

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

Present: Selectboard members: Mike Dunham, Duncan Hastings, Eben Patch, Shayne Spence, Mark Woodward

Others: Tom Galinat, Rosemary Audibert, Randall Szott (remote), Peggy Williams, Lois Frey, Doug Molde, Charles Flaum, Kyle Nuse, Adrienne Parker, Paul Warden, Casey Romero, Joanne Ring, Charles Gallanter, Samantha Dube (remote), Elisa Clancy (remote), Lydia Putvain (remote), two other people

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call Meeting to Order

Eben called the meeting to order at 6:30.

2. Consider Additions or Adjustments and Approving Agenda

It was agreed to add planning for a special selectboard meeting, discussion of Grow Cemetery, and discussion of term limits for DRB members.

3. Term Limits for DRB Members

Duncan said in March the selectboard appointed DRB members but we still have to assign terms. Tom said it looks like we have to stagger term limits.

4. Public Comment

No members of the public wished to comment.

5. Selectboard Issues and Concerns

Eben said he went to look at the wayfinding sign. He thinks it looks nice. (*Shayne and Mark arrived at 6:34.*)

Shayne said this is his last meeting. He thanked the people of Johnson for giving him the honor of serving on the selectboard.

6. Rail Trail Committee Report

Doug handed out a list of rail trail committee activities and reviewed highlights of the list. He said Yva Rose of Lamoille Valley Bike Tours has been a big contributor. She has come to meetings to help the committee figure out how we can make Johnson a rail trail destination. We have a VOREC grant to study safe access from the trailhead to the village. The committee is working on establishing safe, secure parking. Johnson is in the middle of the trail but people are typically dividing it into thirds and staying in Jeffersonville and Hardwick. They would spend 6 times as much if they stayed here. We have a lot of recreational potential, including gravel roads, the arboretum, fishing spots and Beard Park. The State of Vermont will be putting out wayfinding guidance about what signage we can put up in the community. The committee will need selectboard permission to put up signs. We lack overnight accommodations and restaurants but in other regards we are ahead of most towns. The committee will want the selectboard to authorize signage for local attractions. Beth Foy has been working on a website for the committee. The state has done a bad job with its website for the rail trail. Beth, Adrienne and Kyle have put together great information for the website. We need to integrate it into the town website and eventually link there from the state website. We have a Vermont Community Fund Challenge Grant. Adrienne has prepared a map for the trailhead. The committee participated in the Re-Imagine Johnson meetings. They are applying for a grant for reconstruction and improvements at the trailhead. They want to put in stone steps to connect the field to the trailhead building, which requires an Act 250 permit.

Mark asked if there is a Lamoille Valley Rail Trail app. Peggy Williams said VTrans has a website that has information on different segments of the trail. VTrans has the most up to date information on trail closures. The Fans of Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Facebook page is not an official source of info.

Doug said the committee has surveyed where there are restrooms, food, bike racks, etc. in town and why people stop here. The state is organizing a trail friendly business program. He gave businesses in town information on registering with the state. The state will publicize the trail friendly businesses and they get a sticker.

Doug said he reached out to the people planning to put a hostel in Hardwick and asked them to talk to us. The idea of camping at Holmes Meadow is important. Camping attracts different people and may be more attractive to those doing the trail in two days rather than three days. At some point the town will find it beneficial to have a greeter in the trailhead building. That person might also work with camping. Phil Yuris used to run state parks and he is going to look at Holmes Meadow and give advice about how to set it up for primitive camping. Doug wonders how we can get our community interested in providing overnight accommodations in town. There is money to be made from that. The committee can't do it all themselves. They need some outreach and participation from the community.

Duncan asked if there is a reasonable way to try to solicit community input. Do we need Front Porch Form and Facebook posts to generate interest? Doug said the committee has recently gotten the ability to post on Front Porch Forum. Recreation as an economic driver is one of the 5 items that came out of Re-Imagine Johnson.

