

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2025

**Present:** Selectboard members: Peter Hammond, Adrienne Parker, Eben Patch

Others: Rosemary Audibert, Eric Schultz, Bill Jaspersohn, Pam Jaspersohn, Jesse Whitworth, Casey Romero, Charles Flaum, Paul Warden, Kathy Black, Kyle Nuse, Beth Foy, Noel Dodge, Howard Romero

**Absent:** Duncan Hastings, Mike Dunham

**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 to the Agenda**

Peter added an update on the potential Gomo Town Forest survey.

**3. Public Comment**

Casey Romero said she is hoping for permission to apply for 2 different grants. One is \$500 to replace a skateboard rail that was damaged, but not by the flood. The application has to be submitted by Friday. The other is from the Green Mountain Fund. The maximum grant amount is \$5K. She doesn't have a price yet for the work to be done – repairs and security upgrades for the skatepark sheds.

Eben asked if there is any match required. Casey said no.

**Peter moved to give Casey Romero permission to apply for two grants with no town matching funds, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.**

**4. Selectboard Issues and Concerns**

Eben said there were issues with Article 8 at town meeting. No motion was made on the article and there was an issue with the wording of what was voted on. We may also need to talk to the town's attorney about Walter Pomroy's suggestion that another article is needed to allow for a town clerk or treasurer who is not a town resident.

Adrienne said Isabelle Sullivan would like information on a new RFP for Old Mill Park mowing and baseball field maintenance by the town crew. Eben said Tom can provide an update on that at the next meeting.

Adrienne said the town website only has minutes going back to January 2014 but Rosemary says we have minutes going back to the 1970s. She thinks it would be great to digitize all the minutes. If they are readable PDFs people could search them using an AI. She suggested Tom could try to get a college student to digitize them as community service. Eben asked Tom to try to find a student.

Adrienne said she went to a Historical Society meeting. They said the weather vane is lying down in the municipal building entrance. If we are not planning on hanging it they would like it back. Eben said he will bring that up at the next meeting when Duncan is here.

Adrienne said the Conservation Commission asked her to remind Tom and the municipal employees that land use management forms need to be sent to the Conservation Commission for any new developments.

**5. *Consent Agenda***

Eben said the revised consent agenda includes accepting the resignations of Adrienne Parker and Kyle Nuse from the Rail Trail Committee, appointing Linda Edwards and Sam Jaspersen to the Planning Commission, appointing Lynda Hill to the Rail Trail Committee and appointing Jo Marsan to the Beautification Committee. The position Mike Mignone would fill on the Planning Commission needs to be advertised in the paper before it can be filled. **Peter moved to approve the revised consent agenda, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.**

**6. *Reimagine Johnson Task Forces***

Adrienne said 5 Reimagine Johnson task forces were created. They have been really successful and have brought in a lot of new volunteers. Some of the task forces would like to go after grants. At the previous meeting the selectboard discussed whether we should help them get grants if they are not town committees. That is one issue. Also, we don't currently have a Recreation Committee but we have the Rail Trail Committee, the Skatepark Committee and the Reimagine Johnson task force for recreation. Her recommendation is to bring together all the chairs from committees, commissions and task forces and discuss whether we would like to restructure the committees. We also will have a lot of buyout properties soon. Those additional green spaces will need maintenance. Maybe we should be thinking about that as well in making these decisions. At the meeting she thinks it would be good to bring together a list of projects the different groups have been thinking about, find any overlap, and create a prioritized list to give to Randall Szott, so we are all working together and not in silos.

Eben said he thinks restructuring committees could be good for the town. He thinks we probably will need to talk about this again when the full board is present. If we had larger committees with subcommittees for specific areas that could potentially reduce volunteer fatigue.

Casey Romero said she would love to hear Rosemary's point of view. She knows there is a price for the soft support her committee gets from the town. Rosemary said there are many more committees now than when she started. They all want financial reports from her office. Sooner or later taxpayers won't be able to afford everything the committees want and we will have to start to say no. Casey said what Adrienne said about silos was valuable. She is guilty of being in a silo. She asks for what her committee needs without knowing the full spectrum of other needs.

