another person that some of the more northern areas are voting for. Some people have taken issue with the process. He thinks Ken Gibbons would probably be a good choice. **David moved to authorize Walter to vote for Ken Gibbons as public at-large member of the VELCO board, and the motion was seconded and passed.**

6. *Trustee-Selectboard Relationship*

Eric said we are only 5 months into having separate town and village administrators. Maybe that is not the right decision if the boards are starting to move apart. After town meeting the selectboard will be going through the process of hiring a new administrator. If there is any thought of bringing the two positions back together that would be the time for discussion. Are any of the candidates for the village manager position people who could grow into being administrator for both entities? Both village and town need someone more than 50% of the time, so probably we would have to hire a part-timer to assist. Would a full-time joint employee and a part-timer work? Is it something we should even talk about?

Scott said the trustees were thinking about going with a full-time village manager to also pick up Steve Towne's work. Troy has stepped up and is doing well. Sandy is struggling to fulfill 25 hours a week. He is not sure if more than a full time position is required for a joint administrator if we have someone who is a fit. Walter said there are some things Sandy is not doing that the trustees will want the village manager to do, such as being involved with VPPSA. The trustees haven't thrown Sandy any big projects. They have purposely kept his load light. Scott said he is not convinced there needs to be more than 1 FTE. Walter said the village can't delay in hiring a manager. One of their candidates might not want to be full-time. Another might, but the position was advertised as part-time.

Eric said the selectboard won't hire an administrator until September. The period after the village brings the manager on could be a trying-out period. We could see if there is potential for the person to do the town job. Scott said the village can't wait until September. Eric said he is not suggesting that. He is suggesting that the village move forward and then see if the manager is willing to grow into a full-time job in September. He mentioned that the selectboard has not discussed this yet.

David said his only concern is what has happened in the past. It can be overwhelming for one person to have both jobs. He wants to make sure we develop a position that works for the future. He wants to make sure we take into consideration the amount of work involved for both town and village and don't overwork one person. We want to allow the person to focus and make sure things are not being forgotten. There is a lot that goes on here for one person.

Walter said he doesn't want to ask the current candidates if they want to go to full time. He wants to hire the person he wants for the job and not scare them away. Several months down

the road, once they have a good handle on the job, then at that point the subject can possibly be broached. He wants to make sure the village's needs are met.

Gordy said the electric department has a lot of needs right now that take priority for the village. David said that is one of his concerns – making sure policy and regulation are not overlooked.

Eric said it has only been 5 months with separate town and village administrators and we are already seeing the two boards going in separate directions. There used to be one person who shared what each board was thinking with the other board. If we don't go back to that form of administrator, how can we make sure the two boards stay tight?

David asked if we should have meetings like this more often, maybe quarterly. Walter said either formally or informally he thinks we have to make more effort to work together. Gordy said he has some ideas he wants to bring up in executive session. David suggested setting dates for quarterly joint meetings. Doug agreed. He said when he resigned from the planning commission, he strongly suggested that the planning commission, the trustees and the selectboard get together around the end of the year to talk about the upcoming year. Gordy and Eric agreed that would be a good idea. Eric said that should probably happen annually.

Eric asked how much time the trustees estimate will be required of the village manager. Gordy said they are talking about 27 hours a week, but a lot depends on grant projects. Eric said the town hired Duncan for 24 hours a week. He thinks that is a good number. When Duncan served both the village and town, the town was getting 16 hours a week and they needed more than that. Walter said those hours added together come out to 51. Eric said that is why he thought it could make sense to have a full-time person and another part-time person to do things like paperwork. Doug said we provided support for Duncan by bumping up Lea's time. Eric said no one else can add time to their schedule without making overtime. He doesn't think there is capacity for someone currently in the office to pick up more of that workload.

Doug asked if Eric and Gordy can work up a joint meeting schedule. Eric said he thinks they can.

Scott said he disagrees with Walter about asking candidates for the village manager job about their interest in also working for the town. He feels it doesn't hurt to talk during the second interview about the potential for growing the job if the person is interested. If we don't ask about that and we hire someone who is not interested then it is not a possibility. Doug said the town could decide they don't want the person the village hires.