Mark asked if the committee has data on who is using the trail. Are they staying overnight? Are they from out of state or local? Kyle said Yva Rose is not on the committee but she comes to as many meetings as she can. She is an incredible resource. Her bike tour company is right on the rail trail. She is working with the state on rail trail potential and needs. She has given the committee amazing forecasted statistics. The trail will eventually be right up there with trails in Quebec that have millions of riders a year. The potential is huge. Peggy said there isn't formal data from VTrans. You can see many bikes in front of Jenna's Cafe. She goes in and sees that none of them are people she knows. She sees large numbers of people on the trail. People do seem to be riding the trail in thirds rather than halves. Places like the Sunset Motel are doing well because people can get there very easily from the rail trail. People who are cycling don't need an Airbnb. They need a bedroom and a place to have a shower and breakfast, and they need to stay for one night. Kyle said they need a place that doesn't have a 2-night minimum. Peggy said they also want camping or a hostel. That is what we don't have. We have Airbnbs, but that is more than most people want. Mark said Long Trail hikers stay at the shelters on the trail. He wonders if something that primitive is an option for bikers. Peggy said she thinks it would be.

Tom asked if other towns own and operate hostels. Doug said Vermont Huts owns only two of the huts they book for. They are really interested in coming to a meeting and talking about a hostel in Johnson. We talked to Gene Richards about the idea of a hostel at the Woolen Mills. Shayne said he thinks something like that would be a fantastic use of our revolving loan fund. Mike said we have a lot of town property.

Doug said the regional head of a national organization came to Johnson and was impressed by our trailhead. He said overnight parking should be in the village because we don't have the traffic in the

trailhead area to provide policing for safe overnight parking. Yva suggested it would be important to have overnight parking.

Tom asked what it would take for the mill house to be a hostel. Doug said it is co-owned by the village. It is in a brownfield. If people set their mind to it he thinks there would be no problem using it for a hostel. Tom said if it were operating for more hours security wouldn't be a problem. Doug said on the other hand getting people into the village gets them closer to businesses.

Doug said with the VOREC grant and FEMA buyouts there is the possibility of getting bikes off Railroad St. and onto property acquired by Tatro when they acquired the former Subway. There is a large parcel that runs behind all the buildings. It does not connect back to Railroad Street. There are several other properties that have applied for buyouts. Duncan said the Tatro property is currently in a buyout.

Shayne asked, when it comes to overnight accommodations, are other towns making those types of investments – building hostels or huts and managing them? Doug said he suspects Vermont Huts is going to run the hostel they are putting in themselves. Most other communities have places to stay and more places to eat.

Kyle said she and Doug attend the regional rail trail committee meetings and have been told several times that because we have our local rail trail committee we are one of the more proactive towns. People are looking to us as a model.

Shayne said he thinks pocket parks and smaller pathways are a great idea. One thing he has always wanted to see is food trucks on the rail trail. Maybe stopping there for a food truck would encourage people to also go into town. Doug said he told the owner of Hangry Mike's about the trail friendly business program. The owner said he would like to set up his food truck at the trailhead. Mark said he would be interested to see how many rail trail users come to Johnson Farm and Garden. He notices them there. Doug said people are willing to get off the trail. Ben Waterman told him people came off the trail to his place.

7. *Beautification Committee Report*

Adrienne said the beautification committee is trying to add more flowers wherever they can. They are trying to redirect their focus a little to art. They are going to look for grants for illustrations on the side of the trailhead building where the portraits are, that could be rotated out every few years. They are going to reach out to some other groups like the tree board and the Historical Society to do more collaborating with planting bulbs. They had a successful plant swap this spring. They may want to incorporate more events like that. Tomorrow they have a big planting night. They will decorate the community oven and put mums in different areas. A goal of Adrienne's for next year is to create new beds with fewer weeds that are easier to maintain.

Duncan asked if she means establishing flower beds along highway strips. Adrienne said she means making beds in general areas that are mulched and more easily mowed around. Duncan asked, on town properties? Adrienne said yes. Kyle Nuse said right now there is no permission from the village to do anything in the village. Until it is clearly written out what is owned by the town and what is owned by the village they are not willing to plant in the green strips on Railroad Street. .

