

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, MAY 16, 2022

Present: Selectboard members: Beth Foy, Duncan Hastings, Eric Osgood, Eben Patch, Mark Woodward

Others present in person: Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert, Jason Whitehill, Lisa Crews, Lois Frey, Sophia Berard, Casey Romero, Mary Jean Smith, Brian Vandorn, Kelly Vandorn, Bobbi Rooney, Dick Simays

Others present via Zoom: Terri Sabens, Kyley Hill, Nadeau, 4 other participants

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Beth called the meeting to order at 6:30.

2. Additions, Changes to Agenda

Eric asked to add possible action on the Lazar tax appeal. Duncan said he has a question about the press release that was emailed out. Where were the fires? Eric said there were recent fires on Pearl Street and Lower Main. Beth said she would like to change the order of items 4 and 5 in the administrator's report.

3. Selectboard Issues & Concerns

No selectboard members brought up any issues.

4. Review Invoices and Orders

The board reviewed and discussed invoices and orders. (*Lois Frey and Jason Whitehill arrived at 6:35.*) Duncan asked why there were so many tax overpayments in the orders this time. Rosemary said a lot of people don't like to pay what's on their bill. Mark asked, they are not tax adjustment related? Rosemary said no. Duncan brought up a question about the RFP for mowing. Beth said she wants to add that at the end of the agenda. Eric asked if this many tax overpayments is normal or unusual. Rosemary said it is unusual.

5. Review and Approve Minutes of Meetings Past

Eben moved and Mark seconded to approve the minutes of May 2, 2022.

Eric said the constable job description was discussed at the May 2 meeting. He was able to find a job description from around 2003, which he sent out to everyone. He thinks it might be handy to have something made up for board members with all the town and village policies, ordinances and job descriptions. Rosemary pointed out some books already made up with all the policies. Brian said we can add job descriptions to those books. Duncan said he believes the personnel policy is missing from the existing books.

The motion was passed.

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

Rosemary said the state has sent the final school tax. Right now current taxes are above budget by 1.252. Expenditures to date are 77.7% of budget. Revenue probably won't change until she journals in money from the restricted funds.

Mark asked what our Common Level of Appraisal is. Rosemary said it is in the middle 90s. (*Sophia Berard arrived at 6:45.*) But there was a recent property sale that was way over the appraised price, which will bring it down. Eric said it isn't good for CLA to be down to the mid 90s already when we just had a reappraisal a couple of years ago.

Rosemary said we have 3.5% of taxes left to collect this year. We are slightly ahead of the last two years. The board reviewed the list of delinquent taxes.

7. Public Works Supervisor / Highway Foreman Report

Jason said he is interested in the possibility of doing a pavement management program, which involves giving roads a number on a scale based on what work is needed. Adding up all the numbers tells you whether you should do a reclaim on that road or where your money is best spent.

Mark asked if Jason keeps a spreadsheet of expenses by road. Jason said that has not been done up until now but he would like to start doing it.

Duncan said we used to a program called Road Surface Management System. Is what Jason is talking about the same thing? Jason said it is different. He learned about it at a class he attended and there is a workshop coming up in June where he can learn more. Duncan asked if there is a cost to the town. Jason said he thinks there is. He will learn more about what it will cost and get contact information on the company that does it. We don't have to do the full program. We can adopt pieces of it and do some of it ourselves on our own spreadsheet. Duncan said one thing that was difficult about the Road Surface Management System was having consistency between people doing the surveys. Jason said what they suggest is having at least two people working on this and getting calibrated doing the same worksheets. Duncan said he thinks it is a great idea. Eric agreed. He thinks it could be helpful information for the board to use in setting priorities.

Eric said he received feedback that the public works crew did a tremendous job on Green Up Day. Mark said he was really impressed.

Beth asked if Jason needs anything from the board to set up the pavement management program. Jason said not as of now. He will put together a packet for the board after he gets more information about what the company is offering and the board can decide if we want to use the whole program or just pick pieces. Duncan said using a ranking system that is applied uniformly across all roads takes the politics out of deciding on road projects. It is just based on road conditions. Beth said if we are going to consider customizing what parts of the program we use we should understand why the program is set up the way it is before we make changes. Jason said they offer this program to much bigger municipalities and a town our size does not necessarily need the whole scope of what they offer. We could scale it down for the amount of road mileage we have.

The board reviewed a quote Jason got for signs. Jason asked how quickly the board wants to move toward putting up additional speed limit signs as recommended by the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department. Brian said LCSD's recommendation is that we place signs

according to federal guidelines. The recommended distance between signs is based on the speed limit. For instance, if the speed limit is 30 mph there should be a sign every .6 miles.

Duncan asked if that includes signs saying there is a reduced speed limit ahead. We are supposed to have those. Jason said we already have those where they are required.

Jason said if we bought all the signs we would need to meet federal guidelines we would go over what was budgeted for signs this year. Eben asked if it could wait until the next fiscal year. Brian said we have room in our budget now for the signs Jason got a quote for. That is a planned expense. But Jason is pointing out that if we don't overspend the sign line item it will be a long time before we get signs at the correct frequency throughout the town. Beth asked, what is the safety risk now? Are there any signs we need to purchase right now to reduce the hazard? Jason said we need to purchase the signs he got the quote for – stop signs, handicapped signs and a 25 mph sign. Eben said the projected budget had \$3K in the sign line item, and this spending won't put us over that. Brian said that is right. This order is about \$1400. Beth said she feels that it is not a big deal to take time to become compliant with federal guidelines for sign spacing.

Eric asked, are there issues where speed limits are not enforceable because the signs do not meet the requirements? Jason said that is what the sheriff's department is saying now – that the speed limits are not enforceable because signs are not placed frequently enough. Eric said it used to be that all back roads not posted had a speed limit of 50 mph. A few years ago there was a bill in the legislature that allowed a town to change them all to 35 mph as long as the speed limit was posted where the road entered the town. That used to be good enough. Brian said that is not the current standard that is being recommended to us. Beth said there is a difference between a standard and a law. If the law still allows for what Eric described, then the standards are different from the law. Duncan said he thinks Brian is referring to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The law could be something different. He asked, if the sheriff's department took the ticket to court, would the court throw it out? If not, maybe we need to push back with LCSD. Eric suggested maybe that is a question for VLCT. Mark said we should find out if it is a law or not. The board asked Brian to look into this. Mark noted that he has never seen radar on the back roads.

The board agreed to move forward with the restocking purchase of signs that Jason got a quote for.

8. *Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee Report*

Sophia said right before this meeting she emailed out to Beth the committee agreements that the committee just adopted at its last meeting. A couple of months ago Nat Kinney suggested that the committee come up with values and agreements for how meetings would be run and how committee members would communicate. She read the agreements that were adopted at the last meeting.

Sophia said the committee is planning a Juneteenth celebration on June 19. They hope to have children's books from the library, light refreshments and informational handouts. They are collaborating with Be-Longing for Justice. The event will be on the village green.

The village trustees agreed to hang the Progress Pride flag on the village green for Pride Month, which is June.

In July, two RJSE Committee members are leading a reading of Frederick Douglass' speech *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* Sophia believes that will be on July 9. It will be a collaborative reading where people from the community can each read some of the speech.

This past Saturday the committee put on an anti-racist story time with Jae Basiliere, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at NVU. That was the last piece of the Humanities Council grant. It went very well. There were about 14 kids and about 15 adults. Jae read three books and books from the library with diversity and anti-racism themes were available. The committee hopes to work more with Jae in the future.

Mark asked if the committee has reached out to the college. Is anyone from the college on the committee? Sophia said Jae works at the college, as does committee co-chair Jeff Bickford.

Beth asked if the committee has had expanded attendance at its meetings. Sophia said there have regularly been three or four non-voting people in attendance. The numbers shift from month to month. They are hoping that with the new agreements meetings will shift in a more productive direction for everyone.

9. Review Planned Purchases

Brian said there are no planned purchases over \$1000 other than the signs already discussed.

10. RFP for Lawn Mowing Services

Brian said the RFP is out for lawn mowing services. (*Sophia left at 7:22.*) We got a proposal from Robert and Sons to continue service. Proposals are due by the end of business tomorrow. Beth suggested to him earlier today that next time we go out to bid we should go out in the fall for the following summer. This year the rec department needed the fields mowed before we received any bids so we had to get Robert and Sons to extend their current contract. The bid from Robert and Sons is the only one we have received so far.

Duncan asked how the RFP was advertised. Brian said we put it up on the website and sent it out to local vendors. It was not in the paper. (*Casey Romero arrived at 7:24.*) Duncan said if we are going out to bid he thinks we should make an effort to get the word out. He thinks the cost of an ad in the News & Citizen would be well worth it.

Brian said Robert and Sons mows once a week and their extended contract goes until June 1. Eric suggested perhaps they would go on a week by week contract until we are able to authorize a contract for this season. Brian said he thinks they will agree to that. (*Bobbi Rooney arrived at 7:30.*) It was agreed to put reviewing bids on the next agenda and to extend Robert and Sons' contract by another week before then if we can. (*Dick Simays arrived at 7:31.*)

11. Assessor Contracted Services Outlook

Brian said our current assessor Terri Sabens is looking at scaling back and is also trying to increase the number of people who are involved in town assessing in the state. She has a proposal that she has drawn up where multiple towns would share an assessor position. The person in that position would be someone replacing her and working with her assistance and

training. The towns would agree on how many days the assessor would work for each. One day a week should work for Johnson. A couple of towns have expressed interest in also assigning E911 coordinator duties to this person. Hyde Park has expressed a great deal of interest and has volunteered to make the person a Hyde Park employee. We would pay Hyde Park for one day a week of their time.

Terri said she is trying to create a shared assessor position because so many towns need someone to do grand list maintenance. The pay would work out to be \$32 an hour. Hyde Park has volunteered to be the parent town and other towns would join in. There is a memorandum of understanding already written. The same person would work for all the towns. There is no full-time work in this field. If towns can share a position and give a person full-time work with benefits then we will have younger people getting into the field. The average lister in Vermont now is 62 years old. She is trying to set up shared positions like this throughout Vermont.

Beth asked if Terri has the person identified. Terri said she does. She is trying to get this started in July but she is not sure if that will work out. Hyde Park would interview the person and other towns could also. The person she has in mind is already about 1/3 trained. She and the state Property Valuation and Review Division would help train him.

Duncan asked when we would be expected to say yes or no to this MOU. Terri said once she has enough towns together. She had six towns but one just dropped out and she is waiting to hear from a couple of others. Once she has enough towns so that no one has to pay more than \$32 an hour then the towns can agree to the MOU. She thought she could get this going by July but she is not sure it will be that soon. Hopefully it will be in the next few months.

Duncan said he is having a hard time figuring out how one assessor could serve six towns. Eben said Waterville and Belvidere may only need someone one day every other week. Terri said some towns just need someone working 12 to 16 hours a month. Eric said during the busy time of year our listers used work 5 days a week. How will it work when everyone needs an assessor at the same time? Terri said if someone is working year round they can take care of transfers, mapping, E911, etc. Eric said anyone who is here one day a week could maintain the grand list but who will go out in the spring and look at new structures and assess them all? Terri said she has been doing it this year and she has had less than 20. She can only visit properties with state issued permits. Eben said we don't have zoning so she may not be able to find all the new construction.

Duncan said he likes the basic concept of sharing an assessor. He also liked NEMRC's proposal of a rolling reappraisal. He asked if Terri would consider building that in. Terri said NEMRC left Johnson because Johnson does not have zoning. It is hard to do a rolling reappraisal because there are no records for the assessor to look at. Duncan said the concept originally with NEMRC was that one quarter of properties in the town would be visited by the assessor each year, whether they had a permit for construction or not. Every property would get visited. He likes that concept. Would Terri consider the possibility of building a rolling reappraisal into the concept? Terri said yes. If Johnson hires someone for one day a week they would be able to do that.

Eben said it seems like at this point Terri is asking if Johnson has interest in this concept. If the board does have interest, could we send further questions for Terri through Brian? Brian said he can gather questions and deliver answers back to the board as a report. Beth said there is general interest from the board. We will get back to Terri with questions.

12. Historical Society Use of Second Floor and Lease Options for Current Tenants

Brian said the space on the second floor of the Holcomb House that we are now renting out to tenants would be useful to the Historical Society. They could use it now for expanded storage and in the future there is a possibility of making it ADA accessible. They have a proposal to switch it over to being occupied by them instead of the current tenant. The current tenant's lease is up June 1. Duncan asked, there is a 30-day notice requirement? Brian said yes. He is meeting with the tenants Wednesday.

Eric moved and Mark seconded to inform the current tenants of the second floor apartment in the Holcomb House that their lease will not be renewed.

Eric said he thinks we can continue discussions with the Historical Society about when and how they will move into that space and about the financial aspects. But he feels it is not a winning proposition to continue to have the tenants in that space with the damage we have seen and the cost. He thinks we would be ahead if we let the Historical Society take over the second floor. Eben said he thinks we would be behind. When the voters voted to purchase the Holcomb House it was our understanding that extra revenue from rent would be set aside for maintenance. The rent was not intended to be a revenue source for the town. The motion last time was to come up with a plan that would have no cost to the taxpayers. There was a statement that the Historical Society would be willing to share the cost of renovations. But we don't know what the cost will be. Eric said he thinks we can work out the numbers later. We have a proposal from the Historical Society. We won't be heating the building to the same degree without the upstairs tenants. Eben said the Historical Society proposal doesn't include the cost for maintenance, mowing, salting, etc.

Duncan said he thinks the first step the Historical Society was hoping for was basic agreement from the selectboard that their proposal for sharing utilities was acceptable. That would let them move to the next step of putting together an actual proposal the selectboard could act on, getting into expenses for things like ADA compliance and what the Historical Society would propose to contribute to that. He suspects it will be a while before the Historical Society has a specific proposal. If the tenants move out immediately we could be losing 3 to 6 months of rent.

Eben brought up the \$20K we are expecting to spend on the roof. Mary Jean Smith asked, wouldn't we have to put \$20K into the roof no matter what? Eben said yes, but with the revenue from rent we break even more quickly.

Duncan said he would be comfortable with notifying the tenants that their lease is likely to end at any time with 30 days notice. The Historical Society could probably give a better idea how long it would take for them to develop a formal proposal. It would probably be several months. Mary Jean Smith said yes, but the Historical Society's idea was that the first step

would be to ask the tenants to leave. The Historical Society needs to know that they can move upstairs. Eben said he thinks the chance is there for the Historical Society to occupy the second floor but getting rid of the tenants now when it could be several months before the Historical Society is ready to use that space seems like putting the cart ahead of the horse. Mark said it seems to him that the Historical Society will need access to the space. He feels we should give the tenants notice and not sign another year's lease with them. If they leave, then the Historical Society has access to the space to put together a proposal. If we say no to the proposal we will rent the apartment again quickly. Eben said we would have lost money during the months when it was not occupied. That doesn't seem like a great plan to him.

Eric said if we notify the tenants now it will be June 18 before they even have to be out. Mark said it may be a first of the month lease. Eric said he is sure some work will be involved in getting the place cleaned up. It will be some time before it could be occupied. Duncan said there was a damage deposit taken. We want to make sure we don't release it until we are sure about damage.

Brian said the tenants approached him and said they would be willing to accept any terms for any length of time. Duncan said we could build into the lease agreement that the Historical Society has guaranteed access. Brian suggested maybe we could give the tenants notice that they will have to move out but give them 60 days to do it.

Duncan said the next plan for the upstairs from the Historical Society will require permits from the state for ADA. He would be surprised if that can take place in a year. It won't be simple to come up with a plan that can be approved by the state. It will be subject to public building requirements. Mark asked, what makes Duncan think the Historical Society is going to make the upstairs ADA compliant this year? He thought the plan was to use it for storage. Mary Jean said Mark is right. They are thinking the first step is for the tenant to leave and the second step is to assess what is upstairs. Storage is a big need now. Initially she thinks the upstairs would be used for storage. Duncan said technically if the area is occupied even for storage it is supposed to meet all building codes and standards, including ADA. Mark disagreed. Eric asked, even if it is closed to the public? Mary Jean said the public would not have access to it. Duncan said it depends on whether it is classified by the state as a public building. If Historical Society members or volunteers are going up and down stairs the upstairs would need to be accessible to any handicapped members.

Dick Simays said the current tenants present a huge exposure to the town with the way they keep their trash pile. There have been a couple of instances of things leaking through the ceiling. He thinks having them gone will improve the situation and protect the Historical Society's collection. Duncan said some of the collection is irreplaceable and the upstairs is currently a fire hazard.

The motion was passed with Eben opposed.

Eben moved to post the second floor apartment at the Holcomb House available for rent and to have the lease agreement ensure access to the Historical Society. Beth said she doesn't know if we can ensure that access under state law. Eric said he thinks the same tenants could

apply for the new lease. Eben said he doesn't see why it would be a problem to require Historical Society access with times given to the tenants. Eric said he would suggest having a 30-day renewal period with automatic renewal. The motion was not seconded.

Duncan asked, since the town is the owner of the building does the selectboard need to give any permission to the Historical Society for them to have access once the apartment is vacated? Beth said she thinks we should put this on a future agenda once we know the tenants are vacating. Mark agreed. Brian said he will inform the tenants that the lease is not being renewed and that they have 30 days to vacate.

Duncan moved to accept in concept the spreadsheet provided by the Historical Society proposing cost sharing for utilities at the Holcomb House and to authorize access by the Historical Society to the second floor to allow the Historical Society to evaluate the space and provide a report to the selectboard. Eric seconded.

Eben said the cost of fuel will go up so the numbers on the Historical Society spreadsheet will change. Beth asked if Duncan would like to define “in concept.” Eben asked, does that mean that if the numbers change we have to reevaluate? Duncan said even if the price of heating fuel goes up, currently our lease with the tenants includes heat, electricity and sewer so the town cost would go up regardless.

The motion was passed with Eben opposed.

Mary Jean said the Historical Society will go up and evaluate once the tenants have left.

13. American Rescue Plan Act Discussion Dates

The board agreed to schedule a special meeting at 7:00 on June 8 to discuss ARPA spending.

14. Review of Updates for the Skatepark

Brian said there are some issues at the skatepark. Some people who are using it are making it unfriendly for some other users – being confrontational, drinking or smoking. Neighbors have been complaining. The Skatepark Committee is taking actions to step up enforcement of the existing rules. There are some upcoming plans for new skate features. Casey said the plan is for an extension of the concrete bowl, replacing wood with concrete. Brian said that is recommended by VLCT. Brian said we have a committee to handle skatepark issues and they are doing a good job. He thinks it is appropriate for the board to know about the situation but unless board members have an interest in more details he thinks we can move on.

Duncan asked about enforcement. He said it is one thing to post a board that says “no drinking” but he doesn't think there is anything the sheriff's department can or will do about it. If we drafted an ordinance against having open containers on municipal properties, that would be enforceable. Maybe the board should consider that. The village has an open container ordinance. Brian said our policy at the skatepark does prevent use of alcohol. The biggest problem is when people come into confrontation with other park users. That confrontation is something that can lead to enforcement. We can ask someone to leave and even issue a no trespassing order if they are belligerent with other park users. We can address behavior issues, so it doesn't matter so much about alcohol. We would require enforcement support with people who are not following rules, especially when they are belligerent and

making the park unusable for others. Eric said the sheriff's department cannot enforce policy, just ordinances. Brian said they can deal with someone trespassing on our property if they are not following our rules.

Casey said after conversation with many people, including Brian, the Skatepark Committee is confident that if they can make rules for the park that are not supported by an ordinance or official policy they can work issues out with stakeholders and they are confident they can turn the situation around.

Duncan said he is looking for a way to deal with the people who break the rules. He doesn't want to put Casey or Lisa or any town employee in the position of intervening with someone who has been drinking. He would suggest an ordinance saying there is no drinking on municipal property. Beth said we can add that to our list of potential things to work on but without a date to address it. It seems there is not an appetite for working on it now.

Casey said she is confident that if the Skatepark Committee can make rules and stand behind them the park will be fine.

15. Review and Planning for Pedestrian Bridge

Brian said many years ago there was a bridge across the Lamoille River between what is now Old Mill Park and the skatepark. Bobbi Rooney and Casey said the bridge was for snowmobiles only. Brian said there has long been interest, especially by the snowmobile community, in putting a bridge back there. The bridge could be used by snowmobiles in the winter and bikes in the summer. It could connect the rail trail with the bike terrain at the skatepark. There could be a loop system with trails in town and it would provide additional access to downtown for people who live near the skatepark. We are at the stage where we could go for a scoping study to answer technical questions about building a bridge. This is an opportunity for board members to ask questions that would not be answered by a scoping study.

Mark said his concern is that if we put in a pedestrian bridge people who are using the rail trail will not come to the village but will go to Jolley instead and the village will suffer. Beth asked, he is not in favor of a pedestrian bridge but would be in favor of a bridge for snowmobiles? Mark said he would be.

Duncan asked if there is a cost match. Casey said there is a bike/pedestrian grant available for scoping studies that LCPC would help with. The application is due in early June. If we got it we would have a 20% match, which would be about \$10-12K. The grant would be \$50-60K. Duncan said we don't have funds for the match in our current budget.

Bobbi asked, would this just be a pedestrian and bike bridge or would it be for snowmobiles also? Casey said she thinks it would be for all three. Bobbi said the snowmobile club is in full support if it helps snowmobiles. Eben asked if the snowmobile club could come up with the match. Bobbi said that would have to go to VAST. Lisa Crews said Rob Rodriguez sent an email with the specs for what the snowmobile club would require for a bridge.

There was discussion about where the old bridge used to be. Casey said a different location is being proposed for a new bridge. It would go between Old Mill Park and the river park parcel. Her belief from talking to landowners at the old location is that they want no part of a year-round bridge. The scoping study will give us all the facts and once we see the feasibility we can decide if we want to plan for a bridge. She showed on a map the proposed location of the bridge. Casey said a survey done in 2001 asked 2600 people about various uses. Over half the responses were households and the rest were stakeholder groups. Of those responding, 96% said they wanted a bridge between the parks. Today we have present and planned opportunities in a 5-mile loop that has Old Mill Park on one end and Johnson Hardware and Rental at the other end, with the rail trail and Route 15 forming the sides of the loop. The bridge would be good for rail trail visitors but she thinks it would be more for residents.

Casey asked about using ARPA funds for the match since there is not money in the budget. Eben said that is a community conversation. Eric said he is wondering if VAST would do this with us. Bobbi said she and Rob would have to talk to the VAST office. Eric said \$10K would be a pretty large amount of money for us to pay.

Duncan said the scoping study would answer questions about cost and basic design but he thinks a bridge that a groomer could get across would cost millions of dollars. The local match for a pedestrian bridge could be \$50-100K. Eben said he thinks it would be at least that much. Duncan asked where we are going to get the money to build a bridge.

Bobbi said if we had a brewery in the industrial park, employees who worked in Jeffersonville could ride their bikes to work and come across the bridge all summer long. She sees this as an asset to the community.

Lois Frey said when this bridge discussion came up a while back, Conservation Commission members had pretty strong opinions and good information about regulations that would affect the abutments. At that time there were real concerns about what it would take physically on the ground to put in a bridge as well as the cost for a bridge in that location. Casey said that this is what the scoping study would answer.

Eben said he conceptually agrees with the idea but we have the Holmes Meadow project that will change the path of the river. He thinks funding sources for this project would be a good thing for an economic development person to look into. He doesn't think we should do it now. Duncan said he would be happier about this idea if we had a source of match funds. Eric said he has the same reservations. He likes the idea in concept but it would cost too much money. Mark also agreed. He feels maybe we could pay a match of \$5K, but we won't find \$10K in our budget to spend. Duncan said if we like the concept maybe we could plan for it in our budget next year. These grants come up every year. Brian agreed. This is an annual program and waiting until next year would give us time to talk to VAST about cost sharing for the match. Eric said he could support putting \$5K towards the match in next year's budget. Duncan said he could too. Beth said maybe other programs that would benefit could help with the cost.

16. Proposed Grant Projects for Johnson Community Oven

Brian said the Bread Oven Committee would like to seek RiseVT and/or Green Mountain Fund grants to pay for upkeep and meals at the community oven. There is no local match. They have had both grants in the past. **Eben moved to authorize applying for RiseVT and Green Mountain Fund grants for Bread Oven Committee activities, Mark seconded and the motion was passed.**

17. Review and Selection of Audit Proposals

Eben said last time the board was wondering Rosemary's thoughts about the audit proposal that was received. Rosemary said the proposal looks good to her. She has talked to other towns who have used this company and they were very pleased with their performance. The cost seems very reasonable. **Duncan moved to accept the audit proposal as submitted from RHR Smith & Company, Eric seconded and the motion was passed.**

Brian said he has a meeting next week with Sarah Macy of VLCT. He will go over the document with her and ask questions so we can draw up a plan for audit preparation. Beth asked if Rosemary will be there. Brian said he will invite her. We will have the option of trying to prepare for the audit ourselves or using Sarah Macy to help.

18. Discussion of Next Steps for Economic Development

Brian had emailed the board the historic job description for the community and economic development coordinator and an updated description. Beth asked if we want to post an advertisement for this position or if we are still talking about how to handle economic development. Brian said he does not think we have settled on how to handle it. But what he took out of the last meeting was that the board wanted to see a job description whether we hire someone as an employee to do that work or fulfill some of the duties with a contract position.

Duncan said he thinks we should set aside a work session to discuss this sooner rather than later. Eric said if we decide to go with an employee he has some comments about how the job description might look different. Mark said his sense after listening to the discussion about the assessor job is that this should probably be a contract. Forty thousand dollars won't get us far. Maybe we can work with other towns. Forty thousand dollars might get us three days a week. Eric said when Lea Kilvadyova was hired she was looking for a part-time job. Maybe we could find someone else like that. Duncan said this seems like an opportunity to share with another town. Beth said she generally agrees that a contract position is more appropriate. Employees tend to get lots of things thrown at them. A contractor can focus more. Duncan said we were very much aware of that while Lea was here. Her job description talks about setting priorities. He agrees that is an issue we need to address but he thinks we can address it. Eric said if we are looking at a contract position he definitely doesn't want to see us contracting just to have someone write grants and administer them. We need someone with forward thinking who is finding opportunities we don't know are there, someone who can set programs up so they are ready for grants. Beth said she thinks there probably should be stronger language in the job description about visionary and forward thinking. Mark said there should also be something about familiarity with the Town of Johnson. Duncan said one thing that is a carryover from the original job description that he is not sure is as important now is the connection with the Johnson Planning Commission. At the time the original description was written they were pretty visionary and they came up with ideas for grant

proposals. Eric said in his suggested revisions he also crossed out references to the Planning Commission. They are not at a place where they can provide a lot of direction now. Duncan said he thinks this person should report directly to the selectboard. Mark asked, versus having them go through Brian? Duncan said yes.

Mark asked if the intention is to spend \$40K per year on this for perpetuity. Brian said the wording on the article was vague. Eric asked what a typical contract length is for this level of job. Brian said often the contract is renewed every year or every other year. Duncan said in the past the town has put the basic idea for the position out in an article and then after that incorporated it into the budget every year. Brian said we had left the wording a little vague in the article because we wanted it to be something that could be renewed but we were not sure if it would be. Eric said we also did not know how funding from the village would pan out. Duncan said we still don't.

Mark said he thinks a good person in this position will more than pay for themselves. Brian said he thinks over the lifetime of the position that is true but in any given year it is not as likely to be true.

Brian said he will come up with another draft job description using feedback from tonight. He will try to write it so we are not roped into a decision about whether to contract with someone or hire someone part-time.

19. Planning for Sheriff's Contract Renewal

Brian said the existing sheriff's department contract was included in the board packet. Eben asked if the sheriff has given proposed figures for contract renewal. Brian said he got the figures this morning. The dollar figures are the proposed amounts we put into the budget. *(Lois left at 9:11.)*

Beth said she reached out to Wolcott and Hyde Park. Wolcott has received their updated contract too. She hasn't heard back yet from Hyde Park. Kurt Klein from the Wolcott selectboard said they have been in touch with the sheriff's department with some blue sky ideas. Kurt is interested in sharing thoughts and specifics on this contract and future ones. We should probably update the contract but not this time around. This contract is due July 1. Beth asked Brian to provide copies for tonight so the board can discuss whether there any tweaks we would like to ask for.

Eric said in the past the sheriff used to go over the whole budget with all three towns. They met at the sheriff's office to review it. Brian said usually each board would send a representative or two. We could say that we would like to restart that process. Roger Marcoux would probably come to a selectboard meeting to present the budget if we wanted him to. Eric said the benefit of all towns meeting together is that we have more clout if we all three agree on something we want. Beth said she will ask the other chairs and if they are interested in having a meeting like that she will reach out to Roger and try to get it scheduled.

Mark asked, isn't Roger Marcoux one of the highest paid sheriffs in the state? Duncan said the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department as a whole has the highest revenue of any sheriff's

department in the state. Roger goes after a lot of grants and funding sources that other departments don't.

Duncan said he thinks we should push back on wanting enforcement for things like our speed limit ordinance and our ATV ordinance. If we are not getting that enforcement, should we pay less? He said he thinks Roger does a good job but he is going to retire someday and then we may not get the same service. Perhaps we should investigate other options and opportunities. Law enforcement is a large percentage of our budget.

Beth said she thinks we should continue dialog with our partners in the contract. Eric said another reason to continue those discussions is that Roger committed to having only a 3% increase for 3 years to give towns the opportunity to discuss options. He thinks we are in year two now. Brian said he thinks we might be in year three. Beth said July 1 we will be in year three.

20. Executive Session – Performance Evaluation of Jason Whitehill

Eric moved to go into executive session for performance evaluation of an employee as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), inviting Jason, Brian and Rosemary to remain, Eben seconded and the motion was passed at 9:25. The board consented out of executive session at 10:05 with no action taken.

21. Executive Session to Discuss Employee Performance

Duncan moved to go into executive session to discuss employee performance as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), Eben seconded and the motion was passed. Rosemary left. **The board entered executive session at 10:07.** The board consented out of executive session at 10:24.

22. Executive Session to Discuss the Lazar Tax Appeal

Duncan moved to find that it would be appropriate to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1) because discussion of this matter in open session would put the town at a disadvantage, Eben seconded and the motion was passed. Eben moved to go into in executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1), Eric seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 10:26. The board consented out of executive session at 10:33.

Eric moved to cease all discussion with Mike Lazar in reference to the tax assessment and direct all discussion through the town attorney, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.

23. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:36.