Doug said what he hears is that both boards think there were advantages related to communication between boards when the town and village shared an administrator. Gordy said yes, but there were things that weren't being done.

Eric said he would like to return to this discussion in April or May. The village will have the new manager on board and will have an idea of the person's capabilities. We will have an

impression about whether we want to expand their role onto the town side. Then if we wanted to do that we could decide how much time we would have to add for a part-timer.

Nat said trustees can always come to selectboard meetings if they have concerns.

Eric asked Rosemary if she has any observations about having two administrators. She said she thinks the two boards need to meet together more often. She hasn't heard anything negative from the public about having two administrators.

7. Trustees' Proposed Outlook Calendar Policy

Eric said the selectboard didn't discuss the policy per se. His concern was that he didn't think we would want to impose it on the highway department. Most of them don't have access to computers and he is not sure how comfortable with computers most of them are.

Doug asked what the genesis of this idea was. Gordy said one reason for it is safety. If someone doesn't show up, they want the people in the office to know why. Also, no one knows when the part-timers are working. It is fair for all if there is a structure for when they are working. If someone comes in asking for the part-timers, the people in the office should know if they are scheduled that day. The three part-time employees are Duncan, Sandy, and Lea. David said most public and private organizations have accountability programs using a calendar, whiteboard, etc. This would be a simple accountability and safety program and would be good policy. Scott said it fits into business continuity programs for emergencies. If something happens we will know where everyone is. He has done this in some form for almost every job he has had.

Doug said he understands that Duncan said it would be fine to share his calendar. He would assume both Sandy and Duncan have relatively fixed schedules. Gordy said Sandy emails his schedule for the next 2 weeks, but the trustees don't know about Duncan and Lea. Eric said Duncan generally works Monday, Tuesday and Thursday but sometimes he swaps days and comes in on a Wednesday or Friday in order to attend a meeting or get a meeting agenda out. Originally Eric had asked if there was a way he could see when the part-timers were here in case he wanted to talk to one of them.

David said the draft policy says the procedure is to ensure accountability, effective communications and safety among and between employees of the village. The trustees want to share this policy with the town. There are shared town and village employees. The policy says we want to respect employees' privacy. Appointments may be listed as private. Details of those appointments are not visible to others. We just want to know if an employee is in or out.

Scott said Outlook allows you to put everyone's calendar together and see who is available at a certain day and time. It helps with scheduling meetings with staff. Gordy said at his workplace he used Outlook to submit requests for time off to his supervisor. Scott said with shared town/village employees with two supervisors, the calendar will show whether one of the supervisors has given permission for an employee to have time off. Otherwise, the other supervisor might not know. Eric said Rosemary should be making decisions about time off for those employees. He said they use something similar at his job and it works very well. He

thinks our classification of all time off as CTO is helpful because no one will know what an employee's time off is being used for, whether it is going to the dentist or going fishing.

Gordy said Google Calendar is another option besides Outlook. Nat said Google Calendar is in the cloud. It is very easy to use. Scott said he is not sure which is easier. Eric said he thinks it should be up to staff to figure out which works best and choose one.

Nat asked for Rosemary's thoughts. She said Sandy has talked to our IT person who said Outlook would be a little harder to implement. She is fine with the policy itself.

Eric said he thinks we should draft a policy in the same format as all our other policies. Maybe Sandy and Duncan should coordinate on that. It would be a joint policy that both boards would approve and sign.

Doug said Duncan thought a calendar policy wasn't needed. Eric said because of our small scale Duncan didn't see the need, but he was willing to abide by the policy.

Rosemary asked if the boards want to add anything to the policy about drug testing. She gets a call a few days before a test and she tells the employee's supervisor the day of the test. Eric said if an employee put in a request for time off when a test was scheduled, she would have to tell the supervisor not to grant the request. Rosemary and Gordy said if an employee is not working on the day of a scheduled test that is not a problem; they do not have to come in.

