

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
TUESDAY, JULY 6, 2021

**Present:**

Selectboard members: Beth Foy, Nat Kinney, Eric Osgood, Eben Patch

Others: Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert

**Selectboard members absent:** Mike Dunham

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

**1. Call to Order**

Eric called the meeting to order at 5:30.

**2. Additions, Changes to Agenda**

An update on the backhoe was added to the agenda.

**3. Set the Annual Tax Rate**

Rosemary said the municipal grand list is \$230,938,000. The tax rate based on that figure is 0.8325. After adjustments for school taxes for Waterman Lodge and veteran exemptions, the local tax rate needed is 0.8368, about a penny more than last year. The school tax rate is going down 3 cents.

Eric asked if Rosemary has any thoughts on why the grand list dropped. Rosemary said there are quite a few Vermont Transco lines that they thought were in Johnson but were found to actually be in Cambridge.

**Beth moved to set the tax rate at 0.8368, Nat seconded and the motion was passed.**

**4. Update on Ted Alexander Welcome Center**

Brian said we have been able to make a few changes to the scope of the project and have a revised budget that we are confident about. We can complete the reduced scope of work for under \$33K. Deborah Alexander has seen the reduced scope of work and is comfortable with it. She hopes we will complete the rest of the project but understands that because of what we can get done by August on the budget we have, we need to eliminate quite a bit.

Eric asked, is there an understanding that someday we would finish the original plan? Brian said we will continue to pursue additional funding sources. There may be a future request to the board for funds for a specific part of the project. There are a few items we might be able to add back in, like electrical service and landscaping. The most important thing was to come up with a scope that we could get done in time and would have defined costs for. Everything we couldn't get a firm number on or could afford to cut got cut.

Eric asked if this reduces the Alexanders' contribution. Brian said at this time we haven't asked them to reduce it. The understanding is that we will attempt to complete the rest of the project over time but it won't be completed for their visit.

Beth asked if additional work done later would be funded by the town. Brian said presumably a certain amount would be paid for with the remainder of the Alexanders' funds. We are in conversation with Senator Sanders' office about including improvements at Old Mill Park as part of funding directed by our representatives. There will probably also be requests to the town for

other specific parts of the project. If we want to complete the original scope of work we will need more than the \$45K pledged by the Alexanders.

Beth noted that the engineering and administration included in the revised scope of work was not part of the original scope. Did the town decide to add that? Did the Alexanders? Brian said the town is being asked to approve adding it, though it wasn't part of the original scope. We haven't paid anything yet for engineering and administrative costs, but the amount shown in the project scope is what has been accrued so far. That was originally intended to be volunteer time but because it has been hard to find contractors and source materials and because we have made quite a few changes, it has been considerably more of Howard Romero's time than was anticipated at the beginning. He volunteered thinking a much smaller number of hours would be required.

Nat said he feels our first obligation is to the Alexanders. We entered into a contract with them to do the project for a certain amount of money on a certain timeline. They are agreeing to reduce the scope of work without reducing their donation. He feels like we need to get that work done first before fulfilling this request to pay for engineering and administrative time. Eric said maybe the Alexanders will want to reallocate some of their donation. Nat said he hopes we can start adding in some things this summer like picnic tables, landscaping, or information displays. He could see the \$45K easily being spent. And the current estimate of \$32,285 is just our best estimate. It is tough to pin down costs and we won't really know the cost until we get invoices.

Beth said if we pay somebody in retrospect for their volunteered hours, that sets a bad precedent. She has happily spent many hours doing volunteer work for the town and if she had gone back and asked for money afterward she doesn't think the board would have been happy.

**5. Backhoe Update**

Brian said the backhoe is currently out of commission. It appears the issue is in the wiring harness. The recommendation is to replace the entire wiring harness. Labor will be the most expensive part of that job. He and Hugh evaluated the option of replacing the vehicle earlier than planned and don't think that would be a good investment. The backhoe will be out of commission for a few weeks. The repairs will cost close to \$10K.

Eric asked, the damage was done by mice? Brian said it appears so. Eric asked, the backhoe is stored in the cold storage building? Brian said that is where it is most often kept but it gets moved around. There are traps out in the garage and they occasionally catch mice, but not many.

Eric asked if we can rent a backhoe if we need it. Brian said he thinks we should be able to get one from Johnson Farm and Garden if needed.

Nat asked when the backhoe is due to be traded in. Brian said in 2024. He and Hugh think it is not worth trading it in now because it would have a reduced trade-in value with the repairs needed. They feel repairing it is the best course.

**6. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:48.