Town Administrator's Report for Monday, October 21st, 2024

6:30 p.m. Call to order and Standing Items

1. 6:30-6:35pm Consider additions or adjustments

Decision: Possible Arboretum ROW and stay mat path.

- 2. 6:35pm Review invoices and orders
- 3. 6:35-6:40pm Public Comment
- 4. 6:40-6:45pm Selectboard issues and concerns
- 5. 6:45-6:50pm Planned Purchases

Committee Report

6. 6:50-7:00pm Planning Commission

Information: Paul Warden will be presenting. The Planning Commission will have a heavy lift during this meeting. Please review the report submitted by the Planning Commission in the packet to streamline questions.

a. Historical Society for 11/18/24

Decision: During the 9/16 meeting the board requested the Historical Society to attend in October then switched it the Planning Commission. This is item is solely to confirm board consensus.

Work Session Items: Information, Action, or Review may be taken

7. 7:05-7:20pm CEDS Update

Information: Randall will be present and will bring us up to speed on all of his projects. Please see his report in the packet to streamline questions.

8. 7:20-7:25pm Industrial Park next Steps

Information, possible decision: This item will need to be a running item for the next few months, similar to how we processed buyout applications in the spring. There may be an update, a decision, or no action at all. This project will move quickly and have lots of details to sort out along the way.

9. 7:25-7:35pm Revolving Loan Fund

Information, possible decision: The board needs to decide when or if to borrow from the Revolving Loan Fund. Randall and Duncan will bring us up to speed. By borrowing before our Notice to Proceed, it may complicate the process and slow things down. If the board chooses to borrow, it may be more efficient to bond for the full amount now, and then pay back a large portion of the bond after the project is under way.

10. 7:35-7:45pm Planning Commission and Reimagine Johnson

Discussion, possibly decision: While we have the Planning Commission in the room, the board should try to discuss how the Town will play a role with the sub-committees of Re-Imagine Johnson. The 5 sub-committees are: Bring a Grocery Store to Johnson and Increase Awareness and Access to Food, Develop a Housing Strategy, Downtown Reconfiguration and Redevelopment, Capitalize and Increase Recreational Economic Opportunities, and Enhance and Strengthen the College/Town Connection. I will be meeting with VCRD in late October, this may be premature, but I will relay all your questions and possibilities.

11. 7:45-7:55pm Planning Commission Town Plan changes and final hearing

Discussion: The Village has requested to add language to page 92 of the draft Town Plan. The board will have to agree on language to present at the joint meeting tentatively scheduled for October 30th. Please see the original, Village suggested, and Selectboard suggested in the packet.

12. 7:55-8:00pm Form Based Code

Decision: The Planning Commission will not be making any changes to Form Based Code. The board will have to decide whether to take up an exception to FBC for flood mitigation measures. This decision is mostly surrounded by the Market and plans to mitigate in place. This decision will affect all districts within FBC. There has been no suggested language to date. The decision would start the process of drafting new language.

13. 8:00-8:10pm Scribner Bridge

Decision: This is the last call for new ideas for Scribner Bridge. Any ideas that a board member has should be emailed to the whole board as information only to be discussed at the meeting. The only ideas I would suggest would be to remove the bridge and place it on Waterman Road or another crossing. The bridge could also be used for display elsewhere on town property. That would allow the Town to remove the abutments and restore the river floodway, reducing risk to public infrastructure adjacent to the bridge. This will also allow for the costly repairs to be done to the ironwork beneath and the siding of the bridge will be repaired upon relocation.

14. 8:10-8:35pm Review of Library RFP's and Location Decision

Decision: The board will have to decide the where the library should be located. I believe we have it nailed down to Legion Field. There are two main sites, next to the studio center or in the lot where the alumni house was next to the school. The pro's of the area next to the studio center is that it is close to three phrase power and 1' higher in elevation. The con's are that this is the most disruptive to the current use of Legion Field. The pro's to the alumni lot is that it is best suited for the current use of legion field. We've already approached the SU about transferring the lot as well. The con's are that the front right corner might be in the 500 year flood plain. The rear of the lot has a steep hill. Both issues will require significant drainage or

building elevations to the final design. All told, both sites can hold a fabulous library and it's proximity to the school will put two of Johnson's most valuable community resources side by side. I will have the RFP to you in your email tomorrow or over the weekend to reach out to building movers. We have identified 3 companies. I would suggest we ask Nate Brigham to be on the selection committee as he will be working closely with them to while managing the utilities during the move. This is a big job and delegating roles to a key few people to lead will make this a success.