Duncan said Route 15 is a state highway. Neither the town nor the village own the right of way; the state does. In his opinion all other town highway rights of way are owned and controlled by the town,

not the trustee board. In his opinion the trustee board has no right to tell the beautification committee they can or can't do anything in town highway rights of way. We probably should clarify with the village who owns the rights of way. Duncan said his only caveat would be that if the committee is going to do plantings he believes that should require landowner permission and approval. Technically the town owns the right of way but the land belongs to the property owners to the center of the road. Eben said when he looked at Railroad Street on old maps it looked to him like the town actually owned the property. Duncan said from his past experience dealing with land surveyors, some of them surveyed land to the center of the road. It sometimes depends on what the deed says. Lately he thinks surveyors tend to describe parcels as being to the edge of the right of way. Tom said due to a law change in 2019, towns can no longer tax beyond the edge of the right of way. Duncan said that is different from ownership. Tom said the town maintains control and he believes landowners have to ask permission to do almost everything in the right of way. Shayne said it is probably best practice to ask landowners anyway. Eben said we should also give the village a heads up since they have utilities buried there.

Doug Molde said the contractor working under the VOREC grant will need to know about ownership, so the town needs to resolve the question. Kyle said it would be great if this could be made a priority, for several reasons.

Adrienne asked if the town has storage space for planters and larger items. Eben suggested that Tom come up with ideas. Tom said there are some possibilities. Adrienne said she can make a list of the things that need to be stored.

Mark asked, with the village starting its own beautification committee, is the town committee going to focus less on village properties? Adrienne said the town committee is trying to work out relations with the village. The committee will be on the agenda for their next meeting. She is hearing they no longer want to have a green spaces committee. Mark said if they created their own committee that would change the nature of the beautification committee. Adrienne said it was an unfortunate situation but it gave the committee an opportunity to refocus on other areas that could use work. They will focus on those more until things are worked out. Duncan asked her to report back to the selectboard. If the village is really going to take over spaces in the village he would question the need for a town beautification committee.

Eben said when it is time for the lights and flags on the Railroad Street bridge to be redone, he would appreciate conversation about that. He would entertain the idea of something more expensive that would last longer. Adrienne said the committee will talk about that at their next meeting. Eben said it takes a lot of man-hours to do that every year.

Mike said he noticed in the committee's June 26 minutes that there was difficulty with reconciling committee expenditures. Did that get tightened up? Kyle said the committee keeps a spreadsheet of what they spend and what revenue comes in. Their treasurer, Lauren, asked Rosemary for her version and it was really different. It was the end of the fiscal year so it seemed too late to dig into it. They let it go because they stayed within their budget. The total amount of money was not off, just the specific purchases. Lauren will start checking in monthly with Rosemary so if there are differences they will be caught earlier.

8. ***Future Report***

Casey said in May the skatepark committee gave a report that referred to their need to work with the rec coordinator and needing more support from the rec coordinator. That ties directly to the hiring

process for the rec coordinator. If the selectboard asks what the committee needs and is given a specific answer and then it doesn't ever come to fruition, it is not a good relationship. She also doesn't want Tom overburdened.

Eben said he felt Casey's request for more rec coordinator hours would cost more money than what was approved by the voters for this year. His thought was that during budget time the board would discuss it.

Casey said the person filling this position is very important to the skatepark committee. That wasn't reflected in the hiring process. Communication between committees and the selectboard is a concern.

Duncan said when a committee requests something it doesn't necessarily mean the selectboard will agree and the committee will get it. The request was not lost on him, but he was thinking about how we could build it into long range planning, given that it probably will require budget adjustments.

Paul said he would like the Planning Commission to meet with the selectboard sooner rather than later. The board agreed to meet with the Planning Commission next month and the Historical Society in November.

9. Budget Status / Year End Financials

Rosemary said last week we got about \$200K in FEMA funds. Mark asked how we paid the bills before receiving reimbursement. Our total FEMA expenses were close to half a million, right?

Rosemary said yes. Rosemary said we were able to use money from the paving reserve fund and the tax anticipation reserve fund. Duncan said we will reimburse whatever account we spent from. Eben said the emergency management fund helped a little bit.

