

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021

Present:

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

Others: Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert, Jason Whitehill, Jeff Bickford, Sophia Berard, Raven Pfaff, Rich Westman, Dan Noyes, Kate Donnally, Offie Wortham, John Mills, Dick Simays, Tom Carney, Duncan Hastings, Athena Parke, Shayne Spence, Jasmine Yuris

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Eric called the meeting to order at 6:44.

2. Additions, Changes to Agenda

No changes to the agenda were made.

3. Review Invoices and Orders

The board reviewed and discussed invoices and orders.

4. Review and Approve Minutes of Meetings Past

Eben moved to approve the minutes of December 6, 2021 and the motion was seconded and passed.

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

Rosemary said expenditures to date (for 5 months) are at 41% of budget. Revenue is at 90% of budget. That includes taxes that have been billed but not collected.

Delinquent taxes for last year total \$27,263 dollars. Rosemary contacted Jim Barlow and he was a little hesitant to take on tax sales for Johnson because Stitzel Page & Fletcher are our town attorneys and they do tax sales and are willing to do them for Johnson. (*Shayne Spence and Athena Parke arrived at 6:56.*) Rosemary said we haven't had a tax sale since 2019.

Nat asked, wasn't the thought that Stitzel Page & Fletcher are pretty expensive and for routine matters we could go to others? Rosemary said as far as she can remember the town attorney hasn't been our tax sale attorney. Brian said he thinks that was mainly because the previous town attorney didn't do tax sales and when we went with Stitzel Page & Fletcher we already had an established relationship with another attorney for tax sales. Eric said Jim Barlow would charge his regular rate for tax sale work so there may not be savings from using him.

Nat moved to authorize Rosemary to use Stitzel Page & Fletcher as the town's tax sale attorney, Mike seconded and the motion was passed. (*Sophia Berard arrived at 6:58.*)

Rosemary said traditionally town employees have been given \$100 holiday pay. (*Raven Pfaff arrived at 6:58.*) **Nat moved to give town employees \$100 holiday pay, Beth seconded and the motion was passed.**

6. Review Planned Purchases

Brian said the only planned purchase to discuss is playground equipment for Legion Field. The Rec Committee asked for some additional quotes. Prices for the climbing structure range from \$1K to a little over \$2K. The proposal is to purchase the cheapest unit, from S3 Stores. (*Rich Westman arrived at 7:00.*) We are working on getting tire chains for the grader but don't have a quote yet.

7. Public Works Supervisor/Highway Foreman Report

Jason said the public works department took care of 33 trees in the last windstorm. They redid the floor in the break room. He has been working on safety data sheets. Eric asked if we make use of any of the trees, perhaps for firewood donations. Jason said they usually leave them to the landowner. Nat noted that the emerald ash borer is in Belvidere now.

Beth asked how the new salt truck is working out. Jason said there have been no issues with it. Eben asked when it is getting springs. Jason said as soon as there is a spot open for it. Jason said we are having the sander auger moved over so it will be closer to the center of the road. The seller will honor moving it to where the original quote was for. They will give us a credit on our account. (*Dan Noyes and Kate Donnally arrived at 7:05.*)

Eric asked if the new public works employee is on board. Jason said he starts December 27.

8. Racial Justice Committee Report

Sophia Berard said at its last meeting the RJC unanimously voted to cancel the written expression contest in its current iteration. They have had no entries. They plan to revisit it at a later date. The committee doesn't have a recommendation for any of the candidates for appointment, other than their previous recommendation for Jackie Stanton. They were unable to review candidates' letters of interest prior to this meeting.

Jeff Bickford reviewed the proposed RJC budget that had been sent out. The RJC is hoping to have a combination of educational opportunities and celebrations each year. They are proposing to offset the cost of any trainings or seminars with grants and they will do other kinds of fundraising. They are proposing \$2300 in total expenditures with a net cost to the town of \$825. If they raise less money than they hope, then they will do less.

