

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023

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

Others: Brian Story, Lois Frey, Seth Jensen, Victoria Hellwig, GiGi Beach, BJ Putvain (remote)

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

Shayne added his resignations from the Development Review Board and the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee.

Duncan said he doesn't want to lose track of the discussion about library funds. He thinks we should invite library board members to come have a discussion with the selectboard. Beth suggested doing that when Rosemary is here.

Duncan said he also doesn't want to lose track of the discussion about spending ARPA funds on operating expenses and saving the resulting surplus.

Duncan said Dave Williams sent a request to deal with a dilapidated building issue. Beth said she thinks the agenda is too packed to discuss that tonight. She proposes pushing that out to the next meeting. She will talk to Dave Williams. She also reached out to the health officers.

Duncan said in reviewing old minutes he noticed a discussion about the need to submit a request for an extension on the revolving loan fund. The board also discussed creating a campaign to solicit proposals for the fund. He suggested Brian could give a status update. Beth agreed to add that to the agenda.

Brian added a decision on changing the due date for proposals for the construction project with VEC. He suggested that if the revolving loan fund discussion were pushed to the next meeting he would be able to give a better update with more time to prepare. Beth agreed to that.

3. Review Invoices and Orders

Beth asked why so many keys were cut. Brian said we were all out of keys for the municipal building. We cut new keys for Justin Mason and Anne Crockett and cut a couple of extra keys for the front door for general use. Shayne said he thinks we should get a key box for use by committees and others. Beth said Rosemary is in charge of town office access so she needs to be involved in any discussion on that.

4. Review and Approve Minutes

Shayne moved to approve the minutes of April 10 and April 17, 2023, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.

5. Selectboard Issues/Concerns

Eben said since the board approved the Local Emergency Management Plan he has been working with a local representative who wanted a couple of things added to the plan. Those proposed changes will need to be on the next agenda.

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

Duncan asked Brian to pass on to Rosemary a request for each board member to get an invoice edit list, which can be printed from NEMRC. It could be emailed prior to the meeting or available at the meeting. It would include a listing of each check written since the last meeting. He feels that would be helpful.

7. Review Planned Purchases

Duncan said he talked to Jason about the planned purchase. His understanding is that it is a heavy duty jack to lift the big tandems. Eben asked if this is a replacement for one we already had or something we have not had before. Duncan said he doesn't know. Beth said she would like to know what we need the jack for. She asked Eben to text Jason to ask about it.

8. Johnson Rail Trail Committee (JRTC) Request for Selectboard Liaison

Beth said the Johnson Rail Trail Committee is requesting a selectboard liaison so someone on the selectboard will be knowledgeable about committee discussions. Shayne said he would be interested in being the liaison. **Duncan moved to appoint Shayne as selectboard liaison to the Johnson Rail Trail Committee and the motion was seconded and passed.**

9. Request for Update to the JRTC Purpose Statement

Beth said the JRTC is requesting an update to the committee's purpose statement. They want to add that the committee is able to request authorization from the selectboard to act on initiatives. They felt that the current wording didn't allow them to take any action. They also asked to add "Specific actions/recommendations to regional community networks which would enhance or facilitate the positive benefits that might accrue," repeating the language used with regard to actions/recommendations for consideration by the private sector.

Mark asked if the wording about getting authorization to act will be included for all committees. Beth said no, this would not necessarily apply to other committees. We don't have purpose statements for all our other committees. Committees have sometimes suggested one and brought it to the board. We could ask committees to come up with something like this. Our committees tend to have mission statements rather than purpose statements. Mark said it seems like we should have a blanket committee statement about powers and ability to act. Beth said a few months back she asked Lydia to compile all the committee mission statements. She asked Brian to get that from Lydia and send it out to the board or ask Lydia to send it out.

Duncan suggested the wording about authorization to act could be better. He asked if the committee has an idea what kinds of things they might want to act on. Beth said some committee members just wanted to be idea generators and others very much wanted to be doers and not just sit back and watch others do (or not do) something. But the committee did not discuss specific ideas much at their first meeting.