15. 8:35-8:40pm Kennel Update

Information: I will be meeting with Crystal Friday night to talk about her plans for a kennel and if it's feasible for the Town to subcontract. I have reached out to Hyde Park and did not hear anything as of yet.

16. 8:40-8:50pm Joint Meeting Agenda Items

This is a preliminary list so far, please consider any additional items you can think of. These meetings are elusive so we should capitalize on them when we can. This list is not set in stone but what has come to my attention as we began discussions.

- -The joint 180 acres parcel and selling it.
- -Health insurance.
- -Wage increases.
- -AC unit at the town office.
- -Clock tower repairs.
- -The town purchasing the 20% of the backhoe that the village owns.
- -Interest in ownership of the mill house.
- -Interest in ownership of the village garage.
- -Interest in ownership of the town garage.
- -Possibly others coming out of our meeting on the 21st.
- -Rate of Pay
- -Holidays
- -Website

17. 8:50-9:00pm Budget Process

The budget is upon us! This process can be simplified and honestly needs to be. Eben and I have discussed having 2 board members delegated to work with the treasurer, administrator and committee chairs to put together a first draft. Then bring the draft before the whole board to go line by line.

18. 9:00-9:05pm Old Business

- -Town Administrator & CEDS priority list
- -ATV Ordinance
- -Capital Budget and Plan
- -Town Sewer Service Area, Light Industrial Park
- -Plan to separate ownership of buildings
- -Drainage clarification in village
- -Communication to the Public
- -Interlocal Pound Agreement
- -Road Reclassification
- -Town Website
- -NBRC with a positive bond vote
- -Library as needed
- -Scribner Bridge Grants
- -MOU for Beautification
- -Buyout property planning

19. 9:05-9:10pm Other Points of Note

Get Ready Johnson! We have a new Recreation Coordinator! Isabelle Sullivan has started and is off and running! She will be making weekly/biweekly reports for the administrator and the board. I asked her to do this because on our tour she noticed a significant amount of deferred maintenance. This budget season will have a lot of questions and hard decisions, the board should be fully apprised ahead of time. All programs will run as normal, but the board will have to talk about how to get caught back up. I firmly believe that the heart of every town lies in three places: The Library, The School, and Recreation. If Johnson is going to be the town we're working towards, recreation will need a lift.

The water has been shut off at the Trail Head building. The Skatepark will be shut off the first week of November. New locks have been added to the hydrant at legion field and the trail head. There was snow in Peacham, it won't be long before it's here too.

Executive Session

20. 9:10-9:15pm Executive Session for the Evaluation of an Employee 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)

TOJ Administrator

From: Paul Warden

Sent: Tuesday, October 15, 2024 8:20 AM **To:** TOJ Administrator; Eben Patch

Cc: Paul Warden

Subject: Fw: JPC Report to Selectboard - need comments by end of day tomorrow Tue 10/15)

JOHNSON PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT FOR 21 OCT 2024 SELECTBOARD MEETING

Share a recent accomplishment large or small.

Large - Completion of the draft Municipal Plan

Small – Resolution of Johnson ERAF funding status (7.5% vs 12.5%; 12.5% confirmed)

List of committee members:

Name

- 1 Paul Warden (Chair)
- 2 Rob Rodriguez (Vice-Chair/Clerk)
- 3 Charles Gallanter
- 4 David Butler
- 5 Kim Cotnoir
- 6 Kyley Hill
- 7 Adrienne (Stevson) Parker
- 8 Vacant Seat
- 9 Vacant Seat

Are you looking at grants for any proposed projects this year?

