

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023

Present: Selectboard members: Beth Foy, Duncan Hastings, Eben Patch, Shayne Spence, Mark Woodward (remote)

Others: Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert, Jason Whitehill, Lois Frey, Jeff Bickford, Sue Lovering, Noel Dodge, Jasmine Yuris, Denise Ashman, Kim Dunkley, GiGi Beach

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Beth called the meeting to order at 6:30.

2. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

Brian added approval of a letter of intent for the Municipal Grants in Aid Program for FY24.

Duncan added discussion of the purpose statement for the Johnson Rail Trail Advisory Committee, appointment of a town representative to the LCPC rail trail committee, and Marvin Awards nominations. Beth added a request regarding the Green Mountain Byway committee.

3. Review Invoices and Orders

Rosemary noted that the orders include the block grant funds that will come to us and that we will then need to disburse to Jenna's Promise.

4. Review and Approve Minutes

Duncan moved to approve the minutes of April 3, 2023, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.

5. Selectboard Issues/Concerns

Duncan said he saw in the minutes of the last village trustee board meeting reference to the trustees applying for grants and possible loans for their public works facility. That raises an issue for him because the town is 50% owner of that building. Potential funding they discussed included congressional earmarks through Sen. Welch's and Sen. Sanders's offices, the possibility of LCPC brownfields grants and the possibility of a loan or bond. He feels the town needs to be a party to any of those discussions because we are 50% owner, especially any discussion about brownfields assessment. He thinks such an assessment cannot just look at the village garage but would have to look at the full 15 acre parcel. Because the rail trail goes through the property the state probably also needs to be a party to any brownfield site discussions. The town could end up in a liability situation if any brownfield issues are not handled right.

Brian said he heard from Rob Moore of LCPC, who is assisting the village with the garage project. He would like to have a meeting with representatives from the village and the town to discuss the village's plans because the property is jointly owned.

Shayne asked if it is too late to add this discussion item to the joint meeting agenda. Brian said no. Beth said she thinks we need to formally send something to the village about our concerns. She would be happy to send an email to the chair and vice chair. She would like Rob Moore to reach out to her or Brian can facilitate connecting her with Rob. She would just as soon have Duncan talk to Rob because he is probably more knowledgeable about this topic but she would be happy to be there too. The board agreed that Duncan can speak with Rob on behalf of the

board. Beth asked Brian to add this to the joint meeting agenda. If Rob can attend that joint meeting it would probably be beneficial.

Duncan said he thinks LCPC was approached by the village to assist with the process of submitting a funding request to Sen. Welch's office and in that context LCPC is referred to as local administrator of brownfields funds. Brian said he believes the village is also working with Victoria Hellwig at LCPC, who is an expert on Buildings and Grounds grants. Duncan said that is another big issue. Each board should know what the other one is going to do with regard to those grants. We should be thinking globally about the best way to apply for and use those funds. Beth said the joint meeting agenda should probably include potential modifications to the MOU in case the conversation leads to a desire for changes.

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

Rosemary said expenditures to date are 63.05% of budget. Soon she should get a true-up from the state for school taxes, which will either reduce or increase the revenue. We got the final state aid for highways payment. It just arrived today and is not reflected in the budget status report. Current year taxes are 80.79% collected to date.

Duncan moved to approve the Class 2 liquor license application from Vermont Maple Sugar Company (Butternut Mountain Farms store) and the motion was seconded and passed. Eben said he wants to make sure the standard letter is sent.

Rosemary said she has a resolution the board can approve in order to open an account with Community National Bank. It authorizes Susan and Rosemary to be authorized signers on the account. **Eben moved to approve the bank resolution necessary to open an account with Community National Bank and to authorize the chair to sign it on behalf of the selectboard. The motion was seconded.**

Mark asked, this is the higher interest account? Rosemary said yes. It has an interest rate of 3.75% vs. less than 1% in our current account. Mark said there are savings accounts available that give over 5% interest. He wonders if the board might want to consider other places we can put the money to increase savings. Beth asked where else Rosemary looked. Rosemary said she was trying to keep it local. She noted that we don't have to keep all the money in one place.

Mark said he thinks we could put half a million dollars in higher interest accounts and still be pretty conservative. We would not want to put more than the FDIC insured amount in one account but he would recommend that we put a substantial amount in an interest bearing account.

The motion was passed.

Duncan said he is willing to entertain the possibility of finding an account that has even higher interest rates. Shayne said we can put the money in this account for now and keep looking around for something else. Duncan agreed. Shayne said he does like keeping things in the local area. Duncan said he agrees in concept but with banks he doesn't know if that means the money is staying in the community. Mark said he thinks it depends on how much it costs us to keep it local. If it means tens of thousands of dollars of lost income we should really ponder that.