Shayne said he wants committees to take initiative on things like applying for grants. Duncan said he doesn't want to set up a situation where a committee might act at cross purposes with the board or the community and economic development specialist. Grants would be in the wheelhouse of the community and economic development specialist.

The board discussed ways to improve the wording.

Mark moved to approve an updated purpose statement for the Johnson Rail Trail Committee with the addition of "The Committee may request authorization from the Board to act" and "Specific actions/recommendations to regional community networks which would enhance or

facilitate the positive benefits that might accrue.” Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.

BJ Putvain invited Shayne to attend the JRTC meeting on May 3.

10. Review Planned Purchases (continued)

Eben said he heard back from Jason. He said the jack he wants to buy is a replacement for one that broke when the crew was changing from winter to summer tires. **Duncan moved to approve the planned purchase, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.**

11. Appointment for County LVRT Committee

Beth said the JRTC has recommended appointing Doug Molde to the LCPC Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Committee with Kyle Nuse as an alternate. Aurora River is also interested. The committee has not heard of Aurora's interest.

Mark asked if there is a sense of urgency about making this appointment. Beth said there is definitely a need for Johnson representation at the county level. There are capacity constraints with the people from Johnson who have been attending.

Eben moved to appoint Doug Molde to the county Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Committee, to appoint Kyle Nuse as alternate and to direct Brian to send an email to Aurora River telling her that she can attend meetings of the Johnson Rail Trail committee and let the chair know if she would like to join that committee. Mark seconded. Beth suggested we also tell her that the county meeting is open to the public. Mark suggested thanking her for her interest. **The motion was passed**

12. Naming of Private Road off Collins Hill

Brian said when he went out with Justin Mason for his training they saw that three houses are being built just off Collins Hill Road that share a common access. E911 regulations say if more than three houses share a driveway the driveway should be registered as a private road. The builder was there and suggested a name for the road.

Duncan said on December 16, 2019 the selectboard approved language submitted by the Historical Society to amend the 911 ordinance. The board chose not to amend the ordinance but approved the language as a policy for road naming. It says road naming requests should be submitted to the Johnson Historical Society for review and recommendations to the selectboard and that all road names should have a Johnson specific connection. Duncan drafted the language and at the time his strong recommendation was that the board amend the ordinance. If it is just a policy, what just happened (failure to submit a request to the Historical Society) is likely and will happen again.

Beth said we should follow the existing policy.

Duncan suggested we could ask the Historical Society board to develop a list of acceptable road names and a person who needs a road name could look at that list and pick one from the list. Beth said she does not like that idea.

Eben questioned not letting people who are developing property with their own money choose their own name for their road. They may want to use a name that has personal significance but is not specific to Johnson. Duncan said under this policy they can submit a name to the Historical Society. Eben said the Historical Society doesn't have to approve it. Duncan said if they eventually ask the town to take it over as a town highway, that changes the dynamic again. Shayne said he

thinks for the time being our hands are tied due to the existing town policy. He is open to changing it but a change to the policy is not on the agenda.

Brian said he will put the Historical Society in touch with the builder.

Lois Frey said this policy isn't posted anywhere for someone to know about it. She thinks that is a mistake. Beth asked Brian to get it posted.

13. *Shayne Spence Resignations*

Shayne said he believed that at the first meeting after he was elected to the selectboard he resigned from all town committees but the minutes only reflect him resigning from the Planning Commission. He wants to officially resign from the Development Review Board and the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee.

Mark moved to accept Shayne's resignation from the Development Review Board and the Racial Justice and Social Equity Committee, Duncan seconded and the motion was passed.

(GiGi Beach arrived at 7:10.)

Beth asked Brian to post again for all the boards and committees that have vacancies.

14. *Update on Village Garage Project*

Brian said the village has concerns about health and safety at the village garage and they want to do a major reconstruction project. They intend to remove all but the basic structure and build it back up again. They are pursuing different funding sources. One is congressional spending. Senator Welch is supportive and the request to his office probably will go through but it could take some time and the exact amount of funding could change. They are also pursuing other funding sources. There was a proposal to possibly seek brownfields funding. They believe if they applied for it they would be able to just restrict the brownfields assessment to their building and not the entire site.