None definite at this time.

What are your needs (highest priorities)?

Needs: New Planning Commission members

<u>Priorities - Short-Term</u>: Approval of Town & Village Plan(s), Maximize ERAF funding, finalize TSSA boundary

<u>Priorities Medium Term</u>: Update Flood Hazard By-laws, Water and Sewer line extension plan (?), consider comprehensive review of Form Based Code (?), work with task forces from Re-imagine Johnson as appropriate.

What are your desires/wants (longer term priority)?

Integrate the Re-Imagine Johnson ideas into the Municipal Plan and create a Task Force for each chapter.

Is there a long-term committee plan/or vision?

Create and enact a cohesive plan to reinvigorate Johnson, incorporating flood resilient infrastructure and downtown area.

Paul Warden Johnson Planning Commission, Chair

This email and any response to it may be subject to the Vermont Public Records Act.

Industrial Park

We requested and received approval for an extension of the Notice to Proceed date and the contract end date for the NBRC grant. Additionally, we requested and received a Partial Notice to Proceed which means we are authorized to expend funds for specified items (NEPA, LDD admin, etc.).

Johnson Historical Society

I had a call with the Preservation Trust to explore funding options. It was determined that an updated Needs Assessment would be a good first step (the last one is a decade old). They indicated they could help with funding it. After the assessment, we could coordinate with the VT Arts Council (Cultural Facilities Grant) and the VT Division of Historic Preservation (Historic Preservation Grant) to sequence applications as they both draw from the same pool of funds and there are rules about frequency of funding.

Another option to consider is the Vermont Housing Improvement Program for repairs to the apartment. It is my understanding that there is water intrusion due to a design issue with the apartment and that portion of the building may not be eligible for other grant funding. The program has strings attached (the unit must be priced at or below HUD fair market rates 983/month for a 1br currently), but it offers up to \$50k as a ten year 0% interest forgivable loan. It only requires a 20% match which would mean a 10k investment leads to 60k worth of repairs. The entire premises would be inspected for code violations and many of those may fall outside the scope of funding so it is important to weigh that. I called to confirm that, although unprecedented, municipalities are eligible to apply for the program.

FEMA Swift Current Application for the grocery store

The FEMA request for information about engineering and technical details continues to be addressed. Memos from the lead construction person at Pomerleau and their engineering team have been sent for review, but that may not be satisfactory as it seems like FEMA is looking for more technically informed responses and may need specific forms of testing to be satisfied. It continues to be a waiting game.

VCRD Re-Imagine Johnson Task Forces

VCRD held their third meeting to connect task force members with technical support from around the state and for the groups to set their meeting dates. I visited with all of the groups to make them aware of my role and how, pending Selectboard direction, I might be able to support their work. VCRD has offered to attend a Selectboard meeting to share how other municipalities have navigated their relationship with similar groups.

Housing

You may recall one of the top five identified priorities from the VCRD meetings was housing. A recent <u>Vermont Public survey</u> across the state indicated that housing was a top five issue for voters as well. And as you know housing is a national crisis which is particularly acute in Vermont and Lamoille County. I reviewed <u>this housing study</u> when it was released and recently revisited it. I think the Selectboard should consider exploring housing strategies in tandem with the VCRD task force or separately as it is a crucial economic driver. While both communities are very different from Johnson, <u>Rutland</u> and <u>Woodstock</u> are fully involved in finding ways to improve housing options in their communities. I am happy to try to bring someone before the board to provide more information about housing and economic development, and/or specific actions the community can take.

Career Technical Education (CTE) Construction & Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund

As I mentioned in my last report, I am exploring possibilities with this program. I had a call with the program manager, and I explained that our local tech center has limited capacity for a full-blown housing project (which is the intended typical use case for the program). In brainstorming, and looking at the enabling statute, we determined that there may be other possibilities to look at. One of the purposes mentioned other than affordable housing is "Improving land to meet critical community needs." It may be possible under this wording to access the loan fund for building camping structures for the rail trail. The program manager is going to investigate, and it may be that the Selectboard is not interested in a loan, but it will be interesting to see. As a reminder the loans are 0% interest and partially forgivable so that might have some appeal, and it also has the value of helping local students gain skills and experience.