Eric asked if the committee is pretty confident of any grants. Jeff said yes, there are a number of small grants available. He doesn't think there is any limit on the number of Rapid Response grants the committee can get. And there are some others grant possibilities. If the committee can't find enough grants they will raise funds or wait a year.

Mike said the committee did an outstanding job on the budget, only coming to the town for \$825 when they want to spend \$2,300.

9. Use of Brine on Municipal Roads

Brian said he and Jason believe using brine with no additives will significantly reduce the amount of runoff we contribute by reducing the total amount of salt. When salt is liquefied it sticks on the road where we place it so less bounces off and ends up in ditches and the watershed. There are cost savings with brine. It works at lower temperatures. We don't have to spread as much in preparation for a storm event. Using brine will be more cost-effective and they don't believe it will have a significant effect on residents' vehicles because we

would not be using an additive as the state does. Jason said the brine they propose to use is just salt and water, the same as what forms when we spread salt and it mixes with the snow. If we use brine we use less salt.

Nat said he talked to Jason about brine. The chemical process that happens with brine is exactly the same chemical process that is happening now on our roads. They are just making it into a liquid before applying it to the roads. That prevents salt bouncing off the road and reduces the amount of salt used. Other municipalities use a different formulation that has other additives that lower the melting temperature and stick to vehicles and make corrosion much worse. He supports using brine with no additives. Beth said in the past she has talked about how she doesn't like brine because of the slush it makes when it hits the road. She supports using brine in this case. Eben said there would be significant savings. A lot of studies talk about 30% cost savings. With our salt budget, that is significant. Brine is better for the environment and makes for safer roads and could potentially save us 30%. Nat said that is the amount of savings Hyde Park has seen.

Nat moved to use brine with no additives on town roads in winter, Beth seconded and the motion was passed. (*Jason left at 7:18.*)

10. Opioid Settlement

Brian said we sent copies of the opioid settlement to Jenna's Promise and Healthy Lamoille Valley and they had no comments. He has not gotten comments from others he asked. He recommends participating in the settlement. There is probably not a lot to gain from it. Probably most of the money will go to the state's attorney. But perhaps they can get a bigger piece of the settlement if we sign on.

Beth moved and Mike seconded to sign onto the opioid settlement.

Beth said her only request is that Brian not spend any time on this. Eric asked if there is any downside to joining. Brian said by joining this we might not be eligible for future settlements but there might not be any future settlements to take part in. We have virtually nothing invested in it so taking what is available now seems likely to be the best option.

The motion was passed.

11. Racial Justice Committee Appointments

Sophia said given that so many qualified candidates put their names forward and Adelle McDowell will be going to college before long and will not be able to continue on the committee, she proposes adding Adelle as a seventh member who will only be here for a short amount of time. Eric said that would result in an odd number, something he has advocated for.

Nat said he would be more persuaded by that suggestion if the committee were to come up with some ground rules. By all accounts since the meeting he attended the RJC meetings have been much different, with productive conversation, but as committee members turn over and people lose experience he would like to have that behavior embedded (not belittling other people, not assuming worst intentions.) That would be his strong recommendation.

Mike said it is too bad the other three applicants didn't come here this evening. Eric said in all fairness they were not encouraged in any way to attend. Mike said he thinks we should keep with six members. Changing the number might change the dynamics. (*Offie Wortham arrived at 7:24.*)

Mike said it is good to see younger people interested in what goes on. **Mike moved and Nat seconded to appoint Adelle MacDowell and Shayne Spence to the Racial Justice Committee.**

Nat said Shayne Spence is on the Planning Commission. It is interesting to look at racial justice issues other towns in Vermont are facing related to planning commissions and development review boards and to think about how we can apply that information locally. He thinks that is a great connection.

Sophia asked if it would be possible for the RJC to see the applicant letters prior to an appointment. She thinks it would be valid for the committee to have discussion around appointments. The letters were sent to the committee, but not before its last meeting.

The motion was passed.