Duncan said there was a meeting with Ken Tourangeau, Erik Bailey, Brian, Duncan and LCPC staff. It was brought up by Erik that in the memorandum of understanding between the town and village the definition of maintenance is work that does not alter a building's use or result in a known reduction in value. But there is a conflicting statement in the purpose section saying actions that require demolition or substantial change in use or value require the consent of both town and village. Erik just referred to the definition section and said it gives the village carte blanche to do what they want with the building. Does the MOU trump any ownership interest? Is one entity or the other a legal applicant for funding sources without the other party? He thinks those are questions that need to be answered. He doesn't think the MOU anticipated a scenario where one entity would be applying for a source of funds as a separate entity. He thinks clarification is needed. He doesn't want the village to proceed and have some funding entity say their application is not a proper application if they are only a 50% owner.

Beth said liability is a question for her too. Duncan said at that meeting a comment was made that all brownfields assessment could be done in the footprint of the existing building only, with no impact on anything else. But the town is 50% owner of that building. Is there liability associated with that that we would be subject to? The deed is not clear to him. It just says the town and village are joint owners. There are two deeds. One is for the original 15 acres and the mill house building. The village public works garage and the town highway department garage were on that original deed. There was another deed in the 1990s. Tatro was originally going to sell the land just to the village and the village agreed to allow the town to become a partner in the purchase and sales

agreement. The town and village jointly purchased an additional 185 acres. That includes the lower building, the area with the gravel pile and salt shed and the hillside.

Duncan suggested getting a tentative legal opinion on whether the MOU with the village has any legal standing. Beth said it sounds like we also need an understanding of whether both entities would have to apply for grants and other funding sources.

Mark asked if Duncan feels confident that any brownfields assessment can be narrowed down to just the footprint of the village garage. Duncan said one of his concerns is that the entire site is a brownfield. If we ever subdivide the property the brownfields piece is still hanging out there. Enough time has passed that he thinks we have cost responsibility. His initial thought is, why not do a brownfields study on the whole parcel? Then we know what our responsibility is and if we sell any part of it we can tell the buyer about known hazards we have not remediated.

Seth Jensen said brownfields are complicated. For this property, the work done in the past was an area-wide plan, which is more a visioning of how the property could be reused or have a change of use, with some analysis of past use and how that might limit or contribute to future use. That is not the equivalent of a Phase 1 assessment, which is what has been recommended prior to renovation of the village garage. Phase 1 assessment is a paperwork review of the property. It includes interviews with current and past users but does not include any actual testing. The EPA has suggested also doing a hazardous building materials assessment. The outcome of the Phase 1 assessment will be a report. One of the most important pieces of that will be an outline of recognized environmental considerations – things that may be present based on past use that should be further examined. Generally when a property owner is entering brownfields assessment it is because they are interested in transferring ownership. When Phase 1 assessment is done prior to transfer it opens up some avenues for cleanup funding and liability protection. If that were the situation it would be a good idea to assess the whole site to access all the available funding, but a transfer of ownership is not being considered at the moment so that rationale for assessing the whole site is not there. Doing a Phase 1 assessment for the whole property is an option the town and village can consider. The EPA has given LCPC and the village permission to move forward with a Phase 1 assessment just for the village garage and anything impacted by restoration of that building. LCPC is working with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation to confirm that, but generally they follow the same regulations. Phase 2 would be when the actual testing would occur. If Phase 1 is limited to the footprint of the garage the recommendations for Phase 2 will also be limited to that footprint. Cleanup funding is likely not an option as long as the property stays in the hands of either the town or the village. Funding sources like USDA will look for a Phase 1 assessment. In terms of assessing the property as a whole, he can provide feedback but the decision is up to the town and village. In terms of the application process for Phase 1 assessment, LCPC is the grant recipient. LCPC contracts with an engineering firm to do an assessment. There will be a site access agreement and participation agreement that needs to be signed for the brownfields assessment, but there won't be a funding application for Phase 1.