7. Public Works Supervisor/Highway Foreman Report

Jason said the public works crew completed replacing the backhoe pins and bushings and they are finishing up the tilt bucket now. They have started spring/summer maintenance. The grader has been out with the york rake and the claw on the tractor. Jacob and David completed their OSHA training. The trucks will need to go for spring maintenance and state inspections. We used 4,895 tons of winter sand and 298 tons of salt. (*Noel Dodge arrived at 7:02.*) The crew has welding training starting tomorrow, roadside safety training next week and MSHA training on May 15.

8. Review Planned Purchases

Jason said he got two price-per-foot quotes on culverts. Johnson Farm and Garden has the better price and that includes delivery to the town yard.

It was agreed to add expenditure for inspections and planned maintenance to the planned purchases to be approved by the board. (*Kim Dunkley arrived at 7:06.*)

Jason said he would like to buy \$20,000 worth of gravel and stone to use on Upper French Hill, Foote Brook and Plot Roads for regular maintenance. It is within his budget. He has a budget of \$40,000 for this. Duncan said some of those roads are showing ledge at some points.

Jason got a quote for the additional paving we are requesting from Pike. He wants to extend the pavement on Sinclair Road. Duncan asked if he feels he got everything done that he was hoping to accomplish on Clay Hill with last year's bid. Jason said yes. Duncan asked, we can get a bill for some of the paving before July 1 and not pay for some of it until after July 1? Jason said when he talked to Pike they said that would be fine.

Duncan asked, if the paving company is going to be here anyway is there anything else we should have them do so that we can spend the remaining \$60K we have available? Eben said if we spend all of that it puts a lot of strain on the tax anticipation reserve fund. (*Denise Ashman arrived at 7:19.*) Jason said he would like to save the \$60K in case something happens during the year and we have to fix something. He would like to see that buffer. Duncan said we get more bang for the buck by having more paving done at one time rather than two separate times when we have to pay two separate mobilization charges.

Jason said the crew brought in 15 loads of salt and it is all in the salt shed. He wanted to buy salt now so we can still stay within budget if prices go up again. Brian said previously a concern had been brought up about salt possibly dissolving while being stored but that has not been a problem. Jason agreed that since the salt shed was fixed it has been fine.

Brian said the baseball fields need some maintenance. Greg Fatigate has done this in the past. He is familiar with the needs. The Recreation Committee would like to use him again. Jason said in the past the Rec Committee has bought topsoil to use for this. But this past year the road crew saved topsoil from projects they did. They will screen it and it can be used on the fields.

Eben moved to approve spending \$1,230 for baseball field maintenance; \$101,991 for extended paving; up to \$15,000 for culverts; \$5,065.77 for planned maintenance and state inspections for town trucks; and \$20,000 for stockpiling gravel, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.

Eben pointed out that the extended paving on a Class 3 road reduces ATV access under our current ordinance because ATVs are not allowed on paved roads.

9. *Guidance for Committees Seeking Public Works Assistance*

Beth said we often have a lot of requests for public works time, energy, equipment, and materials. There are often conflicts in expectations of what public works can and should be doing and the timing of committee requests. It puts public works in an uncomfortable spot at times. This agenda item is to talk about what the selectboard wishes to see when it comes to requests for public works time and whether we want to establish a process. Do we want to create guidelines for Jason and for people who are requesting public works assistance?

Mark asked if we have had issues with the current process. Beth said she thinks we have had some. For instance, in the fall the public works crew needed to work on getting a project done to meet a grant deadline but we also had a request from the Beautification Committee to do some work for them.

Duncan asked if Beth has any thoughts about what the guidance should look like. Beth said she thinks we should have something in place that suggests that anything more than about a 5-minute call should probably come to the board so the board can decide whether Jason should spend his time on it. There could also be liability issues for the board to consider.

Jason said he doesn't have a problem with anything. He reached out to get clarity. Back in the fall when the public works crew was hanging lights on the bridge some issues arose that put him in an uncomfortable position. It would have been nice if he could have had a clearer plan. Recently he was doing work at the arboretum that he thought he was supposed to do and then he found out that the board did not want him to do as much work as he was doing. Clearer instructions for him would be helpful.

Eben said he would like to have the time sheets redone so that the public works crew can track how many hours they spend doing work for the skatepark, the town forest, etc. He thinks we owe it to the taxpayers to let them know how the crew is using their time. Shayne asked if Eben is saying we should set up budget of committee hours. Eben said that was what he proposed but it was not approved by the rest of the board. He is just suggesting keeping track on time cards. For instance we could have a skatepark category on the time cards so we would get a better idea where hours were being spent over the course of the year. Eben said he thinks it is nice to have Jason involved in the planning process for committee projects but he doesn't think he should be pricing out supplies needed for projects. And when the committee wants his time he thinks the request should come to the board.