Eben said Kyle Nuse wants to start the process of forming a town events committee. Adrienne said Lois Frey said there used to be a communications and events committee. Maybe we could go back to that where the chairs of different committees could meet periodically and be the events committee.

Jesse Whitworth asked what the benefit is of having a committee over just organizing privately as the Reimagine Johnson task forces are doing. Eben said money. Charles Flaum said access to grants. Eben said when there was a Halloween event at the old Sterling Market building, the town was asked to sponsor the event, accepting liability through our insurance, because if the organizer used their own private insurance it would cost a couple of thousand dollars. A town committee gets that insurance coverage. Some town committees end up with town employees helping with their work because the workload outgrows what they do. Some of them ask for assistance from the town public works department. Jesse said there seem to be clear benefits but they may not be apparent to everyone. Maybe that could be discussed more at the meeting Adrienne proposes.

Eben said he does support the task forces and their work. He only cares about liability for the town. The food task force got some donations and the town accepted them for the task force. If those funds get embezzled, the town is on the hook.

Adrienne said another advantage of being a town committee is that the town could help put information out on the town website and social media and provide support. We don't want to create too many committees. We want to consolidate and make it more accessible to join. We want to be proactive, thinking about things like the new green spaces that are coming, and we want to think more holistically about the future and how we can help each other more.

**7. *Beautification Committee Report***

Kyle Nuse reviewed accomplishments of the committee from the past year. They got approval from the taxpayers for a reserve fund. They are putting a flower sculpture at Old Mill Park. They planted hundreds of bulbs around the Historical Society building, the food shelf and the trailhead. They collaborated with the Johnson Jubilee to install lights in trees on the village green and put up a snowman face cutout. They distributed 10 fall planters to local businesses. They decorated the pizza oven for Halloween. They collaborated with students from the college to install a wayfinding sign at the trailhead.

Kyle said the committee is hoping to apply for a Vermont Arts Council grant to fund new artwork to go on the trailhead welcome center building. They will put out a call for submissions to artists. They hope the grant will fund materials to put the artwork up and stipends for the artists. They are looking for selectboard approval to apply for the grant. They would write the application themselves and would not need Randall's help.

The Beautification Committee would like to expand to 9 members. They would also love to have the town consider a formal gardening/landscaping position eventually. They can only do so much as a committee. A spring or early summer project they have planned is creating bike sculptures with old bikes that they will paint and decorate. They will put flower boxes on them and put them around town, mostly on town properties. They would like to collaborate with other committees on that.

**8. *Future Report***

Eben suggested the Tree Board as the next committee to report to the selectboard. He said the Beautification Committee request to apply for a grant will be on the next selectboard agenda.

**9. *Clerk/Treasurer Job Descriptions/Offer Letters***

First drafts of the job descriptions and offer letters were handed out for board members to review.

**10. *CDS Funding Application and Possible Projects***

Senator Welch's office is taking applications for Congressionally Directed Spending. Eben said the time to apply is short and Tom didn't express a lot of hope that we would get funded. Tom suggested applying for \$1-3 million to relocate the municipal building if we need to. Adrienne had sent out a packet with several ideas – an all season outdoor market, a multi-use water plaza and a community greenhouse. [See attachment.] Eben said he loved the ideas. Tom had pointed out in his report that getting the funding will take a couple of years and not all the FY25 CDS applications were funded by Congress, so this should not be used to make or break a project but to assist an existing project.

Eben said his number one choice would be to apply for the municipal building relocation and his number two would be the municipal water plaza. The application needs to be submitted before the next selectboard meeting. Peter asked if we can we do the municipal building relocation without

this. Eben said we will need some sort of funding. If we get it from FEMA and the state then we won't need this. Peter suggested the grant amount would be a small part of the funding needed. Beth Foy suggested applying for both projects. Adrienne said she would be willing to work on a submission for the water plaza project. It was agreed to apply for both the municipal building relocation and the water plaza. Eben suggested that Adrienne ask for assistance from Randall.

**11. Industrial Park**

There were no industrial park updates.

**12. Library**

Eben said they removed the ramp and got the dirt out. The move is scheduled for April 26. Tom spoke with VTrans and utilities.

Adrienne said the Tree Board has concerns about trees being torn down during the move. Noel Dodge said they have heard rumors that all trees on Main Street will be cut down in order to move the building. Peter said just one tree needs to be cut – the maple across from the Masonic Temple. Noel said the Tree Board is willing to be there to supervise. They could tie back branches if needed. A lot of time, effort and money went into those trees. The ones on the north side are doing better than the ones on the south side. If some trees need to be cut, it would be better to cut the ones on the south side. Peter said he and Tom have talked about the trees. The only tree Tom said was at risk was that maple.

**13. School Street Traffic**

Peter said he thinks this item should be bumped to the next meeting. Eben said in Tom's report he mentioned the idea of speed bumps. Wasn't it brought up in the past that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns had an issue with speed bumps? Rosemary said they don't like them for insurance reasons. Adrienne said she has some ideas she can bring up next time.

**14. Appointment Policy**

It was agreed to move this item to a future agenda.

**15. Vermont 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Eben said the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary is in 2027 but he believes there is a buildup to it, with events being planned in 2025 and 2026. He doesn't think a motion needs to be made tonight. It was agreed to bring it up again at a future meeting. Adrienne suggested inviting the Historical Society to be part of the discussion.

**16. TNL at Old Mill Park for 2025 Season**

Charles Flaum said because of the library move, Tuesday Night Live is being forced to move to Old Mill Park this year. The TNL Committee has talked to Isabelle Sullivan about where to put a portable stage. They are planning two shows, one on July 15 and one in August on a date yet to be determined. They are talking about having them be double shows and maybe expanding the hours. They are bringing in power and a portable stage with lighting. They will have food trucks. They are going to make the two shows bigger events than usual. The library construction zone will be a hazard, particularly for kids.

Howard Romero said the committee wants the shows to go until around 9:30. He doesn't think a noise ordinance waiver will be needed, just a permit to use the park. The double-band shows will last less than 4 hours. It will be expensive to put on each show because the committee has to rent staging for \$2500. The sound system expense will be bigger than normal and a generator will be needed because the stage will be too far away from power. There will also need to be some field lighting. The committee needs \$18-19K and they think they can raise it. They will set up their yellow signage on the baseball diamond and it will stay up through the summer. Isabelle is okay with that. The committee will do a lot of advertising for the shows. Morrisville is not doing much

for Wednesday Night Live this summer so they will advertise in Morrisville. The field at Old Mill Park is a lot bigger than Legion Field. There is plenty of room for people. There is a lot of parking at the park and people can park on one side of Lendway Lane and by the town and village sheds.

Eben asked Howard to send an email about the committee's plans. He would like to run it by our insurance. The village also needs to be involved because they own 50% of the property.

Adrienne asked if there has been talk of moving the bandstand during library construction. Howard said the committee won't move it during construction. It will be expensive to move it. Moving it after construction will be discussed as part of the Legion Field group discussion.

Adrienne asked, the only issue with having TNL at college was the food truck issue, right? Howard said yes. It would have been nice to have been able to use the college campus, but the vendor that provides meals to students has a contract to provide all food on campus and we need our vendors for TNL to be effective. Adrienne suggested it might be worth asking whether that requirement could be waived for this event.

Beth Foy said traffic flow will likely be an issue. She suggested the committee might want to talk to the sheriff's department about it.

**17. RFQ for MERP Contractors**

Eben said the Lamoille County Planning Commission will be putting out an RFQ to find qualified contractors in accordance with all town procurement policies. That will provide us options. He thinks Tom can provide an update at the next meeting.

**18. Acceptance of School Street Parcel**

Eben said the school board has signed the deed and now the selectboard needs to formally accept the parcel. **Adrienne moved to accept the School Street parcel of 0.69 acres from the LNMUUSD, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.**

**19. Website Liaison/Committee**

Eben said Tom would like another set of eyes to help make decisions on the town website. It was agreed that Adrienne should help Tom with formatting and design decisions on the website.

Beth Foy said she wants to make sure all the people who need to have access to the site do have access. She often updates it. She thinks committee chairs should be able to make updates. Adrienne and Charles said one reason we chose TownWeb was that they can give committee chairs access.

**20. Old Business**

As discussed at the last meeting access to Zoom for committees and commissions will be added to the list of old business. Adrienne suggested maybe we could have a laptop in the meeting room for committees to use.

**21. Gomo Town Forest Survey**

Peter said the town owns a parcel of 140+ acres on Coddling Hollow Road. It is under the stewardship of the Conservation Commission. A neighboring landowner may be encroaching on the town property. There is no good survey of that property. The Conservation Commission has been discussing the need to have it surveyed. Peter has been in touch with a couple of surveyors. The cost could be up to \$9K. One proposal is \$2250 for initial work that will give some information and then some subsequent work that could be done, which would bring the cost closer to \$9K. This is a perfect time of year for surveyors to be working in the woods. The easier it is for them the lower the cost, so we should not put off decision too long.

**22. Executive Session for Confidential Attorney-Client Communication**

Eben said an executive session is not needed.

**23. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*

UNAPPROVED

## Possible Projects for CDS Funding

### All Season Outdoor Market

**Project Overview:** The Town of Johnson proposes the development of a year-round outdoor market on a FEMA buyout property, potentially the former Union Bank site. This project aligns with FEMA open space regulations by utilizing a roofed structure without external walls, ensuring compliance while maximizing community benefit. The market will provide local vendors with an affordable and accessible space to sell prepared foods, fresh produce, artisan goods, and other locally made products, fostering small business growth and economic revitalization. Additionally, a pedestrian trail will connect the market to the Johnson Arboretum, enhancing community connectivity and encouraging foot traffic.



**Community and Economic Impact:** This initiative stems from discussions within the ReImagine Johnson Food Resiliency Task Force, which identified the need for a dedicated space to support local food systems and small businesses. By renting vendor spaces seasonally, the market will generate sustainable revenue for the town while offering residents and visitors a vibrant marketplace.

#### **Year - Round Functionality:**

The market will be designed for all-season use, featuring:

- A durable, weather-resistant roof to provide shelter from rain and snow.
- Windbreaks and strategic placement to minimize exposure to winter conditions.
- Heated communal areas or fire pits to encourage winter engagement.
- Potential for winter vendors, including holiday markets, hot food stands, and artisan goods.
- Flood resilient restrooms



**Alignment with FEMA Open Space Requirements:** The open-air design ensures compliance with FEMA regulations while transforming a previously vacant flood-prone area into a thriving community asset. The market's permeable ground surface and removable vendor stalls will maintain flood resilience and adaptability.

**Next Steps:** CDS funding will be sought to cover initial infrastructure costs, including site preparation, roofing structures, vendor stall designs, and trail connectivity. Community engagement and vendor interest will be solicited to refine the market's design and operations plan.

By repurposing a FEMA buyout site into a dynamic, revenue-generating outdoor market, Johnson can enhance local economic resilience while fostering a vibrant public space that serves residents and visitors year-round.

## Multi-Use Water Plaza

### **Project Overview:**

The Town of Johnson proposes the development of a multi-use Water Plaza on a FEMA buyout property to enhance flood resilience, provide community recreation, and support local businesses. This project aligns with FEMA open space regulations by integrating permeable surfaces, flood-adaptive infrastructure, and recreational features that can withstand periodic flooding. The Water Plaza will serve as both a flood mitigation strategy and a public gathering space, creating a dynamic hub for residents and visitors.

### **What is a Water Plaza?**

A Rotterdam Water Plaza is an innovative urban space designed to manage stormwater while serving as a multifunctional community area. During heavy rainfall, it temporarily holds excess water to prevent flooding, then after threat of flooding it releases water to an irrigation system. Once dry, it functions as a recreational space for activities such as sports, events, and gatherings. These plazas often incorporate permeable materials, natural landscaping, and aesthetically pleasing designs, blending practical flood management with vibrant public use. After the floodwaters recede, the water is then pulled into an irrigation system or other overflow areas.







**Community and Economic Impact:**

This project would enhance recreation opportunities while doubling as a flood mitigation measure. By incorporating interactive water features, green infrastructure, and vendor space, this project will stimulate economic activity while enhancing Johnson's public spaces. The Water Plaza can host seasonal markets, outdoor performances, and community events, providing an economic boost to local businesses and vendors.