Beth asked if the site access agreement for Phase 1 is limited to the building itself. Seth said due to the fact that the site has had internal combustion equipment, it is very possible that one of the recommendations for further study could be the result of off-gassing of internal combustion. It could be outside the footprint. Beth said it sounds like if that is the case then the Phase 2 assessment is even more likely to go beyond the footprint of the building. Seth said until the Phase 1 assessment is done it is difficult to say.

Eben asked, if Phase 1 and Phase 2 assessments are done on the village garage, is there any chance that that would prevent us from seeking funds for other buildings on that parcel for a certain period of time? Seth said the assessment funds flow through LCPC so there would not be any impact on eligibility for assessment funds. In terms of cleanup funds, both town and village are current owners and potentially responsible parties. The path to cleanup funding is really limited, at least through EPA and DEC.

Duncan asked if the likelihood of having to go beyond the footprint of the building is exacerbated because the building was used by the electric department. As far as he knows transformers are not stored there now, but at one time they were. Seth said that is the type of thing the Phase 1 assessment would address.

Mark said he is okay with brownfields assessment if it stays with the village building but he is worried about footprint creep.

Duncan asked if the village can sign a site access agreement as 50% owners without the selectboard. Seth said that is one of the things to ask an attorney.

Duncan said we could start with VLCT. They wouldn't give us a formal legal opinion. Eben asked if that is really needed. We could just inform LCPC that we are half owner. Duncan said we could just sign the agreement. Eben and Beth agreed. Duncan said he thinks if the village is agreeable to having the town as a co-applicant or cosigner that would be one avenue. Eben said he would think they would want us to be. Otherwise they may go through the process of applying for funds and be told that they are not the full owner so they can't apply.

Beth said we need to change the agenda for the joint meeting with the trustees to include the question of whether the trustees would like the selectboard to sign these documents with them

Brian said he believes VLCT doesn't like to give recommendations on things that should go to the town's attorney. If there is a dispute between two municipalities that are both VLCT members he thinks it we are unlikely to get them to give an answer. Beth asked if we need an answer if we are going to offer to sign anyway.

Eben said if the town and village were to merge then he believes both entities would cease to exist and a new entity with a new federal ID number would be created. Beth said her understanding is the same. Eben said if that is what happens any property the town or village owns would be deeded to the new entity. If we had a brownfields study done on the whole parcel, could the new entity access brownfields remediation funds? Seth said his gut feeling is that the DEC and the EPA would look at it as the same entity but it is probably a question work asking.

15. Energy Efficiency Grant Opportunities

Tori Hellwig of LCPC said the Department of Buildings and General Services has a new program to help improve energy efficiency of municipally owned buildings. The first opportunity available through the program is a Community Capacity Building Mini-Grant of up to \$4,000 for community outreach or capacity building. The second opportunity comes in two parts. The first is a free energy assessment. Once that is done the municipality can apply for up to \$500,000 to engage in improvements that were outlined in the assessment. No match is required.

Mark asked, you have the contractors in hand? Tori said Buildings and General Services does. They have contracted with four groups. They are hoping to complete all assessments by January 2024. Assessment applications will open this spring. If the town is interested there is money for regional planning commissions to provide assistance.

Brian said the village is likely also going out for this opportunity for the village garage. The program offers up to half a million dollars per municipality. If we are co-applicants with the village on the village garage we may not be able to each independently access \$500,000. Tori said if the town and village each apply separately for an assessment each can apply for up to \$500,000.

Beth asked if this would include bigger efforts like HVAC. Tori said yes. Beth asked if solar energy would be included. Tori said she is not sure. Duncan asked, if we put in a series of electric heat pump units a building and combine them with solar panels on the roof to supplement electricity needs, would that qualify? Tori said it all depends on the assessment the contractor provides. They are likely to recommend heat pumps. She is not sure what they would say about solar.

Mark said it might be a good use of ARPA money to do our own solar.

Eben said applying for funds for any building jointly owned with the village has to be a joint decision. He thinks we will talk about this at the joint meeting.