Miscellaneous

I attended the LEDC Annual Luncheon which had several people from outside Lamoille County in attendance. One of which was the VT Deputy Commissioner of Economic Development – I updated him on Johnson in general, and on the NBRC project specifically.

I applied for the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities program. There was no timeline given for a response, although they are offering an extended deadline of 11/13 to communities impacted by recent storms, so there will likely be no determination until well after that date.

Regional Trail Networks

at the Admissions Office.

The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) is a 98-mile four-season multiuse recreational trail between Sheldon Junction and St. Johnsbury. The section of the trail in Johnson closely follows the Lamoille River. This presents a threat of flooding and erosion during periods of heavy rain. In 2015, fifteen miles of trail improvement work was conducted in Johnson, Cambridge, Hyde Park and Morrisville. In the spring of 2023, the trail was completed. The trail provides a yearround, safe and enjoyable travel alternative for all non-motorized modes of transportation including but not limited to pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians, while in the winter the trail allows for snowmobiling and non-motorized use. The LVRT is the property of the State of Vermont and is currently used by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) in the winter months. The Town of Johnson is responsible for providing trailside amenities for trail users. In 2015, the Town built a trailhead facility at the Old Mill Park recreational fields. The facility provides visitor parking, safety and tourism information, a water-fountain and port-o-let facilities. The trail also provides business opportunities in the recreational sector. In 2015, Lamoille Valley Bike Tours opened in Johnson and provides visitors with bike tours of the trail. In summer 2023, the section of the trail between Cambridge and Wolcott, which includes Johnson, was closed due to damage from flooding. This section of the trail was reopened in September 2023.

Snowmobile trail network: The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers maintains an extensive network of snowmobile trails on private and public lands across the state. VAST trails in the Johnson area comprise of a 37-mile network and are maintained by the Sterling Snow Riders club. Currently, there is no access trail for snowmobiles to reach the village center. An interest exists to find a solution that would provide connectivity between the current trail network and downtown amenities and services.

Long Trail: Johnson's stretch of the 270-mile Long Trail consists of 15 miles of main trail and 1.5 miles of side trails. The trail descends the north side of Whiteface Mountain, through Bear Hollow, along Smith Brook Basin, crosses Route 15 and the Lamoille River, ascends to Prospect Rock, up and over Roundtop Mountain, crosses the Plot Rd, winds into Codding Hollow, then continues its way north to Laraway, Butternut and Bowen Mountains. The trail includes three overnight shelters: Bear Hollow, Roundtop and Corliss Camp. Long Trail access points in the Johnson area include Route 15 just west of West Settlement Road where there is also a parking lot, Basin Road off of Codding Hollow Road, also known as Davis Neighborhood trail, as well as a small 2 car pull-off where the Trail crosses Plot Road.

Vermont State University - Johnson recreation resources available to the community Vermont State University (VSU) has a broad range of recreation facilities that are available to the community. These include the SHAPE Center, which has a fitness center, weight room, indoor swimming pool, exercise rooms, racketball courts and an indoor climbing wall. SHAPE offers membership to Johnson residents at a reduced rate. There are also four outdoor tennis courts; a network of hiking, biking and running trails; two soccer fields, a baseball diamond, and a rugby field; and a disc golf course. All outdoor recreation assets are available to the public at no cost. The Upper Pond is a popular walking destination. Free campus maps can be picked up

Throughout the year, the College hosts performances, guest speakers and countless other events at Dibden Center for the Arts and other campus venues. Virtually all of these events are open to the public – many of them free, others for a nominal fee. In addition, all home varsity games are open to the public and free of charge. VSU competes in NCAA Division III and fields 15 varsity teams, including soccer, basketball, volleyball and lacrosse. Area residents also enjoy free access to the Willey Library & Learning Center. The College welcomes and encourages community members to take advantage of the many programs and resources on campus.