12. Ted Alexander Welcome Center Close Out Phase 1

Nat said expenditure of up to \$45,000 for phase 1 of the Ted Alexander Welcome Center was approved. (*Offie left at 7:28.*) Phase 1 has been completed and \$42,715.49 has been spent so far. There is an outstanding invoice from Howard Romero for materials he paid for and a laborer he paid on his own, as well as his own labor. Nat wants to stick to the promise that phase 1 of the project would cost \$45,000 or less. He feels that we need to reimburse Howard for his materials and the contractor labor he paid for, but it was not agreed on ahead of time to pay Howard for the \$3600 of labor that he is requesting.

Eben asked why there is a second invoice for roofing material that appears to have already been paid for. Nat said some material was stolen. Eben said the contractor is responsible for the site and the material there. It seems like the contractor should have paid to replace the stolen material. If that had happened it would have given us \$740 more to spend. (*Jasmine Yuris arrived at 7:31.*) Eric asked who Eben would consider the contractor in this case. Eben said the person doing the construction. Eric asked, would you consider the town to be the contractor, subcontracting to others? Eben said he would not.

Eben moved and Mike seconded to reimburse Howard Romero \$100 for lumber, \$53.08 for a faucet, \$60 for a welded rod, and \$1,560 for additional labor.

Brian said it is true that Howard's labor was not included in the budget submitted to the board but the characterization that his labor is a new thing he added is not exactly true either. He had told us that he expected to be paid for his work as site manager for the project but it is also true that he didn't actually include that in the budget he submitted. It isn't an approved expense. But it is not that he changed his mind or came up with the idea later. It was omitted from the budget that Howard wrote but he had always intended it to be part of what the town paid. It just wasn't part of what he presented and the board voted on. (*Sophia left at 7:34.*)

Beth said the total approved so far plus the total in this motion is \$511 less than the full budget. Eben suggested the town could pay Howard the difference between the total and \$45,000. (*John Mills arrived at 7:34.*) Eric said he recalls that when Howard submitted the bill we asked him to come and justify it to the board. Brian said we also told him that we would only consider it after we closed out every other expense.

The motion was passed.

Beth moved to pay Howard Romero \$511.43 for his time and to thank him for his effort. Nat seconded and the motion was passed.

13. Ted Alexander Welcome Center Budgeting and Funding for Phase 2

Nat said the board had asked him to get clarity around costs for electrical work and to start a campaign to fund the remaining work. He confirmed with Will Jennison that the village is contributing labor at no charge for primary electric and providing materials at cost, so the quoted cost to provide electric service will go down. Troy hasn't had a chance to give a new estimate but there will be at least \$1500 in savings. He met with an electrician to talk about putting in secondary service (sockets and lights.) The electrician said he would get a quote to Nat by the end of this week. Nat also reached out to the Alexander family. They are definitely in favor of funding the trompe-l'œil and possibly more but they want more detail. He doesn't have anything for the board to act on tonight.

14. Legislative Delegation and Northern Vermont University to Discuss Municipal Priorities

Dan said he is interested in hearing about concerns the board has that he could help the town with as the legislature goes back into session. He is on the human services committee. Making sure the college is strong and adequately funded is on his priority list, though it is not part of his committee work. There have been recent discussions on the Green River Reservoir. He is interested in finding a balance between having a state park and having power generation. Legislators have been working on helping older Vermonters who fall into the "donut hole" for health insurance eligibility. They are looking at raising the income level for eligibility. One bill he worked on that passed the house was on the office of child advocate and another was bill looking at reimbursement rates for home and community health providers.

Mike said he and Dan have talked about inspection laws. It is ridiculous that a car can't pass inspection with one rust hole when the state is full of certified welders and there is no reason replacement metal couldn't be welded in. There are a lot of disadvantaged people on the road who can't afford brand new cars. Dan said he has legislation drafted about vehicle inspection. One aspect to look at is having inspections required every other year.