Shayne said he likes the idea of budgeting a certain number of hours. He would want a better idea what a good number would be. Most committees might not have someone who is able to do pricing. Jason does this every day. He thinks it makes sense to have him involved for things like that as long as we can keep track of the time and not let it get out of hand. It would be great to have people fill out a form when they want to request public works time.

Beth said she doesn't want to micromanage Jason. She feels like he can make a judgment call about whether something that is requested will get in the way of other work. If he needs

assistance he should have the support of the board. But setting expectations matters. He should know what the boundaries are for that support. A good example is the baseball fields. Jason said he had already put soil aside to be used on the fields. That is great. But he has to screen it. Should the board be involved in telling him he can screen the soil?

Jason said there are times he does something for a committee and then there is backlash from the board and the committee gets fired up. (*GiGi Beach arrived at 7:40.*) He is good with having requests from committees on paper so a certain amount of public works time is pre-authorized. Beth asked if he could suggest a cap on the number of hours he should spend helping a committee before the request should come to the board. Jason said he thinks 2 to 3 hours a week would be normal and nothing the board needs to worry about but if it was 10 or 15 hours then the board might want to be involved. Pricing materials and doing background work before a project can even start can take a lot of time.

Duncan said his primary concern is whether a request from a committee is going to interrupt something Jason is already involved in. He thinks Jason should have authority to say that he can't do something right now but maybe could do it next week. Jason is a supervisor and should have latitude to decide if there is time in his schedule. It may require him sometimes to say no and tell the person to go to the selectboard and see if the selectboard wants him to do something else. He is not sure we can set a maximum number of hours before a request needs to come to the selectboard. A lot depends on the time of year and what else the crew is working on.

Mark said he agrees. He thinks Jason can make these decisions by himself. It seems like he works well with committees currently.

Shayne asked for clarification about the Tree Board situation. It sounds like Jason pursued some work and then got backlash from the board. Jason said he was working on a project and then he was informed he should not dedicate so much time to that project and that the Tree Board was supposed to be dedicating more of their time. But they might not have the means or the know-how to price out materials. If the board is okay with leaving it up to him what to do that is fine.

Shayne said he likes trusting Jason. He also doesn't like putting him in the position of being caught between two sides. We could just trust Jason and ask him to come to the board if he feels something crosses a threshold or we could create a form for committees to submit indicating how much time they think a project will take and let the board decide whether to pass it on to Jason.

Jeff Bickford said it would also be helpful to let committees know the expectations with regard to requests for public works assistance – that requests can interfere with the flow of other work and that it is at Jason's discretion whether to do something that is requested.

Kim Dunkley said she likes Shayne's idea of a form for committees to fill out with a timeline and hours. Then Jason can look at it and say whether it is something he feels he can do.

Sue Lovering said Jason explained to the Tree Board what he could do for them. He was happy to help. He told them when he could do it. There was no problem until the issue came up that he described.

Beth said she thinks the selectboard should set expectations with committees as Jeff suggested. She could draft an expectation document.

Jason said a form would be helpful to know the hours the committee is wanting and the project scope and then he can add the dollar amounts for material. Brian suggested maybe the form would be something Jason would fill out with the committee when he first meets with them. It might be hard for them to know in advance what to put on the form. They could decide together with Jason what the request actually is.

Beth said Jason will have to hold everyone accountable and we will have to hold him accountable to make sure that the forms are filled out.

Eben said the Conservation Commission has been asking to be advised of projects. The Conservation Commission notification form could be added to this form.

Beth said she wants to return to this at a future meeting. She wants to work with Jason on what he wants on the form and talk to him about expectations. (*Jasmine Yuris arrived at 7:52. Jason left at 7:52.*)

10. Field Days Noise Waiver Request

Duncan moved to approve the noise ordinance waiver request for Field Days on July 21, 22 and 23, 2023, Eben seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Lamoille FiberNet Appointments

Brian said Charlotte Reber is stepping down from the Lamoille FiberNet board. Paul Warden is willing to take her place as voting representative. Jeff Bickford is interested in being an alternate. **Eben moved to accept Charlotte Reber's resignation from the Lamoille FiberNet board and to send her a thank you card and to appoint Paul Warden as Lamoille FiberNet representative and Jeff Bickford as alternate.** Duncan asked if our policy says we are supposed to post a notice of the vacancy. Brian said we did post a notice. **The motion was passed.**

12. Library Insulation Update

The selectboard had approved the library to engage with NP Foam for \$3,300. The estimate has drastically changed after another site inspection and is now coming back at \$20,472. The library has room in their budget to accommodate the change, although it will delay some of the other planned maintenance.

