

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCING  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2020

**Present:**

Selectboard Members: Mike Dunham, Nat Kinney, Doug Molde, Kyle Nuse, Eric Osgood  
Others: Brian Story, Jackie Stanton, Cal Stanton, Raven Pfaff, Mark Nielsen, Eric Hutchins, Jasmine Yuris, Sophia Berard, Margo Warden, Scott Meyer, Kim Dunkley, Rick Aupperlee, Diane Lehouiller, Jared Jasinski

**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 6:00.

**2. Additions, Changes to Agenda**

No changes were needed.

**3. Review Volunteers for Racial Justice Committee**

Eric said another person who did not attend the previous interviews but had sent in an application had requested that they be provided an interview tonight. He had planned to ask the board for a ruling on that first and interview that person at the same time as Sophia if the board decided to grant an interview. But it does not appear that person is online, though they were notified that this meeting was at 6:00.

Eric asked Sophia to take a couple of minutes to talk about why she would be a good candidate for the Racial Justice Committee.

Sophia thanked the board for taking the time to hear her and commended the selectboard and trustee board for forming this committee. She thinks it is a huge step forward for our community. When she heard about the committee she immediately thought of the amazing turnout for Bor Yang's training last year. There were so many people there from all walks of life who were interested in examining implicit bias. She was shocked at how many biases she had. The training really opened her eyes to the fact that we were all raised in a systemically racist society and all have things we need to examine to make sure we are treating everyone with respect and dignity. She was born and raised in St. Albans. She is a third generation Vermonter but also the daughter of a Cuban immigrant, her mother. She is currently a grad student at NVU in mental health counseling. She feels like she has already begun her work towards building a more empathic and equitable world in considering the mental, emotional and physical health and well-being of our society. She feels her role on the Racial Justice Committee would be to work together within our community to form a more compassionate, inclusive and safe town to all who live here, aspire to live here and visit here, regardless of race, religion, age or culture. She thinks it is important that we all do the work together and support one another in the effort to combat systemic racism and establish racial justice for all.

Kyle thanked Sophia for being here and apologized for her not being part of the process on October 14. She said one question she asked everyone at the last meeting was if they stood with and behind our inclusivity statement and anti-racism statement. In Sophia's letter she had mentioned she was part of creating the inclusivity statement so perhaps she could talk about something she feels strongly about in the statement or her feelings on the statement.

Sophia said she definitely stands behind the inclusivity statement. She remembers town meeting when there was the discussion about whether we were going to use more inclusive, positive language or say we reject racism and bigotry. She was so inspired to see that the town could come up with a compromise and both sides and all voices could be heard. She appreciated that we got to put the message across that we will work towards being more warm and welcoming and also that we reject racism and bigotry.

Doug said the mission statement for the committee talks about both racial and social justice. He asked Sophia how social justice fits into it, in her view.

Sophia said she thinks social justice is an umbrella term and racial justice fits in there. She thinks we need to strive toward inclusivity and compassion for all people based on race, culture, religion, age, etc. It all works together. Social justice and racial justice are very important endeavors.

Doug asked what she thinks the Racial Justice Committee could do to advance social justice. Sophia said she thinks organizations we can reach out to for trainings, if they are dealing with racial justice, probably also have branches that deal with social justice. She thinks we can find venues for trainings in social justice while researching racial justice resources.

Kyle said she had also asked Mark Nielsen to be here again to ask some follow-up questions now that the board has been able to see his letter of interest, which they had not seen before the interviews. Eric said we did not intend on re-interviewing previous candidates. We did not invite any others to attend other than Sophia. He asked for guidance from the board. Mike said we should stick with what we intended and just interview Sophia. Nat agreed.

Doug asked, will we revote on all candidates now? Kyle said her understanding was that we were starting from scratch with the voting process. Eric said his recollection is that we unappointed the committee members and opted to include Sophia and then we would go into executive session and decide on the process to use – whether to consider all candidates again, or only the three we appointed plus Sophia, or any other option the board may consider.

Eric asked if the board wanted to open up questioning of Mark. Doug said he doesn't think the board should further interview Mark but the board should consider all candidates.

Kyle said she had asked Brian if it would be appropriate to ask Mark to come to this meeting, given that we were not given the letters of intent before the interviews and the voting process. Now the board has the letters and it has brought up questions for her. Brian thought it would be appropriate and Mark was willing to be here tonight. She feels she is using the right process to

ask the questions she has based on new information given to the board since the interview and vote process.

Mike said not all candidates gave letters of intent. Some just said they wanted to interview. He thinks we should just interview Sophia. He is sure we remember what the other applicants said last time. Asking Mark to speak would be muddying the waters, especially when we are not asking anyone else to speak.

4. *Executive Session to Deliberate on Appointment of Public Committee Members*

**Mike moved and Doug seconded to go into executive session to deliberate on appointment of public committee members as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3).**

Eric thanked Sophia for her interview and apologized for the way this happened. He said we had many qualified applicants and she should not be discouraged if she is not selected. There could be openings in the future as someone may decide they can't serve anymore.

**The motion was passed in a roll call vote with Kyle opposed and Mike, Nat, Doug and Eric voting in favor.**

Brian explained that he will put everyone in the Zoom waiting room and those who want to stay until the board comes out of session can do so. Eric said there will be an abatement hearing at 7:00 and if the business of this meeting is not finished at 7:00 it will be recessed until after the abatement hearing.

**The board entered executive session at 6:22.** The board came out of executive session at 6:55.

**Doug moved to appoint Mark Nielsen, Portia Foss and Eric Hutchins to the Racial Justice Committee, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

The meeting was recessed at 6:56 until the completion of the abatement hearing. The meeting was reconvened at 8:15.

5. *Executive Session to Deliberate on Hiring and Disposition of Public Employees*

**Nat moved to go into executive session to deliberate on hiring and disposition of public employees as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), Mike seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:16.** The board came out of executive session at 8:43.

6. *Adjourn*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*