

JOHNSON RAIL TRAIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2025

**Present:**

Committee Members: Adrienne Parker, Kim Dunkley, Jan Gearhart, BJ Putvain, Mary Lou Kopas, Peggy Williams (remote)

Others: Kyle Nuse, Lynda Hill, Yva Rose, Eric Nuse, Charles Flaum, Daniel Langevin (remote)

**Absent:** Doug Molde

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

**1. Call to Order**

BJ called the meeting to order at 6:02.

**2. Changes or Additions to Agenda**

It was agreed to move the budget discussion to be first on the agenda since some people had to leave early.

**3. Discussion and Approval of 2024-25 Projects for VCF Grant Funds and Other Funds in Hand**

Adrienne said Doug wanted the committee to figure out what we want to use our grant money on so we can ask for approval from the selectboard.

Kyle said the Vermont Community Foundation gave us \$20K for things like improving the trailhead or facilities. It is pretty unrestricted. She thinks they want us to use it this fiscal year, which means by June 30. Right now the only thing we have used any of the funds for is a grant match for the stairs. There is \$17,200 left. Eddie Gale gave us the remaining \$4,100 of the fund established in memory of Lea Kilvadyova. He said he would appreciate us earmarking money for a new sign that would go near her playground. He got a quote of \$1400 from Great Big Graphics for a sign. We have talked about kiosks. Kyle went to the regional rail trail committee meeting yesterday. They are going to come out with a 4 ft. by 6 ft. regional map and another narrower and longer map showing the trail from end to end. We had talked about putting a kiosk near the trailhead and another downtown, maybe on the village green. We had originally earmarked about \$5K for public art. The Beautification Committee has been talking with the village about putting sculptures on pedestals in the village. They have found an artist, Michael Stanley, who is willing to provide the sculptures. He needs about \$5K for materials to make the sculptures. He would let us put them on the pedestals for 2 years and then we would rotate them out. She handed out pictures of what he has in mind for the sculptures.

Lynda asked, the village trustees gave permission, but not money? Kyle said yes. The Beautification Committee thought maybe the Rail Trail Committee would be interested in helping fund the sculptures.

Kim asked how much Doug committed for the regional map. Mary Lou said \$638.

Kyle said Doug talked to people in Cambridge about their kiosk. They have a very simple looking one at Cambridge Junction that cost about \$1000 for materials. Doug said he has roofing material he could donate for kiosks. Yva and Jan said they do too. Adrienne said she thinks we should get a quote from a local business for a somewhat less simple kiosk. She showed an example of what one business offers.

Kim said it would be nice to have stone benches along the rail trail. Jan suggested maybe the benches could incorporate art on metal sides. Kim said it would be nice to have one overlooking the river.

Mary Lou said signage pointing to Dog's Head Falls would be nice. Kyle said that is coming. VTrans wants to make all signage consistent. They will hire out production of the signs. We are responsible for putting together a local inventory of signage we want. A sign for Dog's Head Falls would definitely be one.

Kim asked if electric bike charging stations are part of how we will use these funds. Kyle said they could be.

Kim suggested getting permission to plant wildflowers along Railroad Street in the area where the rail trail crosses it. Yva said she has wanted to plant flowers along the side of her business's area. She was going to ask about investing in rail trail and/or Railroad Street landscaping. Lynda said she thinks wildflowers are a good idea. Kyle said the Beautification Committee has talked about planting flowers in the green strips along Railroad Street but they are unwilling to take action on that until the town and village figure out who owns them. But we can identify other places to plant flowers.

There was general agreement on spending funds on sculptures, kiosks, two benches between Hyde Park and Johnson, and flowers.

Adrienne suggested getting 3 kiosks – 2 to use now at the trailhead and village green and one matching the others to set aside for use in future green space.

Eric Nuse brought up the idea of an app for rail trail users. He said apps seem to be the way a lot of users find their way around. (*Charles Flaum arrived at 6:30.*) He said the Reimagine Johnson task force for recreation is putting together lists of assets we have and assets we want. He doesn't think it will be ready by the time this committee needs to spend its money but it has a lot of good ideas. How broad an area beyond the rail trail is the committee thinking of working on? Mary Lou said we can put things in the village like bike racks or benches. Kyle said the state's Trail Friendly Business program works with businesses that are no further than 2 miles away from the trail.

It was agreed to get price estimates before making a final decision on how to spend funds. Adrienne will get estimates for kiosks. Kyle said she will talk to Michael Stanley about benches.

Lynda said Marsala Salsa is willing to have a charging station there. Jan said she hasn't had a chance to talk to Mike Mignone yet about having one at his new store. She said we need to determine what we are talking about when we talk about charging stations – just a plug on the side of the building with an overhang and bike racks, or more expensive freestanding stations? Kim said at Jenna's Coffee House they asked how much it would cost them to host a charging station. She told them she thought it would be pennies. That was important to them.

Lynda said another question is how many outlets are needed at one location. We had talked about providing 4. Yva said someday she thinks there will be expansion and this trail will be connected to Colchester Causeway. There might not be high demand for e-bike charging now, but there will be in the future when the trail is longer. She knows Stowe is talking about connecting to it. She would say a minimum of 3 or 4 outlets would be good. The demand is pretty low at this point.

BJ said he had just texted Mike Mignone, who said he will host a charging station if we pay for it.

Lynda said she thinks business owners might prefer outlets on the side of the building to a box in front.

Yva said she would love to come to the next meeting to share some insights. She suggested checking out Move Forward Together Vermont. *(Kyle, Eric and Yva left at 6:41.)*

BJ said he asked Mike if he would pay for the electricity for the charging station after we put it in. The cost would probably be \$5 a month at most. Mike agreed to cover the cost of electricity.

BJ said the only issue the village trustees had with the sunflowers previously planted on Railroad Street was the height. If we planted ground covering wildflowers along Railroad Street that wouldn't be an issue. He doesn't think we should dismiss the idea of flowers on Railroad Street because of what happened before. He thinks it would look nice to have a strip of flowers along Railroad Street. As far as ownership of the green strips, if there are no utilities the town owns it and if there are utilities running under it the village owns it. But the homeowner has the right to maintain it.

**4. Consider Approving Minutes of January 15, 2025**

**Adrienne moved to approve the minutes of January 15, 2025, Jan seconded and the motion was passed.**

**5. New Town Website, Marketing Johnson and the Rail Trail**

Daniel Langevin said he has spoken with Doug about considering the perspective of bike tour operators. Lynda said bike tours come through here often and set up on Legion Field but she doesn't know if they are using the rail trail or roads. Daniel said there could be any number of approaches, depending on the operator. He can send out a list of bike tour operators. When they have an advertised package they usually plan it out well in advance. They typically have 2-5 year contracts with hotels. They will build things into their itinerary that are convenient. If we make it easy for a group of 20 people to stop in Johnson they would spend a lot of money here.

BJ asked Charles Flaum about his efforts. Charles said his 501(c)(3) was incorporated today. He has talked to the Vermont Community Fund. Randall Szott is helping him connect to communities like Newport that have something like this going on. Not everything about it has been fleshed out yet. Tom Galinat and whatever town employee will be involved with the website will be meeting with the designer for the town website tomorrow.

Charles said if we want to publicize the moving of the library we need to know the exact date.

Adrienne said Jasmine Yuris posted on Front Porch Forum that it will be around April 19.

**6. Adjourn**

**Adrienne moved to adjourn at 8:00, Jan seconded and the motion was passed.**