Eben asked where they are cutting to make this expense possible. Jasmine Yuris said they have a substantial amount of donations that they keep in a checking account that they have saved as a rainy day fund. This is the rainy day. Eben asked, it is not a town fund? Duncan asked who has control over the checkbook. Jasmine said library board treasurer Stacey Waterman. Duncan said the library is a town entity. Is it not true that the town treasurer is legally responsible for any and all funds associated with it, including such a separate checkbook? Rosemary said the library has their own money in separate accounts. They have investment funds that she has no control over. Beth said the question is, if Rosemary is the town treasurer does she have authority over any town entity like the library? Rosemary said she does not think the library is included in our federal ID number. Duncan said that is part of his concern. They should be. He thinks she is legally responsible. If someone is donating funds to the Johnson library, are they donating it to

the town entity? In the past, town entities had separate checking accounts and those were all drawn in under the control of the town treasurer. He thinks Rosemary was told all money should have the same federal ID number. Eben asked, if someone were to bequeath funds to the library, that would not go to Rosemary? It would be put into this account? Jasmine said the account is partly donations and partly grants received by the library. Stacey Waterman knows more about it.

Beth said Rosemary probably needs to do research on this. We need to have this as a follow-up agenda item and invite Stacey. She asked if Rosemary can do some research. Duncan said maybe the library board set up a 501(c)(3) friends of the library organization. Rosemary said the endowment funds may be handled that way.

Duncan said he thought he saw insulation in the grant application. But if the library spends money now on insulation it won't be a reimbursable grant expense, will it? Jasmine said she isn't sure. Duncan said he is pretty sure it is not. If there is a possibility of getting a grant that will pay for insulation he would rather have the grant pay for it. Jasmine said there is a long list of things the library board put in the grant application. The reality of getting this done is a lot better if it is done now than if they wait. The insulation company is willing to come immediately after the library gets selectboard approval. The library board wants to check this off their list. Of the total cost, \$7,500 would come from their budget and \$12,000 would come from the grants and donations fund. Beth said the grant won't reimburse for work that has already been done. Are there enough other things on the list to put the grant money toward? Jasmine said yes.

Duncan asked if the library board is proposing to spend money from the current fiscal year budget or the upcoming year's budget. Jasmine said the current year.

Duncan asked if she knows when they will hear back about the grant. Jasmine said she thinks not until late this year or early 2024.

Eben asked about the windows the library had wanted money for. Jasmine said they are included in the grant application.

Eben moved to approve the library to spend up to \$7,500 on spray foam insulation out of its operating budget and to approve expenditure of the remaining \$12,972 of the cost as long as it does not come out of the operating budget, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.

13. Library Grant Application

Information about the grant the library is applying for was included in the packet for this meeting.

Eben moved to authorize the library board to apply for a Vermont Department of Libraries' Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grant. He requested that if the grant is awarded the funds come through the town treasurer. Duncan said he agrees with that conceptually. The library trustees are a little different from other committees. They have an elected board of trustees. There are two state statutes addressing two different categories of libraries. Ours doesn't fall neatly into either category. In both scenarios the library trustees have authority to manage the affairs of the library. In general terms that has been thought to include

managing the budget, the building and the employees. He thinks that is properly in the hands of the library board of trustees. **Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.** (*Jasmine left at 8:15.*)

14. Rail Trail Advisory Committee Purpose Statement

The board reviewed the proposed Rail Trail Advisory Committee Purpose Statement drafted by Duncan. **Duncan moved and Eben seconded to approve the following Rail Trail Advisory Committee Purpose Statement:**

The role of the Johnson Rail Trail Advisory Committee is envisioned by the Selectboard as a limited term Committee whose purpose is to evaluate the benefits and impacts of the opening of all segments of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and provide advice to the Johnson Selectboard in the following areas:

The expected range of benefits that might accrue to the Johnson Community with the full opening of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.

Specific actions/recommendations for consideration of the Johnson Selectboard to enhance or facilitate the positive benefits that might accrue.

Specific actions/recommendations for consideration by the private sector which would enhance or facilitate the positive benefits that might accrue.

Specific actions/recommendations to regional or state entities which would enhance or facilitate the positive benefits that might accrue.

This purpose statement may be reviewed by the Committee and proposed changes submitted to the Johnson Selectboard for consideration.

The motion was passed.