Doug said he is not fond of this. He wonders if it matters to the office employees if they know ahead of time whether another person will be in or not. Would a whiteboard work? Scott said whiteboards are a thing of the past because they are usually only for the week or the day. What concerns him is that we have people on the road or working high hazard jobs. He wants to know where they are if they don't come back by the end of the day. That is essential for safety. With business continuity plans (which he hopes the town and village have), if an emergency happens we may have to account for all our employees. Nat said he doesn't understand that, because under this policy we will just know whether they are working or taking time off, not where specifically they are. Scott said if we have to call staff in during a storm during the daytime he will have an idea where Troy and his crew are. Howard said we have that anyway now with the radio. Scott said not always. If someone is out of town at a meeting he wants to know that. Gordy said with this policy we would know if someone was out of town or at a meeting. Doug said he thinks this is a bad idea for some employees and a great idea for others.

Nat asked, so we would know more than just whether someone was in or out? Scott said it depends on how we do it. He doesn't think we have come to specifics about how detailed it would be. That would have to be shaken out among both boards.

Doug said Scott's most telling example was a lineman in a dangerous position. For a lot of employees that example is not pertinent. Scott said yes, but where David works, in an office environment, they have a policy like this. Most employers have it. David said is a good

policy to ensure safety and accountability. Doug asked which of the office employees this policy would make safer.

David said if there is an emergency and our managers need to do a head count and make sure everyone is accounted for they can simply open the calendar and see who was at work that day and who was out. Walter said if there was a major spill, crash, etc. and we wanted to have all hands on deck working to handle it we could know where everyone was. Scott said that fits into a business continuity plan. Gordy said with one phone call Eric would be able to find out where everyone was. Maybe someone would be out of town on vacation but he could get everyone else in. Eric said these types of things tend to happen outside of work hours, so how would any supervisor know where employees were? Howard said it would not be applicable that time of day. Walter said to some extent there are limitations. If someone is taking CTO we don't know where they are. Unless we want to ask employees to document 24/7, which we shouldn't, all we can ask about is their working schedule. Both the town and village have on call employees. We will probably want the calendar to show who is on call.

Nat said he doesn't have a problem with the policy. He would want it to be fairly general. Doug said he isn't in favor of it, but maybe we should test run it. He thinks we will find it is a waste of money. It is wonderful for certain people who are off by themselves in dangerous jobs but other than that he doesn't see a safety benefit. As far as accountability, he doesn't believe there is a problem with accountability now. He hasn't heard that people aren't accountable in performing their jobs. Maybe we ought to test it but he thinks we will find it is an exercise in bureaucracy. Nat said he agrees that he doesn't see the safety angle, but he does see the accountability angle. If we don't track every 15 minutes it shouldn't take a lot of administrative time. He thinks we should give it a shot. Where he works they schedule in half-day blocks. Howard said he agrees with Nat. Kyle said she thinks it is a bit of overkill but she is pretty neutral on the subject. Bob said he agrees with pursuing a calendar policy. If something happens we will have to answer to people and if we don't have a policy it could cost us money.

8. *CEDC Job Description and Supervision*

Gordy said selectboard members had questioned whether the trustees would continue to fund the Community Economic Development Coordinator position. The trustees have not discussed any change in funding the position. The trustees decided they wanted the person in that position to report to the village manager, not the chief financial officer. Gordy met with Sandy and Rosemary and explained the trustees' concerns and gave Rosemary a chance to express any concerns. He doesn't believe she had any. Then he met with Rosemary, Sandy and Lea and explained to Lea that the trustees wanted her to report to the village manager and not Rosemary. There is no other place in the state where the CEDC reports to the chief financial officer. Rosemary said this change is just for village issues. Gordy said that is correct.

Eric said if we had a single person who was both the town and village administrator it would make sense to have the CEDC report to that person. The reason Rosemary supervises all joint employees is so they only have one master to serve. The only person who ever had two masters was Duncan.