Mark asked if we are going to make a profit off FEMA reimbursements. Tom said any income greater than expense represents the time our employees took out of their normal duties to handle the disaster. Rosemary said library expenses and reimbursement are still unknown. Duncan said we will not get reimbursed by FEMA for more than our expenses. Rosemary and Tom discussed which items we have gotten reimbursed for so far.

The board reviewed a year end financial summary provided by Rosemary. After applying all previously agreed-upon reservations, we will have an uncommitted reserve of about \$220K. The previously approved reservations presented at town meeting will be applied. The selectboard needs to decide what to do with the remaining uncommitted funds. Duncan suggested that board members think about reservations to propose. The board accepted Rosemary's year end summary.

Rosemary said Sodexo has applied for a liquor license for an event at the college on September 28. She will approve it if there are no objections from the board. There were no objections.

10. CEDS Update

Randall said he reached out to the Lamoille County Planning Commission for rail trail data. The most recent they had was from 2022, when they used counters on the trail. At the trail head in Johnson, in the first week they counted 805 people going one way and 745 going the other. That could include some redundant counting of people going both ways. In the next week they counted 693 and 650. There have been 2 years of promotion of the trail since then, but even those numbers are great to him.

Randall said he has been in conversation with Duncan about the next step with the Northern Border Regional Commission because of the bond vote. We have had some communication with the national

and state level NBRC people to get their perspective on what the next step should be. The information wasn't entirely clear. He is going to get some clarification. He has a meeting coming up with the Lamoille County Planning Commission and the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation to get their perspective on how to proceed and to see if they can give clarification on the information from NBRC. Duncan also had some questions about Mumley Engineering's next steps. He relayed those questions to Mumley and they had questions of their own that he needs to relay to NBRC.

The Historical Society was interested in a historical preservation grant from the state. It turns out that is under the same funding umbrella as another grant we have applied for and we cannot receive a second one in the same fiscal year. It probably does not make sense for them to apply because of that.

The rail trail committee and Randall send each other information about grant opportunities and if there is one they are very serious about or that will take a lot of his time he approaches the selectboard. He would like to have the same kind of communication with the Historical Society about possible grant opportunities. Board members indicated they are comfortable with that approach.

Duncan said we should decide whether to proceed immediately with NEPA review of the industrial park site or wait 30 days. If we had a petition for reconsideration of the bond vote within 30 days and the bond article failed on reconsideration, we would be on the hook for the cost of the NEPA review. Do we want to take that risk?

Randall said Mumley indicated that if they are able to work on permitting issues parallel to NEPA they thought waiting 30 days for NEPA review would not impact the timeline significantly. If they are not able to do those things in parallel it would lead to some delay. They said they are about a month away from applying for Act 250. Duncan said the Act 250 application is not part of the grant expense. Randall said the NEPA review will cost between \$10K and \$20K.

Duncan moved to authorize Randall to issue partial notice to proceed with the NEPA review, Mark seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Shayne asked if the board is comfortable with Randall using his time to pursue grants that fall under the 5 priority categories identified at the Re-Imagine Johnson meeting. Eben said he thinks that is a longer conversation. There is still one other Re-Imagine Johnson session. Duncan asked if the 5 areas are going to be reduced to 3. Are the groups working on them going to be independent study groups? Who are they going to report to?

Randall said they won't be reduced in number. There was a list of 15 that was reduced down to 5. At the end of the meeting people were able to sign up for task forces. The selectboard needs to decide how they see those task forces interfacing (or not) with town business. In some other communities they have acted relatively independently. Obviously they can't act independently if and when they reach a point where they are going to impact town business in some way. Almost every one of the 5 areas interfaces with things he is already involved with. It is up to the board whether they want to create a formal relationship between him and the groups. There is a technical assistance program with an October 16 deadline that potentially interfaces with 2 of these task forces. It is not a grant. It is a federal agency devoting resources and expertise. Consultants are hired through them. They organize meetings and the consultants work to produce a master plan for recreation and revitalization. Two of the 5 priorities interface with that. The application doesn't look simple but it doesn't look extremely difficult either. There might be value in the program even outside those task forces. He could take a

deeper look at the application and come back with more information at the next meeting and see if the board wants him to apply.