**Year - Round Functionality:**

The Water Plaza will be designed for year-round use with:

- A permeable plaza surface that functions as a stormwater retention feature.
- Interactive water elements that serve as a cooling space in the summer.
- Integrated seating areas and windbreaks for winter usability.
- Adaptable infrastructure to accommodate seasonal programming, including winter markets, an ice rink, and fire pit gatherings.
- Space for a farmers' market and potential relocation of the community pizza oven.
- New space for Tuesday Night Live and possible theater productions. Can be constructed like a music amphitheater.
- Flood resilient restrooms





#### **Flood Resilience and Natural Management:**

- Functions as a floodwater retention area to reduce damage elsewhere in the village.
- Uses permeable concrete for water infiltration or compacted soil for a terraced, Machu Picchu-like aesthetic.
- Supports floodplain recovery while maintaining an attractive, multi-purpose public space.

#### **Alignment with FEMA Open Space Requirements:**

By utilizing a flood-prone area for public benefit, the Water Plaza will align with FEMA regulations while enhancing the town's flood resilience. The design will prioritize sustainable materials, natural drainage systems, and multi-functional infrastructure to ensure long-term adaptability to climate conditions.

#### **Next Steps:**

CDS funding will be sought to support the project's initial development, including site preparation, installation of permeable surfaces, water feature construction, and community seating areas. Stakeholder engagement will ensure the final design meets the needs of Johnson residents while aligning with long-term flood mitigation goals.

Transforming a FEMA buyout site into a Water Plaza will create a resilient, multi-use public space that enhances both economic vitality and community well-being in Johnson.

## Community Greenhouse

#### **Project Overview**

A community greenhouse in Johnson, Vermont, would provide a year-round growing space for educational, municipal, and community-based horticulture efforts. Located near the elementary school, it would serve as an educational resource for botany and environmental science classes while also supporting town-wide landscaping, conservation projects, and community gardening. This initiative would promote sustainability, flood mitigation, and public engagement in local agriculture.



## **Vision: Multi-Purpose Community Greenhouse**

### **Education & School Use**

- The greenhouse would be located near the elementary school, allowing students to engage in hands-on botany lessons, gardening projects, and environmental studies.
- Local schools could integrate the greenhouse into STEM curriculum, providing students with practical knowledge about plant life cycles, soil health, and sustainable growing techniques.

### **Municipal & Public Landscaping**

- The town could use the space to grow annual and perennial flowers for landscaping public spaces, reducing the need for purchased plants.
- Local committees and volunteers could assist with maintenance and planting efforts to beautify town properties.

### **Community Growing Spaces**

- Residents could reserve plots within the greenhouse to start seedlings for their personal or community garden plots, extending the growing season.
- This would provide an opportunity for those with limited outdoor space to grow their own food and ornamental plants.

### **Conservation & Restoration Efforts**

- The local Conservation Commission and Tree Board/Arboretum could use designated space within the greenhouse for growing native plants and trees for riverbank restoration and flood resilience projects.
- Seedlings for pollinator-friendly plantings, reforestation efforts, and erosion control could be nurtured on-site.



### **Parks & Recreation Support**

- Adjacent to the greenhouse, a storage area would be designated for lawn equipment and tools used by the Parks & Recreation Department for town maintenance.
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- Shared access to tools could support community volunteers working on town beautification and park upkeep projects.

### **Winter & Year-Round Functionality**

- The greenhouse would extend the growing season into winter, allowing for fresh produce and greenery even in colder months.
- Heated sections could allow for cold-hardy crops, early spring starts, and indoor community workshops.
- Solar panels and passive heating strategies could reduce operational costs while ensuring sustainability.

### **Economic & Environmental Benefits**

- Reduces municipal costs by growing town landscaping plants in-house.
- Encourages local food production and self-sufficiency.
- Supports flood resilience by growing plants used in river and wetland restoration.
- Creates opportunities for small-scale growers to start seedlings for sale at the outdoor market.

By establishing a community greenhouse, Johnson would create an innovative space that strengthens local food security, conservation, and public beautification while fostering hands-on education and community engagement.