Beth asked if there is any reason to pick a Level 1 assessment over a Level 2. Tori said if we just wanted it to be very easy and not have to do much work we might want Level 1. Mark asked if it would be a few months before we could have a Level 2 assessment. Tori said yes, it would be a few months before it could happen, but applications are due soon. They are saying that every municipality should be able to get at least one assessment. They are prioritizing based on the energy burden report and Johnson residential units have the highest energy burden in our county.

Beth said the information on the Community Capacity Building Mini-Grants talks about hosting and having promotional materials. What does that mean to our residents? Tori said the town could host an expert to talk about weatherization, window inserts, better insulation, etc. Or the town could hire a consultant to help with things like managing invoices or other project management. Beth suggested we could host an educational session for businesses and couple it with education about our revolving loan fund. Duncan said our revolving loan fund does not lend itself well to this kind of project because of the restrictions on it. Brian said business loans are still very doable with our fund. Duncan asked if we could hire a consultant to work with a town energy committee. Tori said yes.

16. Selecting Priority Locations for Municipal Energy Resilience Program Assessments

Brian said from what he understands the village is likely to apply for only one assessment, for the village garage. They might also apply for one for the sewer plant. That leaves us the ability to pick one to three projects of our own and likely get them done fairly quickly. Someone could do all the Johnson assessments in a day.

Duncan brought up the library. Eben said they are applying for a larger grant. Shayne says it sounds like they are past the stage of needing an assessment. Beth said they would need an assessment to get funding from this source though. Shayne suggested prioritizing another building since the library is further along in the process.

Duncan asked if these assessments would help with library ARPA grants. Tori said these grants can be used with other funding programs. If the library was assessed under this program it could be added to other funding sources they may receive.

Beth asked why Brian said we could do one to three projects. Brian said there is no hard limit. It just seems to him that we are diluting the money if we do more assessments. Beth said if there is capacity she would like information on all our buildings and then we could rank them based on their need. She doesn't care if we do a Level 1 or Level 2 assessment. If we do a Level 1, can we then go for a Level 2? Tori said her understanding is that municipalities can get one assessment per building. Beth asked, Level 1 would be sufficient to give us a list of significant things to change? Tori said yes. Duncan said a Level 1 assessment makes us eligible for an implementation grant but Level 2 makes us eligible for other funding sources.

Eben said he would like an assessment on the library and the Historical Society building. But he doesn't know if we would want to submit for implementation grants without talking to the library and Historical Society boards. He also wants to assess the town garage and the municipal building. We can't submit for implementation grants for those buildings without talking to the village first but we can get them assessed.

Mark said he wants to focus on buildings where we have the biggest energy usage. Probably the town garage would be first and the municipal building next. The Historical Society building doesn't use that much fuel. Duncan said he thinks it makes sense to look at a district-wide heating facility for all the buildings, like one chip plant that could serve as a boiler for all of them. But he doesn't think we have time to think about doing that with ARPA money. He would be willing to go to the voters for a bond if we could demonstrate cost savings over years.

Beth suggested asking for Level 1 assessments for all our buildings. Eben said he could get behind that. Brian said we won't be able to ask for an assessment so we can do a specific thing. And there is not a guarantee they will assess every building we ask for. His impression was that we would not be likely to get more than three assessments. Tori said they are saying at least one. It is not guaranteed that a municipality will be able to get multiple assessments. That is why they should be prioritized.

It was agreed to continue this discussion at the next meeting. *(Tori left at 8:21.)*

17. Planning for Evaluation of Scribner Bridge Engineering Study Proposals

Brian said we contracted with LCPC to do management for the Scribner Bridge engineering study. They are asking for at least one selectboard member or town official to come when they open proposals. **Eben moved to authorize Mark to be present for the opening of proposals for the Scribner Bridge engineering study, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.** *(Seth left at 8:24.)*

18. NEMS Contract Review and Signing

Eben moved to authorize the chair to sign the NEMS contract on behalf of the selectboard, Mark seconded and the motion was passed.

19. Planning for Sheriff's Patrol Contract

Beth said the sheriff's department patrol contract is up in June. She thinks there should be a revision of the full contract but she doesn't have the mental capacity for that right now and she suspects Linda Martin of Wolcott doesn't either. She will reach out and see if anyone from the

other towns wants to have conversations about the contract. We may just continue with the same contract with minor revisions.