Beth asked about the bill related to the office of child advocate. Dan said it creates that office. Right now in Vermont we don't have that position. Beth said she fully supports that. We have kids in our community that desperately need it.

John Mills, the interim president at NVU, said he came to Vermont because he had been involved in transformation work in another state and he feels the way Vermont is doing college transformation is the best way in the country right now because everyone in the

community of the institution is involved. NVU needs more students and more revenue. He is engaged in working with the community as much as possible to enhance economic and community development of the area. He recently found out about the Babcock Preserve, phenomenal opportunity that has been allowed to lie fallow. He is looking to rejuvenate it. (*Dick Simays arrived at 7:49.*) He is also fully engaged in improving the Dibden Center. He thinks it needs to be used more in the community. Applications and acceptance for spring at NVU are significantly above the goal for 2019. Fall applications are almost 50% ahead of where they were 2 years ago. They have tried new ways to reach out to students. Some of the growth is coming from Vermont students. When NVU lost students, the loss was from Vermont students. The out of state student population grew. Act 74 says the college is here to stay and they need to get the word out about that. They need more revenue and more state support. Vermont is tied with another state for 49th in the nation in per student state college funding contributions. That has to change. He will be lobbying as hard as he can to change that. The VSU transition won't be complete until July of 2023. It is a very difficult transition. One example is that NVU, Castleton and VTC all have different daily, monthly and yearly calendars. Today he is less optimistic than he was last week because of the COVID situation. Tomorrow morning all state and independent colleges will be meeting with the Department of Health to get their guidance. (*Tom Carney arrived at 7:55.*)

Athena Parke asked, when the transition to VSC happens, will certain campuses have certain focuses? John said, yes they are working on that now. They will try to have as much face-to-face teaching as possible but every program will also have synchronous or asynchronous hybrid options. Students will be able to attend one school and take hybrid courses in a program that is only offered at another school.

Kate Donnally asked if there is anything besides more funding that would be helpful for the college. John said critical needs scholarships were phenomenal and they are running out. The college needs to find ways to get clinical sites for nursing students. They could have more nurses in training but they don't have places to put them.

Rich Westman said the legislature has tried to put money into nursing programs but state colleges have been slow to come to the legislature with concrete plans for the legislature to fund. John is correct in saying that Vermont has been low in per pupil contributions but over the last two years well over \$200 million has been put into the state colleges. The state college system has to be relevant and part of that is that the colleges have to give the legislature concrete things to do. John said he thinks they have given them concrete things. What the legislature did in the past two years doesn't make up for more than 10 years of neglect.

Beth said the critical needs scholarships John talked about supported her daughter taking classes to help her with her daycare. She is not sure she would have been as motivated to take those classes if those scholarships were not out there. We should keep funding those critical needs scholarships. Raven said she knows there is a lack of teachers. She recently had two co-workers receive their teaching certificates because of the critical needs scholarships. They would not have been able to do it otherwise.

Kate said she thinks the upcoming session will be really intense. Just about every committee she can think of has something big and charged coming through that is activating to people on all sides of the political spectrum. She has been thinking about how we navigate these times together and have these hard conversations. She is available if people want to connect. She is on the judiciary committee. One bill that carried over from last year that became politically complicated and will likely remain that way has to do with expungements, which will likely be referred to as sealing.

Mike asked about what sealing means. Kate said expungement eliminates a criminal record entirely so no one can access it ever again. If a record is sealed it still exists but there are restrictions on who can have access to it. There is a push to move towards sealing. (*Duncan Hastings arrived at 8:08.*)

Athena asked if there is a specific type of record the legislature is looking at sealing. Kate said it would be for very specific crimes and a significant amount of time like 10 years or more would need to pass without recurrence. Some feel they might be willing to expand the list of crimes if the records were sealed, not expunged.