Rivers and Trails

The Gihon and Lamoille Rivers are part of the essential character of Johnson. The picturesque rivers can be admired from many scenic locations including the Power House Bridge and an area located near the United Church. Fishermen and swimmers are among the most frequent river users. Johnson also attracts Kayakers during warm months. Johnson has an ongoing interest in improving access to its rivers to increase the appreciation and use of these unique natural resources. The Lamoille River Paddlers Association strives to build a viable paddlers' trail with access points and camp sites along the length of Lamoille. In Johnson, there are 2 publicly maintained access points to the Lamoille River. The first is at Dog's Head Falls, which allows access to anglers. The second is at Crossing Falls, which provides a ramp to the river.

In September 2020, the Town of Johnson in conjunction with the Town of Waterville supported the purchase of a Codding Hollow parcel by the State of Vermont and its subsequent conservation easement purchase by the Green Mountain Club. The Codding Hollow easement is now an essential part of Johnson's recreational amenities as a vital connector of the Long Trail.

The Long Trail, the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and VAST snowmobile trails are three major state trail systems that pass through Johnson. The Transportation chapter of this plan describes these trail systems in more detail.

Local Businesses

Local businesses in Johnson benefit from the Town's natural beauty and its proximity to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail where it intersects with Railroad Street. Local businesses in Johnson provide E-bike tours of the rail trail, bike rentals/equipment, and offer dinning services and variety of stores where local products can be purchased while LVRT travellers enjoy their journey along the trail.

POLICIES

- Encourage efforts to revisit and/or implement recommendations of the 2005 Recreation Facilities Plan. These efforts include the following strategies:
 - Encourage the expansion of trail-based infrastructure to improve connectivity and pathway networks expansion including connectivity between the LVRT and downtown Johnson.

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ATV trail network: The Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association (VASA) maintains an extensive network of ATV trails on private and public lands across the state. VASA trails in the Johnson area comprise of a 23.37-mile network and are maintained by the Green Mountain ATV Club (VASA Trails Coordinator, 2024). Currently, there is no access trail for ATV/UTV riders to reach the village center. An interest exists to find a solution that would provide connectivity between the current trail network and downtown amenities and services. All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are an essential part of Johnson's recreation economy. ATVs may be used in accordance with the Town of Johnson ATV Ordinance: https://townofjohnson.com/documents/ordinances-policies-bylaws/.

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TOJ Administrator

From: Duncan Hastings

Sent: Monday, October 14, 2024 8:11 PM **To:** TOJ Administrator; Select Board

Subject: RE: Muni Plan ATV edits (Clean Copy Revised)

Standard caveat. Information only. Please do not reply all

I do not think the following sentence is correct

VASA trails in the Johnson area comprise of a 23.37-mile network and are maintained by the Green Mountain ATV Club (VASA Trails Coordinator, 2024).

VASA "trails" in Johnson are primarily based on access to unpaved sections of Class III and Class IV roads. VASA does not maintain these roads, the Town of Johnson does.

I propose modification of language such as: "VASA "trails" in Johnson are primarily based on access to unpaved sections of Class III and Class IV roads as per Town Ordinance. These roads are maintained by the Town of Johnson."

I also don't like the wording of the following statement:

"All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are an essential part of Johnson's recreation economy".

I don't think there is any factual basis for the use of the phrase "are an essential part". I suggest striking the words "are an essential" from the sentence and simply have the sentence read: "are a part of".

From: TOJ Administrator <tojadministrator@townofjohnson.com>

Sent: Monday, October 14, 2024 3:49 PM

To: Select Board <selectboard@townofjohnson.com> **Subject:** FW: Muni Plan ATV edits (Clean Copy Revised)

Board, this is the revised edition of the Town Plan, see page 92 and 93 of the original for contrast. Highlighted here.

Eben and Duncan,

The village added ATV language, I think the board needs to accept this. Let me know if you want to accept this on the 30th in the joint meeting or the 21st as just the board.

Thomas Galinat Town Administrator Johnson, Vermont 802.635.2611 o 802-793.8480 c

townofjohnson.com