Duncan asked if Beth has had more conversations with Roger Marcoux about establishing a regional police force. Beth said she talked to him at Eric's going away party. He was interested in the idea at that point. But she hasn't heard from him since. She is just speculating but she thinks it will not be long until he retires. She hasn't heard that he has talked to any county agency about it. She is sure he has talked to Susan Bartlett about it and probably also Linda Martin.

Eben said he would like to see something in the contract about enforcing the ATV ordinance. Beth said she thinks that is a good addition. She will talk to Chris Watson and Scott Kirkpatrick because they previously were both receptive to thinking out of the box about what it means to patrol for ATVs. They thought there were probably ways it could be done.

Beth said if anyone else has ideas about changes to the contract they should let her know. She will let other towns know that we want to add something about ATV enforcement. Duncan said if Susan or Linda wanted to talk about regional policing, he thinks that is something we should consider.

20. *Planning for Sheriff's Communication Contract*

Beth said as far as she knows there has been no issue or complaint with the communications contract.

21. *Due Date for Proposals for VEC Stormwater Project*

Brian said he would like to change the deadline for proposals for the VEC stormwater project from June 12 to June 16 to give respondents what they feel is enough time to submit a response. He has sent the RFP out to a couple of firms and the feedback he has gotten was that the due date of May 12 did not give them enough time. The board agreed he can change the date.

22. *Town Administrator Combined with or without Economic Development Follow-up*

Duncan said he created spreadsheets that look at the potential financial impact of having separate town administrator and economic development positions or combining them. His conclusion was that we could probably afford the services of a separate town administrator and an economic development specialist. We got voter approval for \$50,000 for community and economic development and we carried \$40,000 in the budget for the current year. He doubts we will use that money in the current year so it will probably turn into surplus. So he assumed we have \$90,000 available to fund a position. At \$40 per hour for 24 hours a week the total cost would be \$79,196, including retirement, workers comp, unemployment, long-term disability, FICA and a prorated share of health and dental insurance. The employee would receive a net salary of \$38,618 after payroll deductions, not including their federal or state taxes.

For a separate town administrator position he assumed 32 hours a week. There is about \$114,000 available in our budget for the position. At \$50 per hour the cost would be \$9,560 above what we currently have in the budget. At \$45 per hour it would be a savings of \$139 and at \$40 per hour a savings of \$9,844. His calculations are all based on a family plan for health and dental. If someone only needed a two-person plan then the cost would be less. The hourly rate right now for 40 hours per week is \$39.16 per hour. If we were able to offer a little more than that per hour he thinks that is competitive based on the salary survey.

He also did calculations for a combined position that would be 40 hours a week. If we did that we would have enough available funds to pay the salary and he believes also cover the cost of an

interim town administrator and the cost of the search. With two separate positions we would have enough in our budget to cover the salaries but not the interim administrator or the search.

Eben said he understands why Duncan added \$40,000 and \$50,000 to come up with the available amount for the economic development position but he doesn't like that. If we use that \$90,000, then next year we would have to almost double what the voters had approved for that position to get \$90,000 again. Whether the position would pay for itself or not is another question. Duncan said he doesn't think we need the full \$90,000. Eben said even at \$25/hr a 24 hour per week position costs \$7,000 over the amount approved by the voters. Duncan said he thinks if we had asked the voters for \$75,000 it would have been approved.

Eben said he thinks the only way we can financially manage is to combine the two positions. Shayne said he thinks that makes sense financially. The two things can be done by one person if we set expectations high and find the right person. Mark said he likes keeping the positions separate. He thinks economic development is important and he would like someone to be focused on that. Duncan said in the best of all worlds he agrees with Mark. The value we would get from having a separate economic development position may be worth the money. But he recognizes and appreciates what Eben is saying. Eben asked what Mark thinks a quality individual would be looking to get per hour. Mark said \$45. Eben said at \$40 per hour we would need \$80,000 for the economic development position alone. Mark said he thinks a person who is good at this will bring in enough money in grants that they will pay for themselves. Shayne said he agrees that if they do the job well they can pay for themselves, but are we going to be able to find someone right now when everyone else is looking for the same thing? If we have a contractor who is also working for other towns they will not be completely focused on us. He would rather get one person who is fully devoted to us. Beth said she is concerned about all that will be happening in the next two years at the town level. She has some concerns about not having two different people. She doesn't want town business to fog and disrupt the work of economic development. She would prefer sharing economic development resources with other towns to having someone shift between day-to-day operations and economic development.

