

**JOHNSON PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MINUTES**

Regular Meeting: THURS, 14 NOV 2024, 6:30PM EDT

*In person at Johnson Municipal Bldg.*

**Members** (P=Present; A=Absent)

<b>Adrienne Stevson</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Kim Cotnoir</b>	<b>P(7:40)</b>	<b>Paul Warden</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Charles Gallanter</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Kyley Hill</b>	<b>P</b>	<i>Vacant Seat</i>	
<b>David Butler</b>		<b>Rob Rodriguez</b>	<b>P</b>	<i>Vacant Seat</i>	

Members of the Public:

In Person: Sam Jasperson, Linda Edwards

Remote Experts: Ron Rodenski, Meghan Rodier

Call to Order and Roll Call: 6:34pm, above

Agenda Changes Public Comment

- Chair proposed moving Flood Hazard Bylaws and River Corridor discussion to follow introductions. Agreed.
- No Public Comment

Self-Introductions of Potential new JPC members:

- Damon Brink (unable to attend, works Thursday evenings)
- Sam Jasperson – Born in Johnson, parents live in town, has lived in NYC and LA, has a 3 year old daughter, has been back in town for 2 years and wants to see Johnson succeed, so is interested in getting involved. Also a member of the DRR Task Force.
- Linda Edwards – (arrived 6:55pm) – Lives in town (10 years) and has family in the area. In her email, Linda stated: “I am interested in being part of future planning for the town. I would bring a calm manner, curiosity, an interest in the town’s future. I am a Johnson resident and viewed “the Great Flood” from the top of West Highland Drive.”

Flood Hazard Bylaws/River Corridors Discussion – Ron Rodenski, Stone Shore Consulting

Ron reviewed the three basic options JPC faces; (1) adopt River Corridors only (to qualify for 17.5% ERAF funding, currently at 12.5%), (2) write and adopt new Flood Hazard Bylaws with River Corridors (also 17.5% ERAF), or (3) ‘Do Nothing’ and wait for state to mandate. Creation of new Flood Hazard Bylaws is typically a time-consuming process, typically 6-12 months– and new state regulations may come in 2-3 years.

Ron also reviewed an email sent by Rebecca Pfeiffer (VT DEC Watershed Mgmt Div., River Corridor and Floodplain Protection Manager). Rebecca pointed out areas of potential conflict between (1) State Minimum Floodplain Rule (standards that towns in the NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) must adhere to), (2) Statewide River Corridor Regulation (several years out, applies to watersheds ≥2 sq. miles in area, still working on how to address developed settlements like Johnson within the river corridor

boundary), and (3) FEMA digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), federal not state. Most recent effort on Lamoille watershed resulted in draft maps with smaller flood hazard areas than the old version, prompting DEC and legislative request for FEMA to revisit this effort; no response yet.

Regarding the NFIP – Charles asked whether we are required to update Johnson’s Flood Hazard Bylaws, which are old and do not meet the current (for now) standard. Ron said technically yes, but practically speaking, no – updating is really only necessary when federal authorities call us out – and then they provide plenty of time to implement. Changing now might just mean changing again with new rules.

In summary, Ron encouraged the JPC to continue gathering information about the River Corridor and Flood Hazard Bylaw options and assessing the importance of the additional 5% of ERAF funding – there is no one “right” answer.

After thanking Ron and Meghan, JPC examined a large-scale map that Charles had picked up from LCPC, which showed the entire town with 100 and 500 year flood plains and River Corridor boundaries (old and still current) marked. We agreed we need a larger scale to view details downtown (Melissa Manka of LCPC sent the maps electronically also, which Meghann Rodier forwarded to all JPC members). The initial observation was that with very few exceptions, in the downtown area, the River Corridor boundary is within the 500 year flood plain, so adoption of River Corridors would not appear to have much impact. River Corridor boundaries in some upland areas might still be improved with ground truthing.

#### Housekeeping

- Recognition of David Butler’s contributions to Johnson – There was a discussion of David’s long service to the Town of Johnson via his tenure On the Planning Commission and Development Review Board. The JPC is grateful for all David’s time, effort, and knowledge, and will miss him.
- Approval of Minutes from 10 OCT 2024 meeting: Adrienne proposed acceptance of the draft minutes as submitted, Adrienne seconded. Motion passed (Ayes: Adrienne, Kim, Kyley, Rob; Nays: 0; Abstaining: Charles).
- Mail – Charles reported there was no mail

#### Member Updates

- Lamoille FiberNet – Paul reported Phase 1 build complete, Phase 2 in 2025. Long Drop Assistance Program is progressing, will use local ARPA funds contributed by Johnson and leftover Phase 1 construction funds (assuming approval by grant authority). Phase 1 construction funds are restricted to Phase 1 addresses and incidental overbuild addresses, while local ARPA funds are not restricted. More to come in near future.
- Rail Trail Committee – Adrienne reported the RTC is waiting for grant approval for major action, but are progressing on other tasks like gravel road maps, trail maps, signage, etc.
- Town Sewer Service Area (TSSA) Extension Draft status – No new news, Paul explained expansion of TSSA to include 100% of properties that were formerly partially included. Duncan is spearheading and Paul will follow up.
- Reimagine Johnson Task Forces – Brief discussion of the 5 task forces; Food (Charles) , Housing (Kylie), College (no one from JPC), Recreational-Economic (no one from JPC though Rob and Paul attended last Rec TF meeting), and Downtown (Adrienne, Sam and Paul). Agreed quick updates

should be a regular item for JPC. Paul also reported that the Chairs/Co-Chairs of the 5 Task Forces met last week to begin to identify areas of overlap and synergy.

Adjourned at 8:10pm (Kylie proposed/Adrienne seconded, unanimous). Next Regular Meeting 12 DEC 2024 (possible joint meeting with the DRR Task Force; Seth Jensen, LCPC and flood modeling).