

JOHNSON RACIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCING  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2020

**Present:**

Committee Members: Rick Aupperlee, Portia Foss, Eric Hutchins, Mark Nielsen, Brynn Nuse, Raven Pfaff

Others: Brian Story, Jackie Stanton, Jasmine Yuris, Kyle Nuse, Sophia Berard, Margo Warden, Diane Lehouiller, Cal Stanton

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

**1. *Call to Order***

Rick called the meeting to order at 6:00.

**2. *Review Meeting Norms***

Brian said this meeting wasn't properly warned so his recommendation is just to elect officers and establish meeting norms and not add anything to the agenda.

Eric suggested adding discussion of a request to the selectboard to have Donna Griffiths take minutes for this group. There was a question about how to post minutes, as committee members don't have access to the town website. Brian said he will work that out with the committee. Minutes usually get emailed to him and Marla. That responsibility needs to be assigned to someone on the committee.

Rick offered to be the host for the meetings and the committee agreed to that.

Brian shared a rules and procedures document created by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns that could be adapted for use by this committee. It explains what a quorum is, what officers have to be elected, how to hold a meeting, etc. The purpose of the group could be left pretty basic or later replaced with something more comprehensive once the committee writes a mission statement. Eric suggested maybe the town's inclusivity statement and anti-racism statement should be included in the purpose. Brian said how much detail to go into is up to the committee. Rick suggested leaving it simple. Brynn said she agrees with what Eric said but she is okay with leaving a basic framework for now and editing later. Portia agreed that we can leave for now and reevaluate later.

**3. *Elected Officers***

Brian said he thinks it is good to have a vice chair as well as a chair because then there is a backup to perform chair duties. The committee doesn't have to have a vice chair but does need a chair to write and send out the agenda, run meetings and make arrangements for guests. It not typically a lot of work but it needs to be someone's responsibility that those things get done and usually it is the chair. The chair can assign those duties to other people but they are ultimately the chair's responsibility.

Rick volunteered to be chair. Mark moved to elect Rick Aupperlee as chair and the motion was seconded and passed.

Brynn nominated Portia Foss for vice chair, seconded by Mark. The committee elected Portia Foss as vice chair.

**4. Review Meeting Norms (continued)**

Brian reviewed the rules in the document. This is a 6-member committee. If there are vacancies on the committee 4 people still need to attend to hold a proper meeting. No single member can represent or act on behalf of the board unless authority to do so is delegated by the board.

Rick asked, if he gets an email from an organization like REAL that wants to have a conversation, can that happen outside of a meeting? Brian said if REAL wanted to partner with this committee, the chair would be able to communicate with them and say he would bring it up at a meeting but he couldn't commit to any action without a board decision.

The committee needs to decide whether motions do or do not require a second. Brian suggested it might be difficult to discuss some issues if a second is needed to raise the issue. It might serve the committee better not to require second. The committee agreed seconds should not be required.

The committee needs to decide whether members can speak or make motions only after being recognized by the chair. For a small committee, Brian said he would recommend against that requirement. The committee might reconsider if meetings are becoming difficult to manage, but it slows down conversation. This applies to committee members, not the public. Brian would recommend that the committee keep the norm that members of the public have to be recognized by the chair but members of the committee can speak freely. The committee agreed to that.

The committee needs to decide whether motions to close or limit debate will or will not be entertained. Brian said sometimes you do need to be able to move on to a vote but it can also be used to stifle debate. He would probably recommend that motions to close or limit debate not be entertained. The committee agreed.

Rick asked if there is a way to circle back to things being agreed upon now and discuss them in the future. Brian yes; these rules can be changed. At any time, for any reason, the committee can reopen and revisit the rules. He recommends not doing it too often.

The proposed draft rules state that any member of the body may request a roll call vote. They say that meetings may be recessed to a time and place certain. If the committee is going to lose a quorum, the meeting is being disrupted, etc., the committee can end the meeting and specify when it will resume.

The committee needs to decide whether the rules may be amended only by unanimous vote, by a 2/3 majority or by a simple majority. Brian said he probably wouldn't suggest that it has to be unanimous. On this committee, 2/3 and a majority are the same. Both are 4. Eric suggested that the wording require 2/3 and the committee agreed to that.

These rules must be readopted annually.

Rick said we just talked about 2/3 and 4 being same but one night we might have 5 members present. Eric said he thinks what is required is a vote of 2/3 of the total members of the committee, not of those present. Brian said that is right. Four people will need to approve a rule change.

The proposed rules say that those who want to request an agenda item should contact the chair and the chair shall determine the final content of the agenda. At least 48 hours before a regular meeting or 24 hours before a special meeting the agenda will be posted at the municipal building and designated public places. We normally use Sterling Market/the post office and Brian is trying to get the library more active in this as a better place to post the second agenda because we are now posting at 2 places that are very close together. He would like to add the library with the committee's permission.

Eric asked who is going to post agendas. Brian said it will be the chair's responsibility to make sure agendas get posted. Town staff will post an agenda at the municipal building when the chair sends it for publication on the website. There is discussion now about whether municipal staff are going to assist in posting at other locations, but the standard is that the committee is responsible for posting anywhere other than the municipal building. Rick said it is a short walk for him to either of the places mentioned. Brian said agendas will also be posted on the Town of Johnson website.

The proposed rules say that all business will be conducted in the same order as it is listed on the agenda except for any additions or deletions made. No additions or deletions can be made to the agenda once the first business item is started. The committee can decide whether changes to the agenda are made by a majority vote or a 2/3 vote. Brian suggested 2/3 and there were no objections.

The committee agreed to meet on the first Thursday of each month at 6:00.

When special meetings are scheduled notice has to be given to all committee members at least 24 hours in advance. Brian recommends removing references to giving meeting notices to news media. If people from the media begin attending regularly the committee will want to start including them in its contacts but he does not think the committee should require that of itself at the outset. There were no objections from the committee. Brian said he did leave in a requirement to send meeting notices to any person who has requested them. It is required by open meeting law that if someone wants to be notified about your meetings you have to notify them. Rick asked how they make that request. Brian said it comes to the chair. Rick will want to build a mailing list so that once the agenda is ready he can send it to all committee members and anyone else who wants to be notified. Rick asked, this just pertains to special meetings? Brian said he should send agendas to anyone who asks at all times.

Emergency meetings can be held without public notice provided some public notice is given as soon as possible. They should be held only when necessary for items requiring immediate attention.

There is a section of the rules affirming that meetings are open to the public. All meetings are in the public, not of the public. Members of the public are given a reasonable opportunity for

input as long as order is maintained. At some point the committee will want to include opportunity for public input. The selectboard provides that opportunity at the conclusion of selectboard discussion and that works well. The committee can limit the number of minutes or not. The selectboard doesn't give a specific number of minutes but they do consider it a priority to maintain order. If someone is monopolizing the time or disrupting the meeting the chair requests they wrap up their comments. Raven asked that this committee adopt the same system and the rest of the committee agreed.

Comments by the public must be addressed to the chair or the board, not to any individual member of the board or the public. Brian said this will be hard to enforce. It will happen a lot but having the rule is a good way to intervene if things start to get heated. If someone has already spoken on a topic, they may not be recognized again until others have had an opportunity to speak. Brian said enforcement of that needs to be a little loose because of follow-up questions. The rules describe respectful behavior and a process for the chair to maintain order.

Eric said in public meetings some Zoom bombing has occurred. Do we need to add something about the chair having the right to remove someone from the meeting? Brian pointed out it does say that the chair may bypass any or all steps when warranted. Eric said he thinks that is sufficient.

**Rick moved to adopt the VLCT model rules and procedures document with the amendments agreed upon at this meeting, Mark seconded and the motion was passed.**

**5. *Discuss Purpose and Mission***

Brian said he would recommend discussing the purpose and mission of the committee at a properly warned meeting where members of the public are given full opportunity to attend.

Eric said he knows all the business of the committee is conducted in open meetings. Are there any restrictions on discussing these issues with committee members outside the meeting? Brian said members can discuss issues with other members but have to avoid consensus building outside of meetings. There is no problem with talking to another member one-on-one. Talking to 2 other members gets a little closer to being a problem because then 3 people will have coordinated and discussed something. That is almost everyone needed to pass a motion. Four people talking outside a meeting is coordinating a vote – getting together enough people to pass a motion and discussing something that the committee will take action on. Conversation between more than two committee members is a little tricky. It is also a little tricky if the discussion happens serially. If Rick talks to Raven about something and then she talks to Eric and he talks to Mark, even though they didn't all four talk together that is still four people who discussed the topic and planned how they were going to vote at a future meeting. If it happened serially no one might even be aware how many people were involved. Mostly committee members should try to avoid talking about things that are going to come before the committee.

Brian asked the board's wishes about this agenda item. He noted that there are quite a few people attending tonight. Raven asked, the next meeting won't be until the beginning of next month, right? Brian said that is the next regular meeting but the committee could have a special meeting before that. Raven suggested that discussing the purpose and mission might

take a little while so in order to move forward on projects and discussion perhaps the committee should get it done sooner rather than later, even if it means holding a special meeting. Others agreed.

Rick suggested that committee members each write down ideas of what the mission statement might look like.

**Eric moved to schedule a special meeting on Thursday, November 19 at 7:00 and the motion was passed.**

**6. Request for Funds for Minute Taker**

Brian said he recommends having a secretary to have ultimate responsibility for minutes even if the committee is going to use a paid minute taker.

Eric moved to ask the selectboard for funds to compensate a minute taker for committee meetings. Rick suggested also asking the village trustees. Brian said he will look into Donna Griffiths' availability. He said if the trustees and selectboard approve the funds, we should be able to find a minute taker, whether it is Donna or someone else.

Brian asked if the committee wants to elect a secretary or just leave the responsibility up to Rick since the group is planning to get a minute taker. The committee agreed to leave minutes as the chair's responsibility.

**7. Other Business**

Jasmine Yuris asked what not requiring a second means. Brian said motions on this committee function the same as other boards' motions but this group chose not to require a second, so any motion made by any board member will receive a vote. If a motion is made it will proceed to discussion and then a vote. Jasmine asked, the committee agreed that discussion would first be by the committee, then it would be opened up to the public and then the vote would be made? Brian said yes. Jasmine asked, so the committee is basically eliminating the need for a second to have discussion? Brian said that is right.

Sophie Berard said she has taken minutes before for the Studio Center so if Donna is not available she would love to be on the backup list of people to ask.

Brian said he will step back from being as involved in committee meetings but he will always be available if the committee needs assistance with technical or legal questions. He will probably plan on attending the next meeting but won't attend every meeting. He will step back and let the committee work. He thanked all the committee members for volunteering.

Rick said he was at the September 11 meeting that was Zoom bombed. One thing that came out of that meeting is that it is difficult to be running the meeting and try to break away when there is a disruptor. If we had a disruptor it would be nice to have someone watching the screen. Eric said he thinks only the host can kick someone from a meeting. It would have to be Rick. Rick said sometimes you don't see or can't get to it. He found out in Zoom where the mute buttons are but that would be an item of last resort. Brian said he doesn't know that he can regularly attend but he is happy to train anyone who wants to assist. Eric said he has been hosting Zoom meetings since March and wouldn't need training. It can be difficult to participate in a meeting and also manage if the meeting is getting Zoom bombed or

something like that is happening. Brian suggested we could try to get a volunteer just to manage Zoom.

8. *Adjourn*

**Rick moved to adjourn at 7:21 and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*

UNAPPROVED