Eben asked if she is specifically referring to ARPA when she talks about the next two years. Beth said not only ARPA. There are a lot of things happening at committee levels that will lead to economic development and there are big things happening with county partners. She sees the economic development person and the town administrator working hand in hand. She doesn't think the town administrator needs to be full-time. She likes the idea of having that person working 3-4 days. But she thinks we also need a community and economic development person for 3 days.

Eben said the board still needs to decide whether to use ARPA funds for operational expenses and put the money saved into a restricted fund for future purposes. Then decisions about spending it would be long-term and would not have to happen in 2 years. In his mind that decision drastically changes the 2-year forecast. Mark said the ARPA funds are the tip of the iceberg. There is still a lot of federal money coming down the pike.

Duncan said right now we are having LCPC do a lot of grant administration for us. We could do that in house and the administration money available from the grants could help fund the position. If money were no object he agrees that having two people would be ideal. If we go with one he feels we need to go with a person whose primary focus and experience is in economic development with town administration secondary. He thinks the skillsets of community and economic

development will be more important in the next two years. He is leaning towards two separate positions.

Eben said Alan Gould of Municipal Resources Inc said it should be one job. He thinks it should be one job. Shayne agreed. Duncan said Alan's comment was not that it should be one job but that it could be if we had the right person. His suggestion was that if we decide to combine the positions we should focus on the community and economic development piece. He suggested that if we go for two separate people we could put our ad together based on looking for a town administrator with strengths in economic development and based on the candidates that came in we could make a decision on whether to combine the positions.

Beth said when she thinks about the things that need to be done every month she is not convinced someone will be able to put blinders on if they are responsible for both areas. Duncan said he thinks we get better bang for the buck with two people.

Beth said she doesn't want to lock us into one decision. She wants to be open to change based on the candidates we get.

It was agreed to advertise for two separate positions but remain open to combining them into one position.

Duncan moved to approve the town administrator and community and economic development specialist job descriptions that were sent out to the board, Eben seconded and the motion was passed.

23. *Town Administrator Search Contract Agreement*

Eben thanked Duncan for the amount of time he put into getting three good quotes. He said he is leaning toward VLCT. Beth said she likes the MRI proposal. She felt like they provided some valuable information. Eben said one thing he liked about MRI is that they have the ability to provide interim services. Duncan said he thinks they would be willing to do that anyway even if they were not doing the search for us. Beth said VLCT has a conflict of interest because they contract with other towns. Duncan said he had a good conversation with Don Gerrish from Peabody, a Maine firm. He thinks he is very talented. VLCT talks about a committee approach to doing the first round. Don Gerrish advises not doing that but rather having a public meeting and an employee meeting and soliciting opinions and then having the selectboard do interviews and make the hiring decision. He likes that approach. MRI does a screening. VLCT suggests a committee.

Duncan said MRI has two levels of service. One is limited recruitment assistance and another is a full-blown recruitment service that is more like what VLCT or Peabody offers. VLCT says the more of the work we do the less the total bill will be. They are including the cost of background checks, advertising etc. Their base fee is \$10,000, the same as Peabody's. That is more than MRI but he thinks they are proposing to do more things for that.

Beth said MRI can solicit people who are in administrator positions now. She heard that from the applicant's perspective MRI gives more of a corporate feeling experience compared to VLCT and she likes that. Duncan said he would be happy going with MRI. But he thinks it will cost more than their estimate. For instance, they estimate \$1,000 for advertising, but he thinks that is low. Shayne said even if the cost does go up there is a lot of room between that and the other proposals. Mark said he thinks he would probably choose MRI. Beth said she likes the idea that they screen and

have experience with the screening process. She likes having them screen versus having a committee. Mark agreed.