15. Appointment of Representative to LCPC Rail Trail Committee

Duncan suggested that we ask the town Rail Trail Advisory Committee to make a recommendation to the selectboard for an appointment to the LCPC rail trail committee. Beth said they don't have a chair yet. She will go to their first meeting on Wednesday to start it off. Regarding the question of whether we should post asking for a volunteer or limit it to committee members, Beth wants to see what the committee says. It doesn't make sense to her to have someone outside the committee serving in this position. Brian agreed but said our policy says we will post the opening. Duncan said he has no problem with posting it. We can choose who we want to be on the committee.

16. Request Regarding Green Mountain Byway Committee

Beth said she got an email forwarded by Kyle Nuse. The Green Mountain Byway Committee is looking to recruit members from its represented towns. They now have members from some towns and they want members from all of them. Brian said Johnson Works has been representing Johnson on the committee for several years. Beth said in that case we don't need to worry about it.

17. Beautification Committee Mini-Grant Disbursement Approval

Eben said the Beautification Committee is proposing to give money to the Historical Society but he doesn't think one committee should give money to another committee. Beth disagreed. If the

Historical Society is committed to planting and maintaining flowers, why would we not let the Beautification Committee use their budget for this purpose? Eben asked, why not just increase the Historical Society's budget rather than have the Beautification Committee give them money? Shayne said because they might not use it for planting flowers. Eben said moving money from committee to committee doesn't sit right by him. Mark said it sits fine with him.

Duncan moved to accept the Beautification Committee's recommendation with regard to allocating mini-grant funds, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed with Eben opposed.

18. Conservation Commission Grant Application and “Bee the Change” Project

Lois Frey said she believes the board previously approved the Conservation Commission applying for a Tiny Grant from the Association of Conservation Commissions. This agenda item is to endorse it. **Eben moved to ratify approval of the Conservation Commission’s application for a Tiny Grant from the Association of Conservation Commissions, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.**

Denise Ashman said the Conservation Commission would like to create a native wildflower garden to support pollinators at no cost to the town through working with an organization called Bee the Change, which will provide seeds and site preparation. They have placed these gardens in over 30 towns in Vermont. The nearest is in Hyde Park. Casey Romero and Dean Locke are both in support of the plan. Duncan asked, this would be placed on town-owned property? Denise said yes. Native wildflower gardens are popular in education. This would support teachers, students and summer programs and it would be appealing to visitors, tourists, photographers, and artists. And most importantly, it would support pollinators. No grant is involved. Bee the Change is donating all the supplies and labor. We will not spend any money. The garden will cover about an acre of the roughly 1.8 acres across the street from the skatepark.

Duncan moved to approve use of town property for a pollinator garden as proposed, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.

Denise asked, if Bee the Change asks if they can park their disc harrow overnight at the site, does the Conservation Commission need to come to the board? Who do they need to ask? Beth said she might prefer that they park at the municipal building, where there is light and monitoring. Duncan said he has no issue with them parking it at the site but he agrees that it would be safer here.

19. Letters of Support for Small Business Grant Requests

Brian said we have received two requests to issue letters of support for applications to the Community Recovery and Resilience Program for local businesses owned by GiGi Beach and BJ Putvain. We previously received a similar request from Andrew Mink, which was approved.

Duncan said he particularly likes GiGi's description of how her project complements the rail trail. It seems to him that we may get more of these requests. He suggests developing a standard form letter the town can send to support any application that meets the program criteria. GiGi said she has a draft letter. Brian said we don't have a standard letter but we have other support letters he can base it on. Shayne said he would want to be consistent with previous letters.

Eben moved and Shayne seconded to approve sending letters of support for the Community Recovery and Resilience Program grant applications by BJ Putvain and GiGi Beach, with the letters based on a template created by Duncan and Brian that can be used in the future for similar letters of support

Mark said he abstained from the vote on the previous letter of support and he will abstain from this one. He doesn't see where these grants particularly benefit the town. They just support private businesses.

GiGi said she thinks it is similar to supporting people in town who have Airbnbs in order to draw rail trail users. That is also a private business. She is attempting to help rail trail users feel welcome. We can support them so they can come into town and enjoy the town. Duncan said he understands what Mark is saying. He has somewhat of the same concern. His own belief is that we should not support any one particular business proposal or business plan, but he is okay with offering a letter of support and allowing any business to make their argument in their grant application. He doesn't think we need to say anything that indicates we support the business but he is fine with supporting the application. Mark said he doesn't see how that is different. If we issue a letter of support it is inherent that we support what the application is for. He doesn't see these applications as particularly beneficial to the town.