Shayne asked if the cost of the consultants would be borne by the town. Randall said no.

Duncan asked if Randall has any sense of how competitive the program is. Randall said he thinks it is fairly competitive. He thinks Poultney got one in the past couple of years, so Vermont has been successful in applying before. It is focused on rural communities.

Duncan asked if we have enough to move forward with a specific request for technical assistance. Randall said the technical assistance is with the planning work. As he understands it, we don't have to have a specific set of projects.

Duncan said he has concerns about working on the downtown reconfiguration and redevelopment priority item from the Re-Imagine Johnson process without being in communication with the trustees. He feels the trustees ought to at least be aware something like this is being considered. Randall said they were invited to Re-Imagine Johnson and he saw some of them, at least at the first meeting. These are aspirational task forces. They have not been empowered to take action. They will explore options and come up with ideas. Then they would tell the appropriate group what they are thinking.

It was agreed that Randall should learn more about the EPA technical assistance program he described and come back to the board with information at the first meeting in October.

11. Historical Society Grant Requests

Randall said there is no need for this item. He doesn't think it makes sense to make a motion with regard to a specific grant application.

12. Form Based Code

Eben said Paul Warden came to town meeting and asked the voters about potential revisions to form based code and then the selectboard asked the planning commission to make revisions to form based code for flood mitigation projects. The planning commission chose not to make amendments, for good reasons. There is a potential need for revisions for flood mitigation projects. Would the selectboard like to take up proposed amendments to form based code?

Paul said at town meeting he was speaking as an individual. He was concerned and thought changes were something we should consider. When the selectboard asked the planning commission to look at it they had a long discussion and voted his idea down. They felt there should not be exemptions for flood mitigation because it puts us back in same position. It makes it easier to rebuild in the same area. During the last Re-Imagine Johnson meeting the overwhelming opinion of the people there that night was that the grocery store should not remain in the same location. But the choice presented was not between building there or not having a grocery store at all.

Eben was unable to attend the last Re-Imagine Johnson meeting but his question would be, if other options are cost prohibitive, should there be a store in the current location with flood mitigation, or no store?

Kyle said the context of that exercise was about building resiliency. The majority did not feel keeping the store in the same location would build long term resilience.

Charlie Gallanter said amending form based code is not simple. The procedure for modifying it will take a while. It has to conform to the town plan. We don't have a town plan. It would have to conform to river corridor and floodplain regulations. We don't know what those are. It has been suggested that a simpler way would be for the selectboard to do it. Whether that can be done depends on which part of the statute you read. To try to do that, we would have to have an Australian ballot vote. It could take years to change the code.

Duncan asked Charlie to expand on why it would take an Australian ballot vote. Charlie said there is statute that says if the original form based code was passed by Australian ballot then any changes also have to be passed by Australian ballot.

Mike asked, what if someone petitions to get rid of form based code? We need a grocery store and if it takes getting rid of form based code to make it happen he is okay with that. Charlie said he is too.

Eben said one thing Paul has brought up before is the question of where the water will go if a higher wall is built for flood mitigation. He has been a big proponent of not filling in the floodplain. But for a grocery store maybe there is a way the board can formally do it. When the project at Holmes Meadow is done he calculates it will remove more than 4 times the cubic footage of the grocery store in material. Maybe the board can allocate some of that in a formal way.

Duncan said a critical thing is that the building is already there. Eben said yes, but it fills with water and it would not if it were protected by a wall.

Duncan said we are sponsoring an application for flood mitigation through Swift Current, a FEMA program. If they conclude that the proposed flood mitigation measures are consistent with FEMA rules and regulations he has to believe that would meet any floodplain requirements.

Shayne said we will have a lot of new green space. It would be smart to look at that and balance the grocery store against additional benching.

Mike and Duncan said they are in favor of amending form based code for flood mitigation purposes. Mark asked if what Pomerleau proposes for flood mitigation will trigger form based code. Tom said there would not be enough window glazing to meet form based code requirements. Eben said he is in favor of making changes.