Rich Westman said he is not hopeful that this will be a year when the legislature will deal with a lot of structural problems in state government. There are three congressional candidates in the senate and a couple who are thinking of running for lieutenant governor. He thinks that will cloud getting work done on retirement issues. The retirement problem is huge and the longer we wait to come up with answers the harder it will be. People are living longer and the system was never built expecting people to live that long. There will have to be a lot of give and take and he is not sure the legislature will be able to make much progress on it this year. His number one issue, and he thinks the number one issue for this community, is to make sure the state colleges have the resources they need to fundamentally change what they do to make them more relevant. Our appropriation per student is low. Throughout COVID he thinks we have done a good job of eliminating a lot of the debt of the system. There is an opportunity to come out of this with a state college system that is relevant and supportive of students. People like him wouldn't have gone to college if the campus in Johnson wasn't there. Ensuring the health of the state college system is his top priority. His afternoon committee is natural resources. About 4 years ago the legislature put \$5.5 million in the budget to educate mental health workers because our mental health agencies were starved for people. The association that represents mental health agencies surveyed students going on to get their master's degrees while working at mental health agencies and found that over half the students were taking online classes at Southern New Hampshire University because they could not find online classes in Vermont that would allow them to work during the day and take care of their kids in the evening. That pretty much ended any thought of the legislature cornering the money to go to the state college system. The money was dispersed in a different way. We have to make sure the state college system comes out of this COVID disaster in a good place and that we make it relevant for students in a way that helps Vermont produce the mental health workers, nurses and others we need to go on.

Eric noted that if reapportionment goes through as proposed none of the legislators here tonight will represent Johnson.

Beth said one thing on her mind is the impact of inflation on Johnson and the skyrocketing cost of materials. It would be appreciated if the state could help towns supplement the cost of raw materials like sand, salt and gravel. Eben said Beth is right about the inflation of materials costs. Eric said salaries are also an issue. We are starting to see a worker shortage. The village can't even get people to apply for the village manager position. We had to give town employees significant increases. We lost an employee who took a position delivering oil for \$5 an hour more than we were paying.

Eric said at town meeting the Johnson voters asked us to address the question of leaving the school merger. We anticipate addressing that this year at town meeting. He asked the legislators' thoughts on that.

Kate Donnally asked if there has been any articulation on why we would leave. Eric said two years ago a member of the community stood up and made the case that being merged did not make sense. We didn't save the money that it was touted we would save. He discussed the benefits of going back and the townspeople voted to have a vote on it.

Nat said he thinks there is a general feeling that our town doesn't have a lot of voice in the school district. For instance the school district decided our local school wouldn't be open on weekends. Enough people spoke up that that changed, so maybe that negates his point. But that that would happen is scary. Mike said there is also resentment that money in our building fund went to Hyde Park after the districts were unified. Beth said she was on the school board when that happened. The money actually went to a reserve fund that was only allowed for building purposes and it actually was left with Johnson. But we did pick up the cost for the Hyde Park renovations. Another thing is that the new school board is big and the Johnson school board was small. The Johnson board was very much open to the public and public interaction was much more tolerated. There was actually a dialogue. She thinks that is missed.

Rich Westman said he understands why Johnson would want to leave the unified district. That is a decision Johnson will have to make for itself. He thinks there will be pushback against that in the Agency of Education and in the legislature from the people who originally supported Act 46. The difference between what is happening in Stowe and Morrisville and here is that State Board of Education overruled the Secretary of Education, who brought them a plan saying that Stowe and Morrisville should not be merged. The Agency of education isn't quite sure how to handle Stowe and Morrisville because the secretary and the agency had originally recommended that they not be forced into a merger.

Related to critical needs scholarships, Beth brought up the need for CDL workers which seems to be a problem everywhere.

Kate Donnally said her understanding is that the merger allowed families to send kids to any of the primary schools in the unified district. She knows parents sending kids to a school in another town. If Johnson makes the decision to leave the unified district that might mean kids would be pulled out of the schools they are currently in.