Doug said he thinks it is probably good idea for administrative purposes to have Lea report to the village administrator on village matters and to the town administrator on town matters. Her position was created when he was on the planning commission. He wanted to have his fingers in part of the discussion so the planning commission could have input, so there is language in the job description about her working in consultation with the planning commission. He thinks that if she is reporting to separate people that puts a higher obligation on the boards to coordinate projects. It makes it much more important to have an overall view. There has to be coordination between the boards and our administrators for it to work well. David agreed. There always needs to be coordination in everything we do.

Eric said we should probably remove the phrase “under the guidance of the Johnson planning commission” from the job description, because they don’t really have a role in her job anymore. Doug said he thinks they should have a role in helping the boards set her agenda. He thinks we should leave it. We had a dead planning commission at one time. When we had an active one they were really driving her work. He thinks that once they are past form based code and the 5-year plan we need to furnish a person to them to help them plan and move ahead.

Scott said the current language in the job description says the CEDC reports to the selectboard and trustees under the general supervision of the clerk under the guidance of the planning commission. Doug suggested changing “clerk” to something like “town and village administrators with regard to their particular projects.”

Bob said if there is a calendar in the town clerk’s office with access to both administrators and the planning commission can adjust and work into that calendar then he doesn’t see where there would be any problem.

Walter said at some point the village manager may walk in and say a certain thing has a high priority and the town manager may give the CEDC a different high priority. That puts stress on the CEDC. Bob said he imagines the two administrators would work it out. Walter said they may, but they may not know about each other’s requests. Lea would need to be proactive and bring them together to discuss priorities.

Nat asked for more background on this conversation. Scott said he thought that discussion should be in executive session.

9. Executive Session - Personnel

Scott moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel, with just the board present, Walter seconded and the motion was passed. Howard moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel, with just the board present and the motion was seconded and passed. The boards entered executive session at 8:25. The boards came out of executive session at 9:15.

David moved to authorize Sandy to organize, research and schedule general office workplace safety training, driver training, ergonomics training and sexual harassment training for village employees, Walter seconded and the motion was passed.

Howard moved to authorize Duncan to work with Sandy to organize, research and schedule general office workplace safety training, driver training, ergonomics training and sexual harassment training for town employees, seconded by Nat. Nat asked if the driver training would be for all employees or just those driving municipal vehicles. David said he would say just for anyone driving a municipal vehicle. **The motion was passed with Doug recusing himself.**

10. Other Business

Gordy said he wanted to talk about solar power generation. The village electric utility has some mandates that are coming. There are differences of opinion about whether VPPSA can provide that for us. There is also the question of how cooperating with other municipal utilities will affect VOJ electric. He thinks it is a good idea to pursue solar power projects, but the trustees have to take a little different perspective on that from the selectboard, because of the electric utility.

Walter said the discussion about solar projects started because we were getting a new roof. That is the best time to put solar panels on. By 2050 the electric department has to have 90% of its energy be renewable.

Scott said a bill was introduced yesterday about roofs being structurally sound enough to hold solar arrays.

Walter said our environment as an electric utility has changed drastically and fast. He thinks under net metering the town's and the village's interests are the same as far as getting to the 15% net metering cap. After that our interests will diverge. Right now anyone who puts in solar panels is a winner and the utility is the loser. We have to accept anyone who wants to do net metering up to the 15% cap. In that case, why not make the winner be the town and village taxpayers?

Gordy said Johnson will soon be the only utility in the state that isn't doing its own generation. David said we need to figure out if we are going to go on our own and build a solar park or if there are other opportunities. Walter asked when the industrial park will open. He said the village might be the first tenants. Eric said the Jewetts have agreed to sell for the appraised value. Now the town is looking for financing. Several people said they thought the site of the potential industrial park could be a good site for solar power.

Eric said the boards probably want to direct all supervisors to conduct annual reviews. Both boards agreed that the expectation is that all supervisors will be conducting annual reviews as required. The requirement for reviews is in the job descriptions.

11. Adjourn

It was moved and seconded by the village trustees to adjourn at 9:24 and the motion was passed.

It was moved and seconded by the selectboard to adjourn at 9:24 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths