

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2023

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

Others: Brian Story (remote), Rosemary Audibert, Jason Whitehill, Dean Locke, Kirsten Owen (remote), Lois Frey (remote), Jasmine Yuris, one other person

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

**1. Call to Order**

Beth called the meeting to order at 6:01.

**2. Additions, Changes to Agenda**

No changes to the agenda were needed.

**3. Review FY24 Town of Johnson Budget**

Eric suggested starting with a philosophical discussion about how we want to handle cash on hand. The way it is being presented is the way we did it the last year or two. A lot of the reason for that was not having a regular town meeting so voters had no opportunity to amend or change anything in the budget since they were voting by Australian ballot. This way probably has the least amount of transparency. In the past when we presented the budget to voters we went through it, highlighting any significant changes or new items, and we had the cash on hand displayed at the end of the budget. We informed voters that approving the budget would approve the proposals for using cash on hand. Some voters have expressed some concern in the past with not really having a say in how we deal with cash on hand or have brought up transparency issues. Another way we could do it would be by article. We could have an article saying we anticipate audited cash on hand in the amount of around \$205,000 and proposing in the article where it would applied – a certain amount to reducing taxes, a certain amount to various reserve funds. The voters would have the ability to amend that article. There would be great transparency. The drawback is that they have the say and some of our wishes on how we want to use the money might not be what they choose. He thinks the board should decide which approach we want to use. *(Mark arrived at 6:06.)*

Duncan said he is not in favor of applying the surplus as line items in the budget and showing the total amount of surplus as revenue coming in. That meets the goal of getting voter authorization but it does not give the voter any meaningful way to determine how the surplus will be used. He would be happy with either a special article or with applying a certain amount of surplus as a line item to reduce taxes, being very clear with voters how we propose to spend the remainder and asking for their authorization. He would still list it in the budget but not expense it out by line item and show it as revenue, except for the amount to reduce taxes.

Eben said he doesn't think our expected surplus from this year should be spent. That should be part of the audited fund balance for next year since it is not guaranteed until July 1. Duncan agreed.

Duncan said the current version of the budget applies \$125,000 of the surplus to reduce taxes and on line 23 shows the amount over that. But we would not want to show that line if we are

not expensing out those funds. The amount is shown as revenue and is being expensed out in three different lines. Eben said since it is money in, money out the revenue and expense lines could be zeroed out. Beth asked, if we do that and the amount is just applied to the bottom line budget, what does that look like? Eben said he thinks there would be a floor discussion on how voters want to apply the funds.

Beth asked, next year when we compare the budget to actuals how does it look if this amount is not in the budget? Duncan said it would not be in the budget, it would be in the reserve funds where it was applied.

Eric said we won't have an audited exact number until August. If the voters approve a certain amount to reduce taxes that money has to go there. The rest would go to the voters the following year as a question on the warning or proposal in the budget. Next year we will have a known number to present to the voters. Beth said we have a known number from this past year too. The difference is that we had a budgeted line to capture that. But the number the voters voted for last year doesn't match it exactly. Eric said last year was a little different than when we had town meeting because there was no opportunity for voters to make changes. He thinks we should be as transparent as possible. He suggests going back to the way we used to do it.

Duncan said his suggestion would be to wait until we have an audited figure and then transfer it into the reserve fund. Beth suggested maybe we could propose using a percentage of what is available and then if the audited amount is different from our estimate we use that percentage of the actual amount.

Duncan said it would be nice to have the flexibility as a board to apply part of the surplus to a large unexpected repair cost instead of taking it out of the budget. If we do it the way we are talking about we are pretty much committed to putting it in a reserve fund as planned. Beth said she does not like the idea of not specifying where we want the surplus to go and just having it be general funds. Eric said he thinks Duncan is right. If we had a standalone article the money would have to go where we said in the article it would go. If we show it at the end of the budget and say we plan to put certain percentages in certain places, we have control over the budget. Voters vote the total number and within the budget things can change and we have the authority to reallocate funds.

Mark said he is leaning in Eric's direction with a little caveat. With this kind of multi-million dollar budget, we need flexibility. It seems to him that we should have a line item in the budget for matching grants. He didn't see that. He suggests \$15K or \$20K. Eben said it is in there as one of the proposals for using cash on hand - \$4500 for matching grants. Mark said he would recommend more like \$15K or \$20K. Beth said if we did as Mark suggests we would need to reduce the amount we put in the buildings and grounds, reappraisal and capital equipment funds if the board sticks with using \$125K to reduce taxes.

Brian said we have received comments from the public that the way we had done it in previous years was not sufficiently transparent. This is an attempt to incorporate it into the budget to be more transparent. Having a separate article would reduce flexibility but would be the most transparent.

Mark said he thinks we should show it as we have in the past. That gives us flexibility. He thinks people trust us.

It was agreed to present the proposed uses of cash on hand at the end of the budget and to cut the proposed surplus amounts out of the individual line items where the board proposes to use the funds.

Eben, Duncan and Eric all agreed that the total available surplus should not include the expected current year surplus.

Eric said he thinks if we are going to an annual audit we can remove the year-to-date and projected final end of year columns from the budget spreadsheet. Beth said she disagrees. She thinks we do need to know our projected year end number when budgeting for the next year. Duncan said he thinks we can include it for our purposes but we don't need to display it in the budget in the town report. If we know our year end surplus on an ongoing basis that estimated year end figure becomes much less important. Beth said it depends on how you are using it. It is still important. She agrees that cash on hand will be less needed, but if we are really the stewards of our budget we had better be aware of projections for line items. Eric said he thinks Beth is right that we need to be conscious of where we are on each line item but we don't need to try to forecast what the estimated cash on hand will be. Beth agreed.

Excluding the estimated amount of surplus from this fiscal year, the total amount of surplus available is \$205,286.52. Board members made different suggestions for the percentage of the available funds to put in buildings and grounds, the reappraisal fund, the capital equipment fund and matching funds for grants.

Duncan said our CLA is down to 87% and 85% is when we get a letter telling us to begin the process of reappraisal. Rosemary asked if that happens at 85% or 75%. Duncan said it used to be 80% and he thinks it is 85% now. In either case we will soon need a reappraisal. Mark said he would argue that the state is aware of this and is aware that there are not enough people to do reappraisals. He thinks there will be leniency from the state. Eric said he agrees that the state will need to make adjustments but our reappraisal fund is so underfunded that maybe Eben's proposal to put a larger amount in that fund is good.

Beth asked Rosemary how we would handle allocating surplus for grant matching funds if we do not have a reserve fund for that. Rosemary asked, what happens to that money if there are no grants and we don't spend it? Eben said it would be cash on hand for the next budget. Beth suggested maybe we should add an article asking the voters to establish a reserve fund for grant money. Or we could add a line item into the budget for grant fund contingency and increase the amount to be raised by taxes by that amount. Eric said then it will be a permanent line item and we will decide each year how much to put in it. The board agreed to add a grant fund contingency line item. Eben said he thinks we need a reserve fund to be able to roll over surplus from the line item. It was agreed to add an article asking the voters to establish a grant contingency reserve fund to be funded by cash surplus or other sources such as donations. Eric suggested the reserve fund should be funded from a line item in the budget rather than from surplus. That way any future board can choose to fund it or not. Beth said she thinks this year

we have to put a line item in our budget to put funds toward grant matches as well as ask the voters for authorization to create a reserve fund.

Brian said the last of the petitions could come in after this meeting so the board will have to have at least a brief meeting after this. The board doesn't have to approve the budget tonight. It could be approved at the next meeting after the board sees the changes discussed tonight. Beth and Eric suggested finishing the budget tonight and asking Susan to check to make sure it is adding up correctly.

The board agreed to have an article for economic development rather than building it into the budget.

Eben suggested adding a line item for grant matching funds and putting \$500 of tax money, not surplus in it. The board agreed to that.

Beth suggested that in the grant match reserve fund article the allowed funding sources should be surplus, budget lines, other donations and endowments. Duncan said it is highly unlikely that we would ever get federal funds like the ARPA funds again that are allowed to be used as matching funds, but if that ever happens we might want that to be a possible funding source. Beth asked if we can include federal funds and grants as funding sources. Rosemary said not grants. Brian said a few other communities are asking about how to use ARPA in reserve funds. He can see what language they are using. Beth said we should include ARPA in our draft article and Brian can confirm that is a possibility as a funding source.

Duncan said he wants to make sure that the budget included in the town report is not the one that has the excavator in it. Eric said an excavator is a major piece of equipment. He thinks we are probably overdue to revisit the large equipment capital plan. When we update that plan is when we discuss what kinds of equipment we will get. We would have a cost benefit analysis presented and would make a decision then whether to include an excavator. If we include an excavator then we would build it into the reserve fund. In the past we have looked into the idea of getting an excavator and after looking at the cost of maintaining one versus using a contractor a prior board decided it would not be cost effective to get one. Maybe it would be now. At that time the board thought it there was more value in maintaining the backhoe because it could be used to substitute for the loader if the loader were out of commission. But discussion on this should take place when we develop the capital equipment plan.

Duncan said the plan is supposed to be updated every 5 years. Does anyone know where we are now in the cycle? Brian said we updated it around 2018 or 2019. Beth said we made some changes last year too. Duncan said there is a process for updating it. He believes there is supposed to be a public hearing on it prior to adopting it. It could be a warned item at a selectboard meeting. Eric said if it was last updated in 2018 it should be updated this year. We should expect a cost benefit analysis from Jason on an excavator.

Jason said he believes an excavator with a mower head and other items we want would be \$140,000. A Caterpillar backhoe the same as the one we have now would be \$157,500. A John Deere backhoe would be \$172,900. If we are going to get rid of the backhoe, the village has

expressed interest in buying us out of it. If we got an excavator with a mower then we would not need to rent a boom mower.

Duncan said we talked about moving the backhoe ahead one year. Eben said the cost Jason just gave for a backhoe is \$50K higher than what we had been predicting. An excavator has costs and benefits but if we were to stay with the plan to replace the backhoe, the amount for the backhoe in the plan is not accurate, which bothers him because the amount we were planning to take out of the reserve fund will not be enough.

Eric asked if the reserve fund information Brian provided has taken into account some of the numbers Jason just gave. Brian said no; we did not have those numbers when he drew up the spreadsheet. He will update it. Our costs will rise. Eric said we have to know those costs. We need to know how much to put in the reserve fund to keep the fund healthy. We may have to increase our allocation to the reserve fund. Eben said the price we can sell used equipment for will go up as well, but he doesn't know how much it will go up in proportion to the cost of new equipment. Some low points in the capital plan may go negative. Jason said prices at John Deere, Cat and Allegiance have all been going up about 5% quarterly. Eben said if we have up-to-date data he thinks it is important to get that entered. Brian agreed. Eric said our schedule shows that we propose to replace a tandem in 2025-26 and two tandems in 2026-27. The numbers we have in the schedule don't reflect the prices Jason is giving us. Our reserve fund may not be healthy enough. Beth said she does not think we should make changes to anything until we have updated numbers.

Duncan said we need to know the interest rate for the equipment note we would get and if it is higher than 2% we should be looking at the municipal loan fund as a possible funding source. Beth suggested that Brian and Rosemary meet this week to determine the amount we would need to borrow and the interest rate.

Beth said Howard Romero said Tuesday Night Live was net zero but we show revenue that is \$2,600 less than expenditures for TNL. Brian said he and Howard will be making a correction on that but they haven't yet been able to get together to discuss it. Beth said she thinks we need to make assumptions based on prior year actuals rather than waiting for Howard. It looks to her based on actuals like the town has been funding Tuesday Night Live but Rosemary says we haven't been. If Brian could correct that it would be good.

Beth recommended increasing Historical Society Tuesday Night Live revenue from \$5,000 to \$6,000 to more accurately reflect actual revenue over the past 3 years. Duncan suggested that someone contact the Historical Society and let them know that change is being made. Beth asked Brian to do that and to copy her.

Duncan said Brian updated the year end figure on paving to reflect the contracted price but if we look at what is being brought in from reserve funds, the amount set aside is more than the anticipated spending. There is still \$50K available for paving in addition to what this budget shows us spending. Do we want to enable more paving? Jason said he would like to do more paving. There are roads that could benefit.

Eben asked about just leaving the extra money in reserve instead of taking it out. Duncan said it is not in reserve. The board set it aside as a dedicated amount last year. Eben asked, unspent money for paving is just carried over year to year? There is no reserve fund for paving? It is strange that it doesn't become cash on hand. Beth said it is because it was dedicated for that purpose. Eben said we could say that about any line item He doesn't understand what makes this different. Eric said in terms of transparency to the taxpayers, it is very complicated, but it is most cost effective if we can combine two budgets. If we can do a project around June/July it can go across two budget cycles. Eben asked, did the voters vote to keep the money explicitly in that line item? (*Jasmine Yuris arrived at 7:48.*) Beth said she thinks we probably should have a place in the budget to show carried over funds. Duncan said the selectboard has the authority to dedicate funds outside of the reserve fund process. Eben said he doesn't know if we have the ability to randomly carry cash from a previous year without showing it anywhere. He thinks we should add it as revenue and expense. Duncan said he thinks it is adequately shown at the bottom of the budget. The board looked at the line where it is shown: 445 (Paving holdover.) Eben pointed out that the line is in a section with the heading "Reserve Funds included in FY22 Cash on Hand." But it is not a reserve fund. Duncan suggested that header could be "Treasurer's FY22 Estimated Cash on Hand."

Jason asked if the board wants him to talk to the paving contractor to see what additional paving we can get for \$50K. The board said yes.

Beth said we will not be making any more changes to the budget other than what was discussed tonight. Next time we go through the budget process she intends to be heavy-handed in letting committees, commissions and town groups know that wherever possible their budget should be net zero. She does not want to see revenue go down year after year.

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

Donna Griffiths said Casey Romero asked for a change to the January 5 minutes. She would like to change "Beth said the amount does not include ARPA, just planned expenses for grants applied for that the skatepark committee expects to receive" to remove the reference to grants the committee expects to receive as the money has already been received. She would like the sentence just to say that the skatepark budget does not assume any ARPA funds.

**Eben moved to approve the minutes of December 19, 2022 and January 5, 2023 with the requested change to the January 5 minutes, Mark seconded and the motion was passed with Eric abstaining as he was not at the December 19 meeting.**

**5. *Selectboard Issues/Concerns***

Mark urged the board to spend time on ARPA funds.

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

Rosemary said we spent 47% of budget for the first 6 months of the year. Mark asked if that is typical. Rosemary said yes. Taxes to date are 60% collected, which is close to the past two years.

Rosemary showed the board a list of delinquent taxes and asked for permission to take any over \$1,000 to the town attorney for collection. The board agreed. Beth asked if we do anything for those less than \$1,000. Rosemary said we send the same final notice to them.

**7. Public Works Supervisor/Highway Foreman Report**

Jason said this month the crew has primarily been working on winter maintenance. The Powerhouse Bridge sign will be installed tomorrow. The other two “no parking” signs for the rail trail and the Old Mill parking sign will be installed on Wednesday. We have used less than the usual amount of salt. The amount of sand used has been typical.

Jason said he got a quote to add an additional tank to the salt truck. The goal in adding this tank would be to save another 30% on salt by using more brine and less salt.

Duncan said he has had his brakes totally replaced twice in the last 2 years because they have rusted out. The bottom of his frame is getting more rusted. Mechanics tell him it is because of liquid chloride. He doesn't know if that is true. Jason said it is true. Magnesium chloride is more corrosive than the salt brine we are using. The brine the state uses has an agent in it that makes it stick to surfaces better. Ours doesn't. Ours just has the same effect as salt. Duncan said his point is that we may save money as a town but it may cost us more as car owners. But the state is using it and so are other towns.

Eben asked if the salt truck circuit was repaired under warranty. Jason said he thinks it will be because another town had the same problem but they have to look it over first before saying.

Eric asked, the additional tank will save salt because we will be adding more liquid? Jason said it would reduce the amount of granular salt used. Beth asked if it will reduce the surface area covered. She has noticed that the distribution of the brine from the salt truck is narrower than she would have thought it would be. She wonders what reducing the granular salt will mean in terms of width of distribution. Jason said we will see more liquid per mile. It will still be applied from the same place in the back but the track will be wider.

Eben suggested dealing with this under planned purchases.

Jason mentioned that he saw the new grader today at Milton Cat. Everything needed for it is there.

Jason said he wants to get an iPad or some type of tablet because he has been working with Rob Moore and there is an app for roads and grant work that Rob Moore would like to get more road foremen into using to record data electronically in the field so that they rely less on their memory.

Duncan said he would love to see us come up with a capital plan for paving based on conditional assessment. Would this help with that? Jason said that is something that is a personal goal of his. The program on the tablet is for MRGP compliance but there is nothing saying that a paving one couldn't be put on the tablet as well.

Duncan asked if Jason thinks the salt brine tank setup can be covered under the current year budget. Jason said yes. The winter supplies line item is getting close to budget but he thinks there is room in outside repairs and parts. Duncan said as a practical matter he would rather have Jason budget expenses where they properly belong even if it results in being over budget on that line item because that is more helpful for accurate budgeting going forward. Brian said

that is how we would typically handle it. He thinks Jason meant that one line item would go over budget and he would underspend on another item so in total the budget would balance. Beth said she agrees with Duncan that recording expenses as accurately as we can is great. But it is appropriate for Jason to move money around in the budget.

Mark asked when we are expecting to get the grader. Jason said he told the dealer that we prefer to get it on a day when the weather is good.

**8. Review Planned Purchases**

Brian said the tablet for public works will cost less than \$1,000 but he wants to bring it to the board's attention because buying it will also obligate us to an ongoing cost of about \$20 a month. But it will be a very useful tool for public works.

Brian said the library submitted requests for quotes for attic insulation to five different companies and only got one quote. Eben asked if the library's insulation expenditure will affect their ability to buy windows as they had discussed. Jasmine Yuris said no. They are applying for a grant they just learned about for the windows. She thinks \$16 million is available for Vermont libraries and one of the things the grants are available for is historic windows or doors. They are applying for funds for an ADA automatic door and for windows. If they do not get grant funding for windows they plan on purchasing them and holding onto them until they can be installed one by one with volunteer labor. **Eben moved and Mark seconded to approve the expenditure of \$3,300 for insulation at the library.** Mark asked if the library board has talked to Efficiency Vermont. Jasmine said yes, they have tried working with them, but Efficiency Vermont has a list of contractors that you must work with. She doesn't think it is realistic to work with them based on the library's experience. **The motion was passed.**

**Eben moved to authorize purchase of a tablet with a continuing \$20 per month expense for cellular data and to authorize purchase of the proposed salt truck upgrades for \$4,445, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.**

**9. Historical Society Weathervane Display**

Duncan said he thinks the best way to display the historical weathervane in the lobby would be to build a small cubical holder that the weathervane could stick into. He would volunteer to do the work. Eben said at our joint meeting the village approved displaying the weathervane. He doesn't know if they understood the size of it. **Eben moved and Eric seconded to approve displaying the historical weathervane at the municipal building as described.** Beth said she would just ask that we make sure things are accessible in that area. She has a little concern about the size. But she is in favor of the display. Mark suggested a plaque describing the weathervane would be a good idea. Duncan agreed that it would be nice to do something like that. Beth offered to pay for the plaque and help order it. **The motion was passed.**

**10. Ice Rink Improvements at Legion Field**

Brian said Dean has been working on solutions for ice rink issues brought up at the last meeting. He and Brian are looking at a few different options. He doesn't think the board can take action on it this season so we could come back to this later. Eben suggested coming back to it in May. *(Jason, Jasmine and one other attendee left at 8:25.)*

**11. Review Draft Town Meeting Warning**

The board reviewed the most recent town meeting warning draft. *(Dean left at 8:26.)*



It was agreed to add the word “estimated” in a second place in the budget article to make it clearer.

Eric said after seeing the board's policy from 2003 about allocations to nonprofits, he now has reservations about having Article 7. He doesn't think it is fair to all the nonprofits operating under our current policy if we separate their allocations into a separate article since the understanding they had when they submitted their requests was that after the first approval their allocations would be rolled into our budget each year. He doesn't want to separate them back out without warning them.

Eben said the policy says that the selectboard at their sole discretion may include these in the budget. Duncan said he thinks we need to read the whole policy. He agrees with Eric. If we had notified them in December that we were going to make this change that would be different but right now they have 3 days to solicit a petition to get their funding requests put in as an article. Eben said we would not require them to petition to have their requests included in Article 7. Duncan said no, but they could submit a petition for an individual article. That is the way it used to be done and it took a long time to get through all those articles.

Eric said when money is allocated to a group in our budget, voters are not able to do a line item elimination. This article could be amended to eliminate one of the groups or change all of the amounts given to the groups.

Beth said the policy refers to two ways funds can be given to groups: through submission of petitions or by inclusion as a line item in the budget. The selectboard putting a separate article in the warning for these is not one of the two ways mentioned.

Eben said a separate article gives the taxpayers the ability to decide on the funding. Eric said he is not saying it is a bad idea but he feels we should change the policy and present the change for next year. Mark agreed. Duncan asked if we should have an article asking the voters if they want to change the policy. Mark said no.

Eben said at least three members would like to remove Article 7 so it should be removed.

Duncan suggested adding bequests in addition to donations as a source of money for the Arboretum Reserve Fund. Eben said he thinks “unspent funds dedicated to the Town of Johnson Tree Board” should actually refer to a specific line item in the budget. Brian said his concern with specifying a particular line item is that right now there is just one line item for the Tree Board but in the future we might decide to break it out into multiple line items and then we would have to go back to the voters and ask for an amendment. If we just refer to any unspent funds that were already dedicated to the Tree Board he thinks we are covered.

Duncan asked if unspent means unspent from the line item or the difference between revenue and expense. Eben said he thinks it should be the difference between revenue and expense.

Eben said in the future if they have many line items and they are all inflated by 10% they could potentially have a lot of unspent funds. Beth said this just says that the reserve fund is allowed to be funded by those unspent funds. It doesn't say that all the funds have to go there.

It was agreed to add bequests as one of the potential funding sources.

It was agreed to insert an article similar to the Arboretum Reserve Fund article asking to establish a grant match fund reserve.

Proposed Articles 11 and 12 ask the voters if the town should be authorized to appoint the town clerk and town treasurer. Rosemary said an appointed town clerk or treasurer does not have to live in town. They are more of an employee. They have a job description and their wages and benefits are set by the town. Elected clerks have articles in the town meeting warning on their salary and benefits. An elected clerk or treasurer cannot be removed from office as they only report to the town residents. An appointed clerk or treasurer can be removed for cause.

Mark asked if we should put a date that this will take effect. Rosemary said it goes into effect 30 days after it is approved. Beth asked if Rosemary feels like now is the right time for this. Rosemary said she thinks two or three years from now would be a better time. Duncan said he thinks we need to involve Rosemary in the plan to take this to the voters. Beth asked if Rosemary feels the same way about the clerk position and the treasurer position. Rosemary said the treasurer needs to have more experience. That job is much harder. Beth said if this article were passed and the clerk and treasurer positions became appointed she is pretty sure the board would still want Rosemary to hold the positions. She asked if Rosemary feels we should hold off on changing both to appointed for 2 to 3 years. Rosemary said yes. It was agreed to remove those articles from the warning.

Duncan said we need to think about the ramifications for the village too. Rosemary said they are putting a similar article on the ballot for this April. They elect a clerk and treasurer each year.

Eric said we need to add an article allowing discussion of other business.

Duncan said the board had received an email from Kyle Nuse about an article for a gardener position. He checked with her to see if she was circulating a petition and she said no. She is requesting that the board include an article. He thinks we owe it to her to discuss it.

Eric said he doesn't support it. If the Beautification Committee is serious it is not that hard to get a petition out there and get the required number of signatures and then the voters can decide. Mark said he think she should do a petition. Eben said his mind is blown that we can't ask nonprofit organizations to put petitions together in 3 days but we can ask our own committee to do that. But he is not in support of the article. It was agreed not to add the requested article asking the voters to approve hiring a gardener.

It was agreed to meet to approve the warning on January 23 at 6:30.

## ***12. Review Website Hosting and Management Agreement***

Brian said our annual contract for website hosting and management is up. We have had good service with 3W Promotions. There was a little discussion at the joint meeting about possibly seeking out alternatives and upgrades to the site but the discussion was inconclusive. Eben asked if there is any cost change from last year. Brian said there is a minor increase. **Eben**

**moved to renew the website hosting and management agreement with 3W Promotions, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Duncan moved to approve payment of invoice #1793 from 3W Promotions in the amount of \$528.76 and the motion was seconded and passed.**

***13. Review Fire Service Contract***

Brian said the increase in the fire service contract cost is 3%. **Eben moved to authorize the chair to sign the fire service contract with the Village of Johnson, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.**

***14. Discuss Planning for Farewell Party for Eric Osgood***

Beth asked if other board members are supportive of a farewell party for Eric. Eben said he wants to know the cost. Eric asked, if we use Jenna's Promise is there any cost associated with that? Beth said she has talked to them and we have it booked for March 4. There was no mention of cost so she assumes there will be none.

Eben said he would like to ensure we are not extending gratitude to selectboard members beyond what we would do for employees. Eric asked if the town has paid for retirement parties for employees. Rosemary said yes. Duncan asked how much we have spent. Rosemary said we have given gifts of \$500.

**Mark moved and Duncan seconded to expend \$500 on a farewell party for Eric. The motion was passed with Eric abstaining.**

***15. Discussion and Potential Decision on Updating Light Industrial Park Mumley Proposal***

Duncan said he would like to accept the proposal from Mumley Engineering in concept and ask Brian to have Mumley prepare a contract for review and action by the board. He would like to see an additional scope of work to include an update to the construction cost estimates. He would also like to have a better understanding of the items Mumley said were not included in the scope of work, what cost might be associated with those items, and if in the engineer's professional opinion he thinks they will be needed. The board all agreed to this.

Brian said this was not a proposal submitted as a result of an RFP. We made a request to Mumley so we would have a better idea what cost we were looking at. If the board is comfortable with that we can proceed. Duncan said he is comfortable not circulating an RFP because this is an update to a proposal that we did solicit an RFP for. Eben asked, it is over \$10K, right? Brian said yes, but we can justify going with Mumley and not circulating an RFP because of the provisions in the procurement policy related to sole sources and expertise. He just wanted to make sure that the board was aware that we had not circulated an RFP.

***16. Jenna's Promise VCDP Grant Surety Agreement***

Brian shared the agreement drafted by our attorney to protect the town and VCDP in case Jenna's Promise fails to complete some grant requirements. VCDP agrees with this document. **Duncan moved to approve the grant surety agreement from Jenna Rae Tatro L3C, Mark seconded and the motion was passed.**

***17. Lease Agreement for Holcomb House Caretaker's Apartment***

Brian shared the updated lease agreement for the caretaker's apartment at Holcomb House. Beth asked if there are any changes beyond the monthly rent. Brian said there were a couple of minor updates to bring it in line with the lease agreement we had for the other apartment. No functional differences, just grammar, etc.

Duncan suggested we might want to remove Tom Carney as a listed contact person because he believes he is no longer a member of the Historical Society board. He thinks we should check with the Historical Society on that.

Eric asked if Donnie Garrett has been notified of the impending change so the rent increase can happen 60 days from tonight. Brian said he has been notified. The rent of \$525 per month will start in March, based on the date he was notified.

Beth suggested adding the municipal office phone number to the contact information and removing Donnie's name as he will not be his own contact, but then it was decided to leave the contact information as is so the contract will be the same for anyone we lease to. Board members are confident that Donnie knows who to contact.

It was noted that the header on the lease agreement refers to Apartment #1 but should say Apartment #2.

**Eben moved and Mark seconded to authorize Brian to sign the lease agreement for the Holcomb House caretaker's apartment as amended.** Mark noted a strange term in the lease: "demised premises." Beth said she thinks it is a typo. **The motion was passed.**

***18. Executive Session to Discuss Economic Development Contract Services***

**Eben moved to find that premature public disclosure of negotiations may place the town at a substantial disadvantage and, that being the case, to go into executive session to discuss economic development contract services as allowed by 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1), Mark seconded and the motion was passed at 9:22.** The board came out of executive session at 9:32. No action was taken.

Beth said she thinks we should reach out to economic development resources in our county and around the state and have some conversations so we can apply some of the funding we have in our budget for economic development. Duncan volunteered to reach out to Paul Costello, retired executive director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development. Beth asked if Brian can reach out to county level resources. He said he can reach out to LEDC, LCPC, VCRD and ACCD. Beth said she will reach out to our state legislators and see if they have suggestions for state resources. Maybe we can schedule a discussion in March or April. Mark said the legislature is really zeroing in on helping rural communities access grants through providing grants. Brian said Welch's office has been pretty generous with their time in the past too. Beth said the first step is to see who we can get for contacts. At the next regular meeting we can talk about setting a date for an economic development discussion.

***19. Adjourn***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*