Nat said emergency services is really starting to face a crisis. There are issues with staffing and cost and the structure of policing in Vermont. Some towns don't have any coverage. He thinks we will start seeing a big disparity between rich and poor towns as far as who gets public safety and ambulance service and who has to wait and or drive themselves.

Rich Westman said he is angry about the state not allowing Lamoille County deputies into the retirement plan we would like to move them into. We are being penalized because we made a decision in 2003, whereas Washington County has never had a retirement plan and they were just let into the plan we would like to move into. He thinks Washington and Orange both had no retirement plans and were allowed into the plan we want to go into. He doesn't understand why that was allowed. Nat said he thinks every sheriff's department should have the same retirement plan and it should be the same as the state police plan or the state will be poaching our people.

Duncan said he wants to emphasize what Nat said about law enforcement, emergency response and public safety. He thinks it is time the state put together a study committee on public safety in Vermont. Retirement is a huge issue but there are other issues. There should be ways such as union municipal districts to enhance communities' ability to provide public safety for their citizens.

Rich Westman suggested that maybe VLCT could push the legislature to make changes to its program that gives large grants every three years to help towns with larger projects. Perhaps they could increase the amount of money or the frequency with which grants are given out. *(Shayne and Athena left at 8:38.)*

Eric said it is good to see the president out in the community. *(Legislators and John Mills left at 8:40.)*

15. Historical Society Update

Brian said we have made several phone calls trying to get a contractor to look at the leak at the Historical Society building. One person said they might be able to show up this week. We have not been able to find anyone to give us an estimate or commit to doing the work.

Dick Simays said another issue is the bracing by the back exit stairway. Water is flowing down the 45° braces to the wall and flowing behind the siding. Tom Carney said it is an easy fix. The braces need to be taken off the wall.

Duncan said the Historical Society would like to encourage the selectboard to think about putting money in the budget to deal with the issues at the Historical Society building – the roof leak in the main part of the building, the porch roof leak and the back stair issue Dick mentioned. The Historical Society also felt it would be good for communication if the Historical Society had a standing spot on the selectboard agenda. They might not be there every meeting but if an issue came up it would be nice to have that agenda slot.

Eric said the repairs needed would be eligible for money from the buildings and grounds reserve fund. He suggested that it might be helpful if the Historical Society took the lead on trying to get a contractor. That might be more successful since Brian's time is limited.

Tom said it would be helpful if the Historical Society could use the second and third floors of the building. That way the bathroom and kitchen water could be shut off upstairs and we wouldn't have to worry about more leaks. Eric said it is more important to take care of the immediate concerns. He asked if the Historical Society would consider taking the lead on trying to get a contractor. Duncan said under the Historical Society's new bylaws they have a buildings and grounds committee. It could be referred to them. Dick suggested that the Historical Society can try to get a contractor and maybe the town could also continue to try.

Brian said we did not get any submissions when we posted the vacancy on the Historical Society board. Duncan said he would be interested in submitting his names for the vacancy, which would mean the selectboard would need to find someone to be the selectboard representative. Eben asked what that is needed for if the Historical Society is planning to be here every month. Duncan said in the past there was a selectboard member sitting on the Historical Society board. He thinks he was the first representative who was not a board member. Under the Historical Society bylaws the selectboard representative cannot actually hold any offices on the Historical Society board. He is not sure he is fulfilling the original intent of being a selectboard liaison because he has now become more interested in advocating for Historical Society needs. Maybe Eben is right and the representative is no longer needed but he thinks there is value in having someone who is more closely affiliated with the town.

Eric said his only concern with having a standing agenda item for the Historical Society report is that other groups may also allow wish to have standing items. We could be headed down a path where every group would want to have time on our agenda. He is not sure we have done the correct thing by establishing the precedent of having a monthly report from the RJC. Beth said each committee doesn't have to report at every meeting. Reports could be quarterly with different groups rotating.