Beth said she also tends to be on the side of caution about private businesses. There are some private businesses whose mission is something she does not value and that she would not want to support. She can understand how GiGi's submission benefits the community. But do we put ourselves in an awkward position later if we issue a letter of support for one application? Duncan asked if Beth is agreeing that we should not support any of these applications or saying that we should be cautious. Beth said at the very least we should be cautious about what we support.

Mark asked if it concerns anyone that GiGi and BJ are both village trustees. Eben said he sees the optics concern, but if another small business came to the board asking for a support letter for a similar thing he would approve it. If they were not both trustees, would that bring ease to Mark? Mark said not in this case. Beth said for her that is not the issue. It is about precedent.

Duncan said his idea of creating a generic letter is not that we would support every application but that if we approved sending a letter of support there would be a generic letter we could use. Beth asked how we would justify whether to approve sending a letter of support or not. Could someone argue that we are being biased in any way or not fairly approving sending a letter because we don't like something? What are the guidelines for approving a request? Duncan said his personal guideline is what is in the best interest of the town, not what he believes personally. In that context, he could side with Mark that we should not support any business as that is beyond the purview of the selectboard, but if it is a requirement of the person applying for the grant that they get a letter of support, he doesn't want to deprive someone of funding that they otherwise would be eligible for. If the letter of support were not a requirement for applying for the grant he would agree with Mark.

The motion was passed with Mark opposed.

20. Northern Borders Regional Commission Infrastructure Grants

Brian said he got some comments from Paul Warden today about the Northern Borders letter of intent he had drafted. Duncan said he thinks Paul's suggestions are spot on. **Duncan moved to incorporate Paul Warden's suggested edits and comments into the Northern Borders letter of intent, seconded by Eben.**

Brian said he still needs data from Mumley for the budget part. Tyler Mumley says he will provide it in time. What is in the budget section calls for spending \$300,000 of our remaining ARPA funds on this project. That brings us up to our maximum of 80% federal grant funds. He wants to make sure the board is comfortable with dedicating that use of ARPA funds. The funds are not obligated until the grant application is further along.

Beth asked, isn't this a grant where we can get more than a million dollars? Brian said yes. Beth said so in theory we could propose a total project amount of more than a million and spend more than \$300K in ARPA funds. Brian said based on prior budget estimates that were updated in 2022, \$1 million would construct a road and other infrastructure just past where the engineering study assigned a double lot on the western side and a single lot on the other, so it would get us three saleable lots.

Beth said we could ask for \$2.2 million dollars and then use just over \$600,000 of ARPA funds. Duncan said we have committed close to \$110K in ARPA funds already. Beth said that means about \$1.8 million would be the maximum we could ask for.

Duncan said Beth raises a good point. Is \$1 million what we should be targeting? If Mumley tells us it would cost \$2 million to get infrastructure for the whole park, he doubts anyone will want to commit more than \$300K of ARPA funds for this, but we could take out a bond from the Vermont Bond Bank, which would be a very reasonable additional amount of money on the tax rate. He would rather get as much money as possible from a Northern Borders grant and then make up the additional money with a bond if necessary. We would have to get taxpayer approval for a bond. If it is going to cost more than \$1 million he thinks we should put in for more than \$1 million.

Brian said the grading criteria are different if we ask for more than \$1 million. In the past these grants have been limited to \$1 million. That is still a guideline but for infrastructure is possible to apply for more than \$1 million. But there are different scoring criteria. The first letter of intent is due Friday.

Duncan said if we don't have a good letter we won't get to step two. Mark asked if the letter has to include the amount of money we are willing to put up. Brian said yes. Beth said she feels like we need something in the letter about the need for this from a state perspective. We could also mention our central location with regard to northern cities in Vermont.

Duncan said the letter talks about this as an industrial park. In his mind it is not so much that. He thinks what we have in mind is more like supporting the growth of local businesses, entrepreneurs or value-added markets. When people think about an industrial park it brings to mind certain things and he doesn't think that is what we are thinking of. Brian said we could say

“business park” instead of “light industrial park.” Duncan suggested looking at the wording in the Yellow Wood study about targeting certain sectors of the economy.

Brian said it will be easier to get \$1 million than to get more than \$1 million. Beth asked, in the application process, or will requesting more than \$1 million filter out our letter? Brian said he doesn't know. They say they will not score the letter of intent by the criteria but will review it for alignment with the criteria, whether or not the request is for over a million dollars.

Mark asked how much of our ARPA money we need to commit to draw down these grant funds. Brian said we could commit zero but then we would have to come up with the money somewhere else. Duncan said if the board were to decide to apply ARPA funds toward the budget and then ended up with surplus that went into a reserve fund there would be no cap on how much of that money could be contributed toward the cost. Brian said that is correct.