Eben moved to authorize Duncan to represent the selectboard in signing a contract with Municipal Resources Inc and to authorizing payment of an amount not to exceed \$12,000 to Municipal Resources Inc. He noted that that is more than the original quote but there might need to be wiggle room. Beth said the contract amount will remain the same but the billed amount can be more. **Mark seconded and the motion was passed.**

24. Town Administrator Interim Next Steps

Duncan said he has talked to a potential candidate for the interim position. He created a spreadsheet based on a discussion with him. He would prefer to work as an hourly employee. If we paid him \$60 per hour as a base rate then with FICA, workers comp, unemployment, etc. the effective hourly rate would be \$70.50 vs. \$85 per hour if we used MRI's interim services. He knows this person. He has been a town manager for over 30 years.

Eben said he would prefer to make a decision at the next meeting so it is sufficiently warned. He would like to start the next meeting off with an executive session. If the candidate could attend, that would be great. It would be followed by a potential action item. The board agreed to start the next meeting at 6:00 with an executive session.

Eben asked if the contract would be open-ended. Beth said she assumes the contract would be for a specific time block with a possibility of an extension. Duncan said if we do it as a contracted service it would not be an employee relationship, which is what the candidate is looking for. He thinks there is an advantage to having him covered under our policies. Mark asked if he would be on the clock for travel time. Duncan said he did not mention that.

Beth asked if this is the only person who has shown interest. Duncan said he is the only one he has found. A couple of people have said they would be interested if the timing were different. Under our personnel policy this would be more along the lines of an emergency appointment, which would obviate the need for advertising the position.

25. Economic Development Round Table Discussion Planning

Brian said our facilitators for the economic development roundtable have asked if we could move it to May 17 and change the time to 3:00. Shayne, Beth and Eben said they would not be able to attend then. Beth said she wants to be there. But it is more important that the people we have invited can come than that a majority of board members can come.

Brian reviewed the list of potential attendees. A couple of people from Johnson Works are interested. Shayne and Beth suggested some local business owners they would like to invite. Beth would like to invite three people from the college. Duncan suggested someone from Lamoille FiberNet. Brian and Mark said that is a good idea. Shayne suggested someone from Lamoille Housing Partnership and also Greg Stefanski. Brian said he thinks someone from the Planning Commission might come. Beth suggested inviting a representative from the village trustee board, not the whole board

Beth said she thinks we need to make sure we are prepared to address current status, vision and obstacles for each item, we need to confirm the list of participants and we need to send formal invitations to attendees. Brian said we should plan on who is speaking and time it to fit within our allotted time. He noted that May 23 is his last day. Beth said she thinks for consistency we need

someone else to present each of the items anyway in case follow-up is needed. We need to collectively agree on status, vision and obstacles. Brian said Vermont Rural Development will send out formal invitations.

Brian said the upstairs meeting room at the municipal building has been used in the past for rather large meetings. We could probably host it here. During the day probably not many people from the public will want to attend. If we change the date Susan can make a Costco run for refreshments. Beth said she will get disposable tablecloths.

The board discussed possible dates. Beth suggested offering a range of dates: May 23, 24 and 25. Brian said the time was changed to accommodate a wedding that is happening on May 17 at the municipal building so we could probably go back to 10:00 a.m. if it is going to be on a different day.

26. Other Business

Eben said last week he had a regional emergency management meeting. AOT presented about the rail trail and they said they will be mowing it twice this year. They are targeting June and August.

The agenda for the next meeting will include library funds with Stacy Waterman invited for that discussion; the question of whether to apply ARPA funds to the operating budget, with Katie Buckley invited for that discussion; a dilapidated building update and discussion about the revolving loan fund,

Board members were not interested in amending the road naming policy but it was noted that it does need to be published and put in the policy book.

Beth asked Brian to contact our tech support about increasing the capacity for guest wifi access.

The next agenda will also include continuation of the energy grant discussion

Eben asked if the board would be interested in him trying to find out if we could get a network security audit done for free He thinks there is an opportunity through emergency management. Beth said he should do that.

27. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths