

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2022

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

**Others:** Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert, Kyle Nuse, Jeff Bickford, Sheriff Roger Marcoux, Greg Tatro, Scott Meyer, Margo Warden

**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 / Selectboard Issues & Concerns**

It was agreed to move the assessor and ARPA items to follow the sheriff's department item, to make the sheriff's department item first under Administrator's report, action items, and signature required items, and to add clarification on the social media policy as related to a requested posting for the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee.

**3. Review Invoices and Orders**

The board reviewed and discussed invoices and orders.

**4. Review and Approve Minutes of Meetings Past**

**Eric moved and Mark seconded to approve the minutes of October 12 and October 17, 2022 as presented.** Eben said the motion in item #21 in the October 17 minutes should be shown as being made by him, not by Eric. Duncan said he would like included in the October 17 minutes the comment he made regarding the salt truck issue that if the manufacturer was denying coverage under the warranty they should state in writing what was not covered and why it was not covered under the warranty. **The motion to approve the minutes with the suggested changes was passed.**

**5. Selectboard Issues/Concerns**

Eben asked if any bids have been submitted for the grader. Brian said he has none yet but the due date is not that close. We had some interest in the fuel RFP and got one bid. We have at least three applications for the highway operator position. The end date for the job posting was today. If the board agrees he intends to handle the application review process the way we used to do it, with him and the public works supervisor doing the first round of interviews and bringing final candidates to the selectboard for a decision. The board agreed to that approach. Mark said he would like to know the whereabouts of the new grader. Beth asked Brian to send out an email about it.

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

Rosemary said we got the settlement from Property Valuation & Review on the self storage suit and a new tax bill has been sent to Michael Lazar. They agreed with our settlement agreement.

There is an errors and omissions form to be approved. A property transfer was missed last year. A 27 acre lot was split into a 10 acre lot and a new 17 acre lot. The assessment for one owner went down and the assessment for the other owner went up. **Duncan moved to**

**approve the grand list errors and omissions as presented, Eric seconded and the motion was passed.**

Beth asked if there is any update on the reserve funds and how surplus can and cannot be applied. Brian said he will email out a written summary of all the reserve funds and the conditions for moving money into them. Regarding the current surpluses, he and Rosemary had more discussion and took the board's feedback about feeling that the tax anticipation fund was pretty healthy. They recommend possibly putting a little more into the budget to cover a couple of one-time expenses: a large format printer and scanner. Beth said she thinks that has to come after we understand the reserve funds and the allowances for putting money into them. Brian said he reviewed the prior legal opinion about how to apply surplus. A lot of that legal consultation was done via phone call so he does not have a detailed response. But the lawyer supported what has been our current practice for the last couple of years. We decide how we want to spend the money and we write it into a budget that is approved by the voters.

Mark asked if this is answering Walter Pomroy's concern. Brian said yes. Beth said Walter will not agree with it though, because voters are approving budget amounts but our position is that the budget gives us flexibility to use funds the way they need to be used to operate the town properly. Duncan said a legal opinion carries more weight than the opinion of a selectboard member or Walter Pomroy. To him the critical question is whether this board has the ability to propose putting surplus funds into a budget line item. Beth said she would like to see the findings Brian has and she agrees with getting a legal opinion after we see those. Can we do anything with rollover funds? Do they need to go into the voted budget and if so do they need to be specific or does the board have leniency on how to spend them as long as it falls within the purpose of the reserve? Duncan said he is not keen on the way it was done in the prior year because it makes it look like we are overspending on a line item. We used to take a specific proposal and attach that to the end of the budget and by approving the budget the voters were approving the proposed reservation of funds. He would be uncomfortable with a legal opinion that said the selectboard doesn't have the authority to deal with surplus funds. Beth said Brian should get the information he has out to the board and the board should discuss it before we ask our attorney anything.

Duncan said he doesn't want to lose track of the fact that we asked Rosemary and Brian to report back to us on a purchase order system. He would like that to stay on our agenda. Beth said we talked about that but she doesn't know that there was consensus that we needed to act on looking into it. Eben said he doesn't remember the board giving that instruction. Duncan said he would like to put that on an agenda for a future meeting.

**7. *Review Planned Purchases***

Brian said he spoke to a representative at Viking about the salt truck. Their position is that the issue was chiefly caused by improper maintenance. This equipment needed specialized maintenance that we were not conducting because we were not aware of it. So they are not covering it under warranty. They are aware of our feelings and they are willing to share some of the labor costs but they are not willing to cover it as warranty work. The public works supervisor recommends spending \$3,260 to repair the seized pin.

Beth asked, if we go ahead with that option, are we in a position to prevent this from happening again? Do we know and understand all maintenance for this vehicle going forward? Brian said yes. It will be a little inconvenient for us to do the maintenance.

Duncan asked what Jason's response was to Viking's position. Brian said Jason agreed that part of the maintenance needs to be raising and lowering the lift a dozen times when it is greased. We didn't do that because we didn't know that it should be part of the maintenance schedule. It was not in the manuals and was not mentioned anywhere, but that is the reason it failed. Eben said Allegiance also made that error because we sent this truck to them and they said they greased it properly. Maybe they need to share the cost due to their negligence. He feels it is a design flaw. Brian said he would be inclined to agree if it has such tight tolerances that it can rust and seize in this short period of time. He is displeased with the product.

Eben said he doesn't see on the invoice where there is any cost sharing. Brian said he can get a more detailed invoice that shows where Viking is sharing the cost. Beth asked if the invoice shows the final cost after their sharing. Brian said yes.

Eric said putting grease in is maintenance. Exercising the lift doesn't sound like maintenance to him but like operation. He is very troubled that this is less than a year old and they are not willing to stand behind their warranty. He would be very hesitant to support using Viking again with this knowledge. Brian agreed that next time we are outfitting a truck he would like to consider options other than Viking. Mark asked if we have a history of using them. Brian said yes.

Beth asked if anyone has talked to Allegiance about this. Brian said he has not.

Beth asked what is difficult about doing the maintenance. Brian said the chloride tank and the salt spreader prevent full extension of the hoist so we would have to take off whatever equipment is on the truck a few times a year.

Duncan said he would be very concerned about whether this is going to happen again. He has an issue with the idea that it is our fault because we didn't do maintenance we didn't know about because they did not provide information about the maintenance. Beth asked if we know we were not given that information. Brian said we can't prove we weren't but we have no evidence of receiving it.

Mark asked if in the discussion with Viking they said how often the maintenance has to be done. Brian said no, not in writing. Mark said they haven't told us how often to maintain it and if it fails they will say it is our fault no matter how often we have done it. Eben said he thinks it is a design flaw. He would be willing to see the breakdown of where Viking is sharing the cost with the town but he would be more interested in considering options to prevent this from happening again such as moving the cylinder or changing its pitch. Brian said one thing Jason believes will help with maintenance in the future is installing a couple of extra fittings in places where we know grease does not reach from existing fittings. Duncan said that if we did that it would probably void the warranty.

Eben said for now we could opt for the cheaper option of spending \$600 to bolt it down to use it for the plowing season until we have more information. The crew wants that done for plowing anyway so it will be more stable. Eric asked, if we are not using the lift and it was the cause of the problem, why not eliminate it? Duncan said he believes Jason said that was something that could be done. Eben suggested returning to this discussion on Wednesday when the selectboard meets with the trustees.

**Mark moved to authorize spending up to \$600 to secure the hoist to the bed on the salt truck if the public works crew is not able to perform that work, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.**

Brian said the gearbox on the blower for the tractor has worn out and needs to be replaced. They don't sell individual parts so the entire gearbox needs to be replaced. Eben asked what year it is. Brian said it is pretty new. The gearbox has a shorter warranty than the rest of the tractor. *(Roger Marcoux arrived at 7:08.)* **Eben moved to approve repair of the blower gearbox for the tractor and the motion was seconded and passed.**

8. ***Review FY24 Sheriff Department Budget and Town Request***

Roger Marcoux shared two versions of the sheriff's department budget, one with a 3% increase and one with an 8% increase that takes care of all costs. Beth said a 3% increase would mean there would be a deficit of a little over \$60,000 in operating costs, which in theory could be backfilled with other contract work. Avoiding that deficit would mean an 8% budget increase. Roger said he started with a budget that had a 3% increase just to see what it would look like. An 8% increase is needed to cover costs. The three towns can say they want 3% increases but there will be a point where the sheriff's department can't keep doing that anymore.

Duncan asked if Roger had an idea what would have to come out of the budget if all three towns said they only wanted a 3% increase. Roger said in the past they have not diminished services but have found savings in other areas like having their own fuel tanks. They take money from their administrative budget. There was a time when the sheriff's department was helping the state with things like motel security and supplementing with that money but he is working hard to keep the people he has and can't cut corners there. Two people are needed on most shifts now. Not having two people on a shift is as much of a factor as retirement in people leaving.

Mark asked why health insurance is shown as going down. Beth said they took the current year's health insurance numbers and applied them to the budget next year. They are always in arrears on insurance cost.

Roger said they are hoping they can be part of VMERS. If they can get a 20-year retirement benefit for staff in order to be competitive with other municipalities the cost for retirement will be less. Beth said for now they budgeted as if they would be paying the same for retirement.

Roger said the sheriff's department is fully staffed with patrol and with communications. Salaries are down somewhat, probably because there are a fair number of new hires.

Beth said if one town wanted to address the \$60K deficit differently from another town, we could do calculations to determine what percentage of that \$60K belongs to each town. Roger said that would be uncharted waters. Beth said we all sign independent contracts. Eric said a few years ago Wolcott wanted to reduce their police budget. Their share of the total amount is about 20%. If Hyde Park or Johnson had done the same thing that would have been big trouble. The sheriff's department would have to reduce services to communities that want to reduce their contribution. Mark said it is hard because there are so many fixed costs.

Beth asked Rosemary if we know what the cost to taxpayers would be if we went with an 8% increase. Rosemary said a penny raises about \$22K. Duncan said so the increase from 3% to 8% would be a little over a penny.

Beth said she has a lot of questions about the health insurance numbers. She thinks using arrears for projections will cause a problem. But she would be somewhat supportive of going with a higher percentage increase. She doesn't know that 8% is the right number but she would be more comfortable increasing cost a little this year because she thinks next year will be a bit of a shocker.

Eben asked if there is any thought of trying to do another 3-year contract, shooting for an annual increase of more like 5%, so towns can each budget for 3 years and the sheriff's department can catch up with patrol budgets. Roger said he is open to that. Beth said she thinks Wolcott and Hyde Park would be willing to discuss that possibility. Eric said inflation is a bigger unknown for the next 3 years than it was 3 years ago. Duncan asked about the concept of trying to tie the increase to CPI. Eben said he would only be supportive of that if it was tied to the previous year's CPI average over 12 months, so we could properly budget. Beth said she thinks we need to look at trends over a longer period of time. Eric said he thinks if the increase were tied to CPI we could budget. Beth said she would prefer something more trend-based than CPI-based.

Eben said he thinks 5% is very generous and would allow the sheriff's department to get caught up. Duncan said he is supportive of that in theory. He has concerns about going to the voters with an 8% increase. That is a lot to ask our taxpayers. Eric and Mark said they would entertain the idea of a 5% increase. Mark said he would even consider 8%. Eben said he would support 5% increases for 3 years if the other two towns would. He suggested there could be a rider saying that if inflation is above 10% for 2 years we could come back to the table. Roger asked what the board thinks about a 2-year contract because of the unknown aspect. He would be open to that discussion as well.

Beth said she will talk to the other two boards. Roger said he meets with Hyde Park on Wednesday. Is it okay to tell them what was discussed tonight? Beth said yes. She will probably email them tonight.

Eben noted that there is a 7% increase in the communications budget. Roger said he doesn't have it broken down into what each town will pay. We don't get the grand list until January after the budgets are already out. Each town's share is partly based on the grand list. (*Greg Tatro arrived at 7:41.*)

Roger said he is working with the 911 board. The state police are having a difficult time providing staffing to handle 911 calls. He proposed dedicating one LCSD call taker just to taking 911 calls and proposed that the state police pay that salary. Another thing going on is that the Department of Public Safety is saying they want to get out of dispatching for local fire, ambulance and police so they are working on setting up regional dispatches. (*Scott Meyer arrived at 7:42.*) There is a question of how much more LCSD can take on without having to add overhead.

Beth asked if we could get the expected communications cost for Johnson based on the current grand list values. She said we will likely pick this discussion up again at the second meeting in November. (*Roger left at 7:44.*)

**9. *Proposed Municipal Partnership for Assessor Services***

Duncan said a proposed agreement for assessor services was included in the packet. He thinks our cost is in the vicinity of \$25K. Hyde Park has approved a municipal partnership for assessor services. He hasn't heard if Wolcott approved it but indications were that they would. He is hoping to get authorization to have Beth sign the agreement. If all three communities agree and the LCPC board approves then each community will have to assign one person to represent their community.

Beth asked if Rosemary has any questions or concerns about the proposed partnership. Rosemary said no. She thinks it looks cheaper than what we are doing now.

**Eric moved to authorize the chair to sign the agreement between LCPC, Hyde Park, Johnson and Wolcott for assessor services, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.**

**10. *Continuing ARPA Discussion***

Brian said he tried to group together possible uses for ARPA funds discussed at the last meeting. He took out the ones we thought were not a good fit or were more village-related and tried to fit the rest into broad categories.

Beth asked if board members think there are any items we should remove from the list. Eben said he thinks assistance with renovating existing rental houses is probably a bad idea. We are going to have about \$600K. We have to whittle down the list and think of something that will have a long-term impact. Duncan said we should also consider the possibility of using ARPA funds to leverage other funds. Beth said the four possible uses that got the lowest number of votes were housing, transportation, offsetting annual law enforcement cost increases and capital investments to update and maintain buildings. Eben said he thinks updating and maintaining our buildings should definitely be considered. Duncan said he is not sure the law enforcement one should be removed. The board agreed that the medical transport and housing items can be removed. Duncan said he would not want to use ARPA

funds to pay for law enforcement except as a last resort. He is open to the idea of dedicating budget surplus to offset law enforcement costs.

Eric said this kind of money has never come to the town before. He doesn't think it should be used for something that would normally come out of the operating budget like law enforcement or building maintenance and updates. He thinks we should use the money on something that will bring fruit to the community such as the industrial park. If it increases our grand list the town will realize that benefit forever. He thinks we want to use the money very wisely to benefit the town in the long term, not just in the short term. Beth and Mark agreed. Mark said he wants to do something transformative and long-lasting. Eric said he wouldn't want to see ARPA funds used for things that could be paid for through other funding sources that are out there.

Beth asked if there is consensus to remove the law enforcement item from the list. Everyone but Duncan said yes. Duncan said he can go along with that.

Eben said he thinks updating and maintaining buildings should stay on the list because all the buildings the town owns fully or jointly have fallen into disrepair and he doesn't see the town catching up. There would be long-term gains because we would be protecting an asset of the taxpayers. If we put in a sprinkler system and replaced the permanent wall with a movable wall in the upstairs of the municipal building maybe we would not need to use the school anymore for town meeting. Duncan said Tasha Wallis indicated there is some ARPA money for energy efficiency improvements. Eben said he would be fully supportive of going after that but that is only potential at this point. Beth said she could see using ARPA money more for upgrades than for maintenance. She likes the idea of keeping this item on the list but she likes even more the idea of using the ARPA money to get other money. Eben said the Holcomb House keeps being discussed. He thinks we could easily spend a third of the ARPA money on that. He thinks using ARPA money to leverage grants is a great idea and increasing the grand list is a great idea.

Eric said this whole discussion would benefit if we had an economic development person on board right now. They would have answers about where there is money out there. Maybe we need to step back and get that person on board to help us with these discussions.

Brian said people have talked about wanting to spend all the ARPA money and not give any back. Having projects of different sizes will help us with that. If we have a small amount left at the end it will be nice if we have already looked into smaller projects.

Eben said we have money in our budget for economic development. Perhaps we could use some of that money to hire an ARPA expert.

Scott Meyer said this is a great list. He wishes the town could do all the things that are on the list but he has met people who used to live in Johnson and have left or who are ready to leave. He is hearing that it is because of high taxes and the lack of affordable single-family housing. The land bought for the industrial park is great land. He doesn't agree with using it for a light industrial park. What we need is single family homes and we have land. Building

homes there would put people back on the tax rolls and get people into town. He thinks we should look into affordable housing. The village is pretty dense and he doesn't see a lot more housing going in there. The town is sitting on a chunk of land that has remained vacant for a long time, maybe close to 10 years. We should think long-term about what people in Vermont need. People are skipping over Johnson because of taxes and the lack of single-family homes.

Mark suggested removing the walking bridge over the river from the list. The rest of the board agreed.

Beth said this needs to be put on the next agenda. She likes the idea of challenging ourselves to consider what Johnson needs the most.

Brian said VLCT has hired an ARPA expert. We can invite them to appear at a future meeting. Duncan said he has spoken to VLCT's ARPA expert. She is very sharp and practical. He thinks she would help in the winnowing process. Maybe we could use ARPA funds to help with the process of hiring an economic development person. Eric said we have money in our budget for that person that we haven't spent. Brian said we didn't spend the money because we had no proposals we thought were worth spending it on.

Mark asked what other towns are thinking of using ARPA money for. Brian said it runs a gamut. All are being told that the best use of the money is for transformative projects. That means different things to different towns. He doesn't think he has seen a trend that applies to us.

Beth asked what the purpose of VLCT's ARPA expert is. To be supportive? To generate ideas? To be a resource? Brian said to be a resource. Beth asked if we pay for her if we use her. Brian said he doesn't think so. He can get more information about what using her entails. Beth suggested that Brian find out the purpose of her role and how towns can use her in that role. She suggested that board members consider what Johnson needs most. She wants to have more conversation at the next meeting.

#### ***11. Beautification Committee Mission Statement***

Kyle Nuse said the Beautification Committee has approved a mission statement, contingent on selectboard approval. The proposed mission statement is: *The mission of the Johnson Beautification Committee is to work collaboratively to enhance the aesthetic quality of Johnson and promote public pride with flowers, art, and inclusive philanthropic opportunities.*

Eben asked what is meant by "inclusive philanthropic opportunities." Kyle said that means the mini-grants the committee gave out in the spring. They would like to continue that but they didn't want to limit themselves so they did not refer to that specifically. The process of applying is simple. That is how it is inclusive. She thinks the program was successful. Eben said the grants were not necessarily inclusive to everyone in town. They were for the village only. The grants were funded with town taxpayers' money but those outside the village were not included. Kyle said yes, the committee had to set parameters. There was no way they



could have opened the opportunity up to the whole town. That would have been logistically impossible and properties in the village are easily seen. That was important to them.

Margo Warden asked Kyle to give an example of something funded by a mini-grant. Kyle said the committee provided money for paint for the front of a private residence on Railroad Street, for a business to put a more attractive permanent roof over its garage, for the new cafe to put in flowers, and for flowers for the community oven. These were all things people could see.

Beth asked if visibility is part of the mission. She thinks she is with Eben on this. She understands the intent of the word “inclusive” but it can be interpreted in different ways and because it is a town committee she would be careful about using the word because it might be misinterpreted. If the intent is around highly visible areas she feels that should probably be part of the mission. Duncan suggested leaving out the word “inclusive.” Mark suggested leaving out everything after “public pride.” Eric suggested thinking about funding things outside the village limits. There is a lot of traffic on the rail trail, which is mostly outside the village. There might be a residence visible from the rail trail that could be spruced up. Board members agreed the mission statement could be amended by leaving off the part after “public pride” as the rest of the sentence just provides examples.

**Eric moved to adopt the Beautification Committee mission statement as amended by removing everything after “public pride” and the motion was seconded and passed.**

***12. Beautification Committee Railroad Street Bridge Request***

The Beautification Committee is asking to hang colored lights and plastic flags on the Railroad Street bridge. Kyle said the lights would be solar powered and the solar panels can be clipped to the top of the bridge.

Eben asked if the village would be installing the lights and flags. Kyle said there is \$500 in the village budget for the Beautification Committee that hasn't been used yet. The committee's thought was that maybe the money could go to the electric department for their labor and they could hang the decorations with their cherry picker. She heard from the village manager that Nate Brigham told him using the cherry picker would be very cumbersome for this job. She will be at their meeting next week to talk about this. Brian said we need to know more about what the village will be doing and what would be asked of the town public works crew before Jason can say whether the town crew has time for it.

Eric asked if we ran this through our insurance to see if there are any issues with having the decorations on the bridge. Brian said not yet. Eben said if the decorations are under 13 ft. 6 inches high there has to be more posting for vehicles crossing the bridge. Brian said it is our bridge so we have to show some support for the project in order for it to happen even if the village is going to do the work.

Eben said he wonders if something like this would be visually better on Pearl Street. It would be more visible.

**Mark moved and Eric seconded to approve the proposed Railroad Street bridge decoration project contingent on insurance coverage, the village agreeing to install and remove the flags and lights, and determination that the project is allowed by any applicable transportation codes.**

Kyle asked, if she goes to the village next week and they say they are not willing to do the work, then the whole plan is killed? Beth said then the Beautification Committee needs to come back to the board. Duncan said he thinks one issue for the village will be traffic control. Perhaps we could support the project by providing traffic control in order to help enable the village to do the work.

Scott Meyer said it is difficult to manipulate a bucket truck within a steel cage. They will need to use the whole bridge deck to swing their bucket left and right. The road might have to be closed completely. They are not allowed to have a bucket over traffic. It would almost be easier to do with harnesses and a rope than with a truck but he doesn't think anyone in the town or village is qualified for that work. Greg Tatro suggested a Johnson resident who can climb trees who might be able to do the work.

**The motion was passed with Eben opposed.**

**13. Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee Mission Statement**

The Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee had provided a mission statement for approval:

*The mission of the Johnson Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee is to encourage and support community diversity, and to disrupt and actively change the oppressive systems and policies that wrongly marginalize populations in our community.*

*We pledge to uphold our town and village's Inclusivity and Antiracism statements, and promote awareness by providing free educational opportunities, events, affirming public displays, and partnering with local and state diversity experts and organizations.*

*Our work is to educate ourselves and others about the impacts of racial inequality, power, privilege, and oppression in our community to continually seek justice, with the goal of cultivating equitable change in Johnson for generations to come.*

Eben said it is very long and a lot of it is examples. He thinks the first sentence is right to the point. Duncan said the last sentence also could be a mission statement itself. Mark suggested ending the second paragraph after "awareness." Jeff said there was some discussion about that among the RJSE Committee as well. He thinks that would still capture the intent and direction of where they wanted to go. His personal preference would be to keep the current wording in but if getting the statement approved means leaving that out he thinks that would be consistent with the committee's intent.

Margo Warden she said she thinks something like the Beautification Committee can have a concise mission statement. There have been questions around town about this committee. If

the mission statement can include steps and opportunities it eliminates questions. The mission of the Beautification Committee is clearer.

Beth questioned whether “by providing free educational opportunities, events, affirming public displays, and partnering with local and state diversity experts and organizations” restricts the committee too much. She thinks that could be removed and if the committee wanted to have annual or permanent goals they could address those things.

**Mark moved and Duncan seconded to accept the mission statement of the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee as amended by putting a period after “awareness” and eliminating the rest of the second paragraph.**

Scott said “disrupt and actively change the oppressive systems and policies that wrongly marginalize populations in our community” seems like a bit of a challenge. Is there a kinder way to put that so people in the community don't see it as a challenge? Margo said she sees that as a positive statement, not a negative statement. Jeff said it is consistent with the inclusivity statement on the wall downstairs. There was discussion about the word “reject” in that statement. Scott said he doesn't agree with the tone. Jeff said the committee would love to have him at its meetings to discuss this.

**The motion was passed.**

#### ***14. Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee Appointments***

Brian said two people have expressed interest in being appointed to the Racial Justice and Social Equity committee: Jackie Stanton, who has the support of the committee and who regularly attends its meetings, and Johna Keefe, who has served on a number of other committees. She is on the Beautification Committee. There are two open seats. Duncan asked if the openings were posted. Brian said yes.

Jeff read Sophia Berard's statement of support for Jackie. Sophia said Jackie has been a non-voting member of the committee since its formation. She has attended every meeting, a track record better than some voting members. She is adept at research and gathering data, keeping the committee informed about local events and inspiring many of the committee's motions. She is a devoted participant who has proven to be an integral part of the committee and a passionate community member dedicated to serving Johnson in our mission to create a more just and socially equitable town. The RJSE committee unanimously recommends Jackie's appointment to the committee. Jeff said Jackie puts a lot of work into the committee. Johna has not sent anything writing or appeared before the committee so the committee makes no recommendation one way or the other regarding her.

Mark asked how long these appointments are for. Beth said they are indefinite. Duncan asked if Jeff is saying the committee would like to be able to interview Johna. Jeff said that has been the committee's understanding of the normal process. That would be their preference.

**Mark moved to appoint Jackie Stanton to the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.**

Beth suggested posting the opening again and directing Johna to contact the committee.  
(Margo left at 8:53.)

**15. Social Media Policy and Request from Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee**

Brian said the RJSE Committee had forwarded a request to him to make a posting to social media. In its original form he thought it was clearly in violation of our social media policy. The committee revised it and then he sent it to the board so the board could discuss at this meeting whether we think it violates our policy or not. The committee is asking for clarification to help them in the future.

Brian read the proposed revised statement:

*In light of recent attacks on reproductive rights in courts and legislatures around the country, it is crucial to protect these rights for all. These attacks affect all pregnant persons' fundamental rights to access reproductive health and will have a disproportionately adverse impact on BIPOC and populations living in poverty.*

There is also a link to a National Institutes of Health article.

Jeff said the issue with the original statement was that it asked people to vote in a specific way. The committee wasn't thinking of the social media policy when they came up with it. In keeping with the committee's mission to educate they came up with this revision asking people to keep in mind as they vote the disproportionate impact on minorities and those with low socioeconomic status as demonstrated by the NIH.

Brian said the social media policy gives political postings as an example of inappropriate content. A call to vote a particular way is clearly political. A statement of belief is less clear.

Eben said it is a statement of belief. Certain people would be supported by the town putting it on the town's social media. If there was a similar item on a different topic, the question would not be whether you agree with it or not but whether it is appropriate for town social media to be the display case for the statement.

Eric said he thinks the town sponsored media outlets are there for relaying information on what is happening in town and things we are doing. He doesn't think the intent was to take on state or national issues.

Beth said the RJSE Committee has a mission statement that includes fighting against oppression and supporting communities that need additional support. She thinks our town channels and our selectboard statements are one thing. It is a different thing if we have a committee that has a mission statement and a statement they want to put out that supports their mission. She does think it needs to be worded in a way that connects it to the mission statement if something controversial is going to be put out there.

Scott asked if we have checked with VLCT. Brian said no. Scott asked, don't you think that might be a wise idea? Brian said he thinks at this stage it is a question of whether the statement complies with our policy, which is based on the VLCT model policy.

Beth said she thinks there is a difference between social media usage and a statement being made. We need to abide by our social media policy and also consider the ramifications of making a statement.

Greg Tatro said the vote on this is tomorrow. It might be a little unnecessary to create some bad will or controversy by posting this. He would recommend tabling it until the next meeting and see what the vote is on this issue. He thinks it will probably pass.

Jeff said he agrees that it will probably pass and it is the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. The committee still wanted to bring this forward as part of a larger question. A lot of the committee's mission could be taken as inherently political. The committee is hoping for clarification on the bigger picture for the future. They want to know where their guardrails are.

Beth said her personal opinion is that there is data that supports this statement. Referring to that data and the mission statement of the RJSE Committee is appropriate. She also wants to make sure we are protecting the town. She would like to make sure we are not stepping in something we can't step out of. She wants to support the committee in this. She suggested text saying that the committee supports the findings of whatever source is cited, then a statement. Jeff said he is hearing that there should be reference to the mission and fact-based findings – bringing information to light to help inform people rather than requesting that they vote a certain way.

Beth said she thinks that given the committee's role and mission it is probably appropriate for the committee to communicate directly with VLCT.

Duncan said he fundamentally agrees with what Beth said. He would like a statement that ends up on the town social media platform to be as neutral and fact-based as possible. Instead of “in light of recent attacks,” he would say “in light of recent actions.” He thinks “attacks” is political. Instead of saying “will have a disproportionately adverse impact,” would it be more appropriate to say something like “will likely have?” Beth said it could say “has historically had.” There is data supporting that.

Eric asked where it might lead in the future if we start down a slippery slope by taking on one very polarizing political issue. If we take any position like this it will be polarizing in the community. Half of the people will be happy and half will not be. He doesn't think that is the purpose of town social media. If the RJSE Committee had its own Facebook page it would be appropriate to post it there. This would be on the town page and would be seen as speaking for the town.

Eben said he agrees with Eric that it could be polarizing. Was there any study about how many people in Johnson will be affected? This is a Johnson committee. Jeff said the data is at a national level. The issue is statewide. People vote on a town-by-town basis so they wanted to bring forward education.

Beth asked, does the RJSE Committee need its own social media accounts? Jeff said he is wondering that. Eben said every committee could have its own Facebook page. Eric said the Historical Society and the Rec Committee do. Mark said they don't run their posts by the selectboard at all. Beth asked if Jeff thinks that is an appropriate solution. Jeff said he thinks that is something the committee can look at. He doesn't want to speak for the whole committee. Brian said the committee would still have to abide by the town social media policy. Jeff said the committee would not ask people to vote or think a certain way, just provide information they think is important on the issue. Brian said he thinks that is a good idea. He would encourage the committee still to message him or Beth or selectboard members for input on things they are thinking of posting.

Greg said he would like to see posts sound more friendly. He supports what the committee is doing but he hopes we can use friendly wording. There are going to be tough issues but he thinks there is a way to word a statement to invite people to want to learn more about it.

Brian said we will have to amend our policy if the committee is going to have its own social media account. Eben said we should reach out to the heads of all committees and ask if they want a social media account. Beth agreed. She said the committee should establish a link with VLCT and on divisive issues the committee should get feedback before posting.

Duncan asked if the committee would like the board to take any action tonight regarding this language. Jeff said he thinks the value of this discussion is to help the committee moving forward. He doesn't think the committee is still trying to get this out in front of people for tomorrow morning.

Brian asked what we are seeking from VLCT. Beth said if the committee comes back in the future with a statement they want to post we want to have VLCT help us navigate potential issues with the statement and let us know if we are putting ourselves in a position of any risk. But we don't have a statement yet.

#### ***16. Property and Casualty Insurance Quotes Update***

Brian said he had said at a previous meeting that he would be getting quotes from Hickok and Boardman but they emailed him and said they would not be able to provide the town with competitive quotes. Another firm, NFP, has expressed interest but we do not have quotes from them yet. (*Greg left at 9:20.*) Beth said NFP is not a carrier. They are a group of insurance agencies. They will use a comparative rater and get the same results Hickok and Boardman would get from Travelers and other big companies.

Eben said if we get a quote from PACIF, he is comfortable with that. Brian asked if the board wants PACIF to come and present or just send a written quote. Eben said he thinks we can move forward with any written quotes we have from PACIF or anyone else. The rest of the board agreed. Duncan said he would encourage looking carefully at the building schedule.

#### ***17. Review and Selection of Salt Contracts***

Brian said our options for a salt contract are Cargill or Compass. We went with Compass last year. Cargill has the state contract. (*Kyle left at 9:22.*) There is a very good chance that we will not actually need to use any salt except what we already have in stock. Beth asked if there are any delivery fees we are not seeing for either company. Brian said they both deliver

the same way. Beth asked, there are no additional charges when they deliver? Brian said no. He said the public works crew believes that if we have a normal winter we have enough salt in the shed now. Board members suggested that there is no harm in contracting with Compass even if we might not need to buy salt. Beth asked if it would be beneficial for us to cooperate with other towns to buy salt. Eric said that is what towns are doing with the Cargill state contract. **Eben moved and Eric seconded to accept the proposal from Compass Minerals for salt.** Eben said if we need salt he would encourage ordering it early. **The motion was passed.**

***18. Requested Address Change and Private Road Elimination***

Brian said residents who live on Weightman Farm Lane would like their address changed from Weightman Farm Lane to Dukes Road. Weightman Farm Lane appears to be a private road that is not on our schedule of roads.

Mark asked why we have any say on it. Duncan said for 911 purposes if there are two or more residents on a road it has to have a name. Brian said there is just one resident. Beth asked if they own more than one lot. Brian said there is a survey that proposes how to divide up their farm but he doesn't believe they actually did divide it up. That survey includes a proposed right-of-way road to access all the parcels that is not Weightman Farm Lane. He recommends eliminating Weightman Farm Lane and changing the address to Dukes Road.

**Mark moved and Eben seconded to change the address for the residence on Weightman Farm Lane to Dukes Road.**

Eric said when Rose was listed she probably named the road because she thought there could be two or more residents on that road.

Scott Meyer asked if the town is taking a private road and turning it into a town highway. Brian said no. The residents want the road eliminated. There is no public record of how this road was created so he at least wanted a public record that we are eliminating it. It was created around 2010.

Duncan asked if we are sure that no other parcel is served by this road and no one else has an address on it. Brian said no one else has an address on it and the two other lots connected to it both have frontage on Dukes Road. The current owners are trying to sell their property and they were surprised to learn what the address is. Beth said there are two parcels with two different owners. One is a house with frontage on Dukes Road and the other is just a parcel of land. The mailing addresses for both are in Morrisville.

**The motion was passed with Duncan abstaining.**

***19. Other Business***

The board agreed to schedule a meeting on ATV access on December 1 at 6:30.

***20. Adjourn***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*