Duncan asked, isn't the RJC a more limited term committee? The Historical Society is here to stay but presumably at some point the RJC will come to a conclusion and present something and not necessarily continue as a standing committee. Eric said Racial Justice Committee was given a standing agenda item because they were struggling so much when they got started. Duncan said there always used to be a standing Planning Commission report. Eric said we still have that if the Planning Commission wants to come in. Duncan said he suspects that nine times out of ten the Historical Society might not be there. They might submit a written report. Nat said we need to improve communication with the Historical Society but meetings tend to be pretty full so meeting time is limited.

Tom said the Historical Society will assist with trying to find a contractor. Brian said the town will still try too.

Nat asked about the overall condition of the roof. Tom said there are only a couple of spots with issues. Duncan said the porch roof has a pretty serious leak which is causing additional damage. That is separate from the leak in the main roof. Beth asked if both roofs are in poor condition. Tom said the main roof is in reasonable condition and the porch roof is in poor condition. Duncan said he did meet with Dana McKnight, who suggested either ripping the roof open and insulating it or leaving it as it is and monitoring it carefully through winter and if it leaks in spring that would indicate a different problem that would also be cured by insulating it. The ultimate fix would be ripping open and insulating the main roof.

Eben asked, is it correct that for projects over \$5K two bids are required and for projects over \$10K sealed bids are required? Brian said we can make allowances under certain circumstances. He would need to review the policy. Duncan said under federal guidelines if there are three bids required but two bidders put in writing that they cannot bid, that counts. Beth said if we can't get more than one bid we will use the one we get.

Eric said the Historical Society will have a standing item on our agenda for future regular meetings. Eben asked if we want to have the Racial Justice Committee report every other month, alternating with the Historical Society. Duncan said he thinks the Historical Society would be happy with that. Eric said if the Historical Society wants to send a written report, that would be sufficient.

Duncan suggested that the Holcomb House could benefit from an air handling system if that is an item that ARPA money could be spent on. Eben asked what the benefits of air handling would be for the building. Duncan said it could help cure issues related to mold and mildew. His understanding is that there has been a huge push with ARPA funding to increase air exchange in buildings for health reasons. It is an old building that is pretty well shuttered up and he thinks it could benefit from air handling. We could have a heating and ventilation contractor come and give an assessment and an estimate of the benefits. Tom said some people on the Historical Society board have breathing problems and prefer to meet elsewhere. Duncan said it is a public building and members of the public go there. Eric said if there are people struggling with breathing there it might be worth having it evaluated. Eben said if there is more air exchange it costs more to heat the building. Duncan said the building is not well insulated. Eben said that would indicate it doesn't need air exchange. *(Duncan, Tom and Dick left at 9:11.)*

16. Financial Security Checklist and Updates

Brian said VLCT published a new model RFP for auditing services. It is virtually the same as the old one so he made no changes to ours other than what the board had already requested. VLCT is bringing on a new consultant in January and they would like to spend more time talking to us about this when the new consultant is on board. Our responses to the financial security checklist questions indicate that we have good practices and not enough documentation in written policy.

Eric asked if the financial security checklist requires a dedicated meeting. Brian said he would recommend that the board read it and we can get back to it. There were no big red flags. Rosemary agreed. Beth asked if it is already submitted. Brian said there really isn't anyone to submit it to. Eric suggested discussing it in a work session meeting in February.

Beth said she thinks if it is discussed in one work session the board will be brain dead by the time they get to the middle. It could be discussed over multiple meetings, one section per meeting. Eric asked, if there was a meeting dedicated to this, how long it would take to discuss? Rosemary said she thinks it would take at least 2 hours. Brian agreed that it would probably be at least 2 hours and maybe 3. He would not recommend discussing anything else of substance in the same meeting. Eric said we will plan on having a single meeting devoted to it.

17. Other Business

Brian said he is planning on taking time off between Christmas and New Year's. He asked if the board would consider moving the next meeting to January 5 instead of January 3 so he does not have to prepare for it during the time he would like to be on vacation. The board agreed to meet on January 5.

18. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

UNAPPROVED