Mark said he thinks this light industrial park idea is a 20th century sinkhole that he is not particularly in support of spending money on. Shayne said he is supportive of building the infrastructure because it can be used for a variety of things. Mark asked what he has in mind. Housing? Or are we committing ourselves to a business park? Shayne said he doesn't know that we are committing ourselves to anything unless we maintain ownership. The next step could be to sell off the property and then it would be up to a private developer what they want to put there. We could also put housing or commercial buildings there. It makes sense to him to put in the infrastructure. Mark asked if he thinks that is a good use of town funds. Shayne said he thinks it is a good use of ARPA funds. If it were taxpayer funds it would be different. Mark said he looks at it as one and the same.

The motion was passed.

Duncan asked if we can get an estimate of what the additional cost would be to continue road, water and sewer to all the potential lots. Brian said Mumley will be providing a cost estimate for all the necessary infrastructure. Duncan asked, if that estimate comes in at a million and a half or two million dollars, do we want to request a higher number?

Beth said if we don't request the higher number she feels we might kick ourselves but we shouldn't go above a million dollars if it means our letter will get kicked out. She doesn't know how to find out if that is likely. Brian said he will be meeting with the state coordinator and he can speak to her about it. His feeling is that if the board is interested in the higher number and wants to finance it we should go with it. Beth asked, if we go with a higher number, can we change it later when we submit the application or does the letter need to match the application? Brian said as he understands it we can make modifications or Northern Borders may request them. Beth said if we won't have the option to change from a higher number to a lower number she would be more comfortable with asking for a million in our letter. Brian said the board could say that if it turns out that we are allowed to change our number later we should go with the higher number and if that is not the case or we are unsure we should go with the lower number. Shayne said he likes that.

Beth said she likes going with the lower number because if we are allowed to change the amount we can change it upwards. Duncan said he doubts they would let us revise it upwards.

Shayne said he thinks it is more likely they would let us revise downwards. Beth said if we are allowed to change our submission there is no way they won't get applications with amounts higher than what was in the letters of intent.

Duncan said he would rather go with our need than what we think we might get. He would be happy to have Brian meet with the state coordinator and communicate with Beth and make a final submission based on that. Eben and Shayne agreed.

Beth said Brian will get clarification on our questions. She asked if board members agree that if we learn that we can make changes later to the amount we are asking for, and we find that we can't make changes upwards but we can change downward, then we want to submit for a higher amount, maybe \$1.6 million, and if neither amount is flexible then we want to submit for \$1 million. Duncan said if after meeting with the coordinator they say we are better off to put in for a million dollars he is good with that. Others agreed. Mark said he doesn't want to spend any more on this.

Brian said he will be adding some things to the letter based on comments tonight, such as reference to state goals, our central location with regard to cities and resorts, and language about sectors of the economy from the Yellow Wood report. Brian thinks the Yellow Wood study refers to the park as a light industrial park. (*Noel Dodge left at 9:24.*) It was suggested that he should use the terminology in the Yellow Wood study to refer to the park unless it can be softened in some way.

21. *Project Management Offer from LCPC for Road Maintenance Grants-in-Aid Program*

Brian said the Grants-in-Aid program used to be housed out of ANR and now is run by VTrans. It is for improving our compliance with MRGP on hydrologically connected road segments. Before it was run by VTrans it was administered by LCPC at the county level. They have offered to continue to administer the program for us. He thinks there is value in continuing to use their services for management. Duncan said there is a \$1500 fee. Brian said that can come out of the grant. **Duncan moved to authorize the chair to sign the Agreement For Local Project Manager Services by and between the Town Of Johnson Vermont and the Lamoille County Planning Commission, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.**

22. *Letter of Intent to Participate in Grants-in-Aid Program for FY24*

Eben moved to submit a letter of intent to participate in the Municipal Grants-in-Aid Program for FY24, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.

23. *Request for Proposals for Public-Private Partnership Stormwater Construction Project*

Brian said the RFP for the stormwater infrastructure project in cooperation with the Vermont Electric Coop is ready for publication. Vermont Electric Coop drafted an RFP for the project. Duncan asked what the funding source for this is. Brian said it is an ARPA-related grant. The town is the grantee. Shayne asked if there is any local match from us. Brian said no. Duncan asked if there are administrative costs and who will administer it. Brian said administrative services are an eligible cost. We will be receiving some funds for managing it. **Duncan moved to circulate the Request for Proposals for the Public-Private Partnership Stormwater Construction Project, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed with Mark abstaining.**

24. *Tax Map Maintenance Contract with Cartographic Associates, Inc*

Brian said the contract renewal with CAI is due. Duncan asked if we are still happy with CAI's services. Brian and Rosemary said yes. Their price has not increased for the coming year.

Duncan moved to renew the contract with Cartographic Associates, Inc for tax map maintenance, Eben seconded and the motion was passed.

25. Appointment of E911 Coordinator

Brian said he has been serving as E911 coordinator. Justin Mason, the assessor, is willing to do it. It makes sense to assign this job to the assessor. **Duncan moved to appoint Justin Mason as town E911 coordinator, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.**

26. Adoption of Updated Local Emergency Management Plan

Eben said the health officer in the plan is listed as Tracy Myers but he thinks we changed it to Dean Locke, so that should be changed in the plan. Vermont Emergency Management is interested in getting this plan entered online. He would be willing to work with them on that.

Duncan moved to adopt the Local Emergency Management Plan as presented with the suggested change to the listed health officer and to authorize Eben to work with Vermont Emergency Management to get the plan in a web-based format, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.

27. Economic Development Round Table Discussion Planning

Brian said the proposed meeting date and time for the economic development roundtable is May 10 at 10:00 a.m. The Vermont Council on Rural Development is willing to facilitate at no charge. Eben said he cannot attend then. Duncan said he will do his best to be there. The other board members said they can attend. Brian said he will warn it as a selectboard meeting since it sounds like there will be a quorum. The meeting is scheduled to last 2 1/2 hours.

Duncan said at one point after they did the community visit in Johnson we were making an annual contribution to the Council on Rural Development. Rosemary said that hasn't been done in several years. **Duncan moved to make a contribution in the amount of \$75 to the Vermont Council on Rural Development, Eben seconded and the motion was passed.**

28. Continuing Town Administrator Search

Duncan said Municipal Resources Inc, one of the two firms we received proposals from, provides interim services. The person he spoke with at MRI suggested that given the size of our community and the town administrator responsibilities that would be a 3-day a week job. If we provided basic administrative services they could probably provide an interim person for 16 hours a week who would work remotely from New Hampshire with no in office presence at all. Duncan talked to Rosemary and she feels there is capacity with existing staff to do basic administrative functions to keep us afloat.

Duncan reached out to two retired or nearly retired managers. One said she is retiring in September and would be interested after that. He doesn't think that will work for our needs. Another said he is retiring at the end of this coming week. He is interested and said he would get back to Duncan. He asked both people if they would be interested in conducting a search for a town manager. The one who is available in September at the earliest is not interested in conducting a search. The other might be interested. We have proposals from VLCT and Municipal Resources Inc.

Duncan talked to Alan Gould at MRI and told him that we are contemplating hiring a community and economic development coordinator. Alan asked, why not hire one person who could do both jobs? He suggested that in our ad we could try to attract someone who has a strong background in economic and community development. He said he looks at hundreds of

resumes a year for these positions and he thinks we could find someone with a strong background in that area who could do both jobs. He suggested that if we get a good candidate with the appropriate background then we could tell them we would also like them to do community and economic development. Duncan thinks there are advantages and disadvantages to both having two different employees and having one person doing both jobs.

Shayne asked, VLCT doesn't provide interim services, right? Duncan said they don't, and their proposal is more expensive. He asked them if we could reduce the cost by doing some of the things they had listed and they said we could. The person he talked to at VLCT said the last search they did cost closer to the lower number of their estimate. MRI's estimate was \$5000 but the person he talked to at MRI said their typical search recently has been closer to \$4000.

Duncan said if MRI provided interim services the cost would be \$85 per hour. Their recommendation is to involve the interim in the hiring and interview process. Eben asked how much lead time they need to provide interim services. Duncan said they would be able to provide someone within a week. They have people on staff who are very capable.

Eben said he would like approval to spend funds on the search to be on the next agenda because of how it was warned. He doesn't want to execute a contract tonight. Duncan asked board members to give thought to the idea of hiring one person versus two people. Beth said she thinks we should work on the job description and expectations for economic development, whether or not that is combined with the town administrator position. Duncan said he will try to run some numbers on budget impacts of different scenarios.

29. *Marvin Award Nominations*

It was agreed that anyone with suggestions for Marvin Award nominations should send them to Beth.

30. *Other Business*

Beth said the date proposed by the village trustees for a joint meeting is May 3 at 6:00 p.m. She would have to leave at 6:45 on that date. Mark said he thinks it is important that she is there.

Beth asked Brian to see if there is any other day of the week the trustees could meet or if they could meet at an earlier time. Board members agreed that they could start the meeting at 4:00 on May 3.

31. *Adjourn*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59.