Duncan said it sounds like the planning commission is still not interested in pursuing any standards for flood mitigation for property in flood zones. Paul said he wouldn't say that. The question was whether the planning commission should recommend to the selectboard that a waiver process be created and the vote was no. Duncan asked if the planning commission is willing to take this up. If they are he would like to see them work on it. Charlie said 24 V.S.A. § 4441 says a proposed amendment prepared by a body other than the planning commission must be submitted in writing to the planning commission. Duncan said the planning commission is not required to approve the amendment, though.

Mike said we don't need to be too concerned about this until we know whether Pomerleau has gotten the grant and is going to move forward. Duncan said he doesn't think we should think about this just in terms of the store. There are other properties that could need the same relief. This will not be a short

process. If we wait to find out whether Pomerleau gets approval, that could add 6-8 months to his timeline.

Mark asked when the last deadline is for buyout applications. Duncan said it has passed. Tom said people can still apply. He thinks they are calling it a rolling application. Depending on the significance of the project it could get moved ahead or behind others.

The selectboard asked the planning commission to reconsider amendments to form based code.

Mark asked, if Pomerleau doesn't get the grant he is not going to do anything? Others said we don't know. Shayne said he is a private landowner and can do what he wants. Eben said we have only been discussing one grant, but there may be other grants available to him. Shayne said there are also other properties that form based code amendments may apply to.

Adrienne asked, instead of making exceptions in form based code, why not make it easier under form based code to build out infrastructure to hold water? Eben said he would consider language like that. But maybe requiring on-site retention of the same amount of water would be cost prohibitive. Paul said he thinks Adrienne is trying to look at it more holistically. Form based code only looks at the building envelope.

13. Website Redesign Presentation

Charles Flaum gave a presentation to help selectboard members understand website design and development options. He explained that the front end of a website is the part everyone sees online. The back end is like the transmission, engine and chassis of a car. A website is a front end coupled to a back end. A designer makes the front end. A developer makes the back end – makes the buttons clickable and the search field searchable and enables connecting to a database.

There are three different types of websites – custom websites, websites built on platforms and websites built on industry platforms. A custom site is made from scratch. You get exactly what you want. You own the site, so once it is developed you are not paying anyone else.

A website built on a platform like WordPress can be compared to having a chassis provided and being able to choose the wheels, engine and transmission from different options. There are third-party apps that connect to the basic platform. The person who creates the website chooses the third-party apps to use. Websites using WordPress and similar platforms don't need a developer. Designers can plug in third-party software without writing code. Shayne said it is good to have a good designer who will pick good plug-ins that won't go out of date. Charles said with this type of site the designer and developer are the same. It saves money. You own the site, but it whenever there is an upgrade your site changes slightly. This type of site is not for a specific industry. You can pay extra for customization but it is still less customizable than a custom site. There can be security vulnerabilities.

There are some platforms that are designed for specific industries. He showed an image of a back end on an industry-specific site for a town. The company makes custom websites that run on their own servers, with a back end designed to be used by people who know nothing about computers. If something happens to the site and it goes down, it is their job to fix it. They take care of backups, which may not be the case with a custom or WordPress site. Some big WordPress hosts do handle backups. The bad thing about these sites is that you don't really own your site. They give you templates to choose from and will customize it somewhat. There are ongoing subscription costs.

Mark asked if Charles has a favorite. Charles said he hasn't seen all the proposals the town received. He feels we need a track record. We need someone who has built sites for towns before. Mark asked if he has looked at other towns' sites. Is there a particular one he likes? Charles said the biggest player in the field is CivicPlus. They wouldn't even look at us. Their minimum size is about 15,000. Mike said the proposal for about \$3K from someone who had made sites for about 20 Vermont towns seemed like a pretty good deal. Charles said there can be big differences under the hood. We really need to delve into the details. Shayne said there is a lot of fluff in some of the proposals.

14. Website RFP Response and Possible Award

Eben said he thinks a couple of people should be delegated to come to the board with a recommendation. Shayne volunteered to look at the proposals and provide a recommendation. Eben said there were a couple of late submissions. He thinks the recommendations should be based on the proposals submitted on time. Duncan asked if Charles could work with Shayne on a recommendation. Tom asked if he could join them. He said he thinks it is very important to work with Rosemary because we need to see how it will work for her and her staff. Eben said the village wanted to know the price. He asked Tom to tell them the proposals ranged from \$3K to \$20K. Tom said he saw 3 proposals he thought seemed reasonable.

Elisa Clancy said she is the town's current webmaster. She took over when the previous webmaster died. She did not design the current site but she has been keeping it going. She has built websites for Hyde Park and Belvidere. Recently Hyde Park went through a redesign with one of the companies Johnson got a proposal from, Revize. One thing the town should consider is that with some sites the expense goes up every year. Design and development of a website mostly happens at the beginning. That is what the town should be paying for. She doesn't think these custom sites should charge the same amount year after year. She noted that she did not put in a proposal. Joanne Ring did. She is there and can answer questions about the type of WordPress site she recommends. She thinks Hyde Park will regret how much money they are spending. She thinks a WordPress site can meet the town's needs. She recommends not spending too much money.

Mike said he thinks we need to stick as local as we can.

Duncan moved to appoint Tom Galinat, Shayne Spence and Charles Flaum to review website redesign proposals and provide a recommendation to the selectboard, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.

15. Engineering RFQ

A suggested RFQ was included in the packet to go out to bid. **Duncan moved to authorize Tom to circulate the RFQ, with the date of September 17 added, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.**

16. Old Business Display Format

Duncan said at least for work session meetings he would like to see the agenda list old business items. That would serve as a rolling priority list for the board. Completed items would come off the list and new ones would be added. Tom said he would like to create a new spreadsheet for old business items that would include start and end dates and a point person. He shared examples of different possible formats, including what Ron Rodjenski used for Hyde Park. Duncan said he also wants a list on the agenda. He likes what Hyde Park did. Tom said Ron Rodjenski can help him set up grant tracking. The board agreed that Tom can use Stone Shore Consulting (Ron's business) to help him set up grant tracking.

17. Health Insurance

Eben said last year the board talked about starting earlier in the year to consider alternative health insurance options. The idea was that we would ask Tom to work with Erik Bailey to come up with options. Tom said he talked to Erik this morning. Our union contracts come up for renewal next year. If we decided on a change now it might not happen until a new union contract is negotiated. Eben said the union contract acknowledges that we may need to discuss health insurance benefits at some point. He thinks the village has a considerably different contract. He is in support of identifying options. He doesn't see why we couldn't make a change this year. The board agreed that Tom should work with Erik and come back with options.

Duncan said Tom alluded in his report to the question of whether we should consider separating the town and village personnel policies. The village has already made some changes we did not make. Mike said he thinks we should look at separation. Tom said he thinks it would better to have two separate policies even if they had the same language. We could still make joint decisions, but it would be a handshake and not a marriage.

18. Kennel Options

Tom said he met with Hyde Park last Wednesday to go over the proposed interlocal agreement on kenneling. Hyde Park is concerned that they could be on the hook for any dogs left at the kennel by Johnson. It was agreed to work on rewriting the agreement and add procedures. There are 3 confirmed participants. We would be the fourth. They don't want more than 5 towns. Tom said he also reached out to Crystal Earle. He will ask her if she is interested in being a subcontractor and leasing her kennel. Hyde Park really wants to work with us. Our concerns brought up concerns for them. Tom agreed that if he gets a new draft of the agreement before the next meeting he will send it out to the board.

19. Rec Coordinator Job Description

Tom suggested that a couple of board members and previous rec coordinators work on revising the job description drafted by Shayne. Shayne said he thinks with the position funded as it is the description he drafted would be good to adopt right now. If more is going to be budgeted in the future then he would suggest revisiting it and thinking of what could be added.

Casey said she thinks the description is good. But it does not mention having or using a personal vehicle and that has always been something the person in that position has done. Duncan said it would be reasonable to include that mileage will be reimbursed at the normal rate. Casey said they need to transport equipment in their vehicle. Tom said he would add mileage reimbursement under compensation and use of personal vehicle under working conditions. Duncan said the town has a policy on work use of a personal vehicle. Tom said our town insurance will not cover their injury or liability if they are driving a personal vehicle. The board agreed to reference the existing policy.

Duncan said the job description mentions working with the rec committee. Right now we don't have one. Do we want re-establishing one to be a priority? Or do we want to go with Tom's idea of not having one? He thinks there is value to a rec committee, but he understands it might not be easy to reconvene. Tom said there might be new enthusiasm with a new coordinator. Duncan said some towns make use of volunteers for a specific sport. It might be easier to attract people with a specific interest to help with their interest. Eben said for now he would like to leave the language about the rec committee in there.

Duncan moved and Mike seconded to approve the rec coordinator job description with the changes discussed. Tom summarized the changes: add mileage at the federal rate under

compensation, add use of personal car with valid insurance and current registration to working conditions and make sure at the signing of the offer letter there is the personnel policy and the existing personal car use policy (or if it cannot be found, a newly adopted one.) **The motion was passed.**

20. Reappraisals

Tom said he asked Justin to compile the costs for all the reappraisal proposals. He recommends going with NEMRC. Sansoucy does utilities only. Buckley won't visit every parcel. Our reappraisal fund is about \$30K short of the amount we would need. Mike said it won't be by the time the reappraisal is done.

Mike asked, is there no other company that can do it sooner? Eben said he talked to Justin about the potential of Sansoucy doing a utilities-only reappraisal. They can do it earlier. NEMRC will not do utility reappraisal. We have to accept the evaluation the state does for utilities. A utilities-only reappraisal is really more of an audit and recommendation. We would still have to fight with the state to increase the appraisal of the utilities. Duncan said in Vermont every utility has to submit a detailed inventory with cost depreciation, etc. with a full evaluation. The listers can appeal that. If you did a separate appraisal you could use that as the basis for the appeal. The listers can do that anyway.

Tom asked if the village pays taxes to the town. Duncan said only for the assets outside of the village. State statute allows a municipal tax exemption for a municipal utility within their municipality. In Johnson's case it has been deemed that the Village of Johnson is tax exempt within the Village of Johnson but any assets they own in the Town of Johnson are taxable and they do pay taxes to us.

Eben said he doesn't want to pay \$20K to assess utilities when the state provides values and we would have to fight the state to change them.

Duncan moved and Shayne seconded to accept NEMRC's proposal for a townwide reappraisal at a cost of \$150,000.

There was discussion about whether the reappraisal will be started in 2029 or completed in 2029. Eben asked Tom to follow up on that and let the board know.

The motion was passed with Mike opposed.

21. Grow Cemetery

Tom said Grow Cemetery has been closed to new burials, but apparently there was a verbal agreement that Leona Whitehill could be buried there. Duncan agreed that is the case. Tom suggested putting in place a formal agreement, as well as a boundary line agreement. He needs to meet with Leona and the other Grow Cemetery neighbor to agree on boundaries. The board agreed that Tom should provide something for the board to sign that codifies the burial agreement. Eben said he has also heard that there was an agreement that Dave and Lucy Marvin could be buried in Plot Cemetery. He asked Tom to get that in writing also.

22. Scheduling Special Meeting to Fill Selectboard Vacancy

Duncan moved and Mike seconded to accept with regret and thanks the resignation letter of Shayne Spence, effective tomorrow. Board members thanked Shayne for his work on the board. **The motion was passed.**

The board agreed to post the vacancy on the town webpage, Facebook, Front Porch Forum and in the News & Citizen. Letters of interest should be sent to Tom by the close of business on October 1.

The board decided to hold interviews in executive session.

Duncan moved to conduct candidate interviews on October 2 at 6:00 p.m. and the motion was seconded and passed.

23. *Executive Session for Evaluation of an Employee*

Duncan moved to enter executive session for evaluation of an employee under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), inviting Tom to remain, Mark seconded and the motion was passed at 10:20. The board came out of executive session at 10:28.

Mike moved to offer Isabelle Sullivan the position of recreation coordinator pending a background check, Shayne seconded and the motion was passed.

24. *Adjourn*

The meeting was adjourned at 10:29.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

UNAPPROVED