

**TOWN OF JOHNSON
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES**

March 4, 2025

Moderator David Williams called the meeting to order at 9:18 a.m.

Mike Dunham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

David Williams explained that the meeting would be run under Robert's Rules of Order.

Eben Patch presented Lois Frey with a signed copy of the town report, which was dedicated to her.

Mike Dunham thanked Mark Woodward for his 3 years of service on the board, his years in the legislature and for 23 or 24 years of making sure everyone is fed at noon during town meeting.

David Williams asked for and received unanimous consent to grant permission to Dan Noyes, Richard Bailey and Richard Westman to speak when they arrived. He then asked for and received unanimous consent to grant permission to Randall Szott and Tom Galinat to speak. He explained how the meeting would be run and read the town meeting warning.

Article 3. To hear and act upon the reports of the Town Officers and those presented.

David Williams said previously he has treated this article as intended just to point out any mistakes that may be in the warning or town report. He understands that some committees wish to speak and he believes the language of the warning allows for brief reports from committees.

Jesse Whitworth, one of the co-chairs of the Food Access and Awareness Task Force, said his group's mission is to increase food security and resilience. They have been meeting regularly and have invited experts to host panels for them. They raised funds to help the Johnson General Store to open. They have created a food survey and mailed out cards with a QR code that leads to the survey. Jasmine Yuris led the initiative to organize a free community meal on May 15. There will be information about it on Front Porch Forum and bulletin boards. They are exploring different models and locations for a grocery store. They are also looking into how they might bring a community center to town, inspired by the Civic Standard in Hardwick. The food survey will inform their next steps. He thanked all those who have supported them, including private businesses, the selectboard and village trustees, FEMA, and the Vermont Council on Rural Development. They are always looking for more members.

Walter Pomroy said he feels the July 2023 Flood Accounting section on p. 45 of the town report doesn't give enough information. It shows a \$50K deficit. Is this the final accounting for the flooding? Do we have more FEMA money coming? How will the flooding affect taxpayers? Tom Galinat said 3 projects have been obligated but not closed out. We can't get reimbursement for the skatepark project until it is complete. The municipal building work has been delayed until we get a final answer on the sewage treatment plant. The library project has been left open in case any issues arise with the planned move. The \$50K deficit is due to reimbursement for those projects that cannot be received until they are complete. We will get 75% reimbursement from FEMA, 12.5% from the state and the remaining 12.5% from legislative funds dedicated to making municipalities whole for these expenditures. Walter asked, so when all the projects are done our balance should be zero? Tom said it should be.

Walter said the budget information section shows \$33,500 in tax abatements in FY24. Will the grand list permanently be lowered by that amount? Eben said the assessor has already depreciated affected properties, so we saw some hit on last year's taxes.

Walter said there is almost nothing in the report telling what is going on with the industrial park project. He would like a verbal report about where we are. Where are the funds coming from? Is everything looking good, especially in light of the administration in Washington? Next year he would like a much more detailed report on the project.

Randall Szott said there have been almost no funds expended so far. The project is still in environmental review. That is expected to be completed by September of this year. At that point we will be issued a notice to proceed. That is when the big expenditures will start. So far we have only spent \$40K for the engineering contract and \$25K for environmental review.

Eben Patch said the selectboard has asked for revenue and expenses for the industrial park to be tracked in a separate account. Information on that will probably be in next year's town report. There are also other major projects, like the library project, that will be in next year's town report.

Charles Flaum said it appears that the federal government will come after the funds that allowed some states to expand Medicaid. Organizations the town helps fund such as the Council on Aging, Lamoille County Home Health, the Lamoille Family Center and Meals on Wheels will all be impacted in a big way. Are we considering any kind of backstop? Eben said he is not sure what Charles means by backstop. If the budget is approved we have funds raised by tax dollars for those organizations. Charles asked, what happens if money from the federal government is cut out? Are we going to let those organizations sink? Eben said the amount in the budget is what we will contribute to them. He is not sure if Charles is proposing that the town taxpayers fully float those organizations but the amounts included in the budget are the funds they requested and those funds will be provided if the budget is approved.

David Williams asked that further discussion of the budget be saved for the budget article.

Beth Foy commented on the town administrator's report in the town report. It says that for the first time we are rebuilding with the next flood in mind. Johnson has continuously had floods in mind over the years. We are not doing this for the first time. It also talks about Johnson having an identity crisis. She takes issue with that. She thinks we have a strong community and a strong identity.

Article 4. To establish the rates of compensation for the Town Officers.

Beth Foy moved to keep the rates of compensation the same as in the previous year: \$2000 for the selectboard chair and \$1500 for each of the other selectboard members, Walter Pomroy seconded and the motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 5. Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$3,375,751.67, of which an estimated \$2,192,185.97 shall be raised by taxes and an estimated \$1,073,565.70 by non-tax revenues?

Eben Patch moved the article as printed and Mark Woodward seconded.

Eben reviewed the revenue section of the budget. This budget calls for a 4.18% increase to property taxes. This past year we lost about \$50K in Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) revenue for the college property and we are projecting to lose more because the formula that determines the payments is based on the insured value of the buildings multiplied by the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and our CLA is dropping. We do have a townwide reappraisal planned. He believes our CLA was around 74% last year and is about 68% this year. The budget includes Municipal Energy Resilience Program funds coming in for improvements to the town garage.

Walter Pomroy said he is unclear on the PILOT explanation. A drop in CLA would increase the value of the buildings, not decrease it, so something else is going on. Eben said we do not assess or appraise the value of those buildings. PILOT is based on the insurance company's value, which did not change. The formula multiplies by CLA rather than dividing by it. Our CLA dropped so when we multiply by CLA the PILOT amount gets smaller. That is the state formula. Walter said it makes no sense. Eben said most towns in the state are losing money due to the formula. It is out of our control.

Eben said there is a substantial increase in revenue from the highway equipment capital fund. We have ordered a new truck and are bringing in money to pay for it. We are also bringing in money from the audit reserve fund to pay for the audit. We are bringing in \$86,160 from the asphalt reserve fund that was created last year to pay for paving projects. There are no drastic changes in committee revenues.

Jon Gregg asked what happens if the town doesn't get grants that are expected. Eben said if we did not receive a grant we were planning on using for a project, the project most likely would be canceled. Jon asked if the anticipated grants are mostly government grants. Eben said yes. They are mostly project specific. For instance, we are applying for a grant to armor Lendway Lane where it washed out in the flood. If we don't get the grant, we won't do the project.

Eben said there is an increase in the cash on hand we are using to reduce taxes. Our reserve fund balances are comfortable and we had available cash on hand to offset the loss in PILOT revenue.

The office administrative salaries line is going up due to employee turnover, cost of living increases and extended hours.

Beth Foy asked for more explanation. Eben said an employee left and we hired another employee at a higher rate for the recreation position. Beth asked what the total budget impact of that was. Eben said he thinks \$6-8K. Beth asked about the rest of the \$40K increase. Tom said there was also a change in how we track payroll. In the past, the community and economic development specialist and the rec coordinator were on separate lines and now they have been added to the office administrative line. Eben said about \$18-20K of the difference was due to cost of living increases. Some was due to increased hours and some was due to the rec coordinator salary increase. The selectboard elected to increase the town administrator's hours from 32 a week to 40. Beth asked the cost of that. Eben said about \$20K.

Walter asked what the total health insurance increase is throughout the budget. Eben said the total cost for health insurance is about \$160K. There was a 9% increase in town office expense for health insurance and an 18.66% increase for highway health insurance expense.

David Williams asked for and received unanimous consent to waive the restriction on any individual speaking more than twice on a given issue.

Jon Gregg complimented the board. He said the knowledge expressed and the speed of answering questions with detailed facts and figures is a lot different than it used to be. He commented on the fact that 9 people at the front of the room were all wearing the same shirt. Mike Dunham said Mark Woodward got the shirts from Johnson Woolen Mills.

Eben said the cost for general insurance has risen by \$10K. The town gets its general insurance for properties and equipment from the VLCT PACIF self insurance program, as does almost every town. We are working on trying to reduce the increase.

Lois Frey pointed out that lines 191 and 192 are missing from the budget printed in the town report.

Eben said line 191 is other dues and line 192 is Vermont trails and greenways. Lois said Conservation Commission expenses also appear to be missing. Eben agreed that the line does seem to be missing from the town report. The amount is \$1,250. He said the section total in the town report is the correct number, so the budget to be approved does include those expenses.

Jesse Whitworth said line 195 is missing. He asked if Eben could summarize the missing lines. Eben read off the amounts budgeted in lines 189 through 196.

Eben said there are no significant changes to committee or town office expenses.

Beth Foy said line 209 is missing. Eben said that is records supplies for \$4000

Eben said line 233, grounds mowing, increased from \$1K to \$15K but that is not actually all increased cost. Cemetery mowing used to be a separate line item but the two lines have been consolidated.

Animal control expense has increased due to the cost of kenneling service, which is out of our hands.

Electricity expense for the library has increased. They are currently running two facilities.

Charles Flaum asked why nothing is shown for the rec coordinator salary. Eben said it is under office salaries.

Eben said there is a \$21K increase in buildings and grounds maintenance and supplies for the town garage. That is grant-funded expense for energy improvements. We are bringing in \$86,160 from the blacktop reserve fund. There is a new line showing the \$110K contribution to the paving fund. Our planned projects for paving will cost \$196,160. Lines 376 (gravel/stone) and 384 (mud abatement) were combined into one. The gravel/stone line went up and the mud abatement line went to zero. The amount budgeted for winter sand might look like a large increase, but last year we got a one-time cost reduction. This figure is similar to the one from two years ago.

Walter Pomroy asked why the board decided to allocate another \$20K of cash on hand into the capital reserve fund. Eben said that is because in 2030 or 2031 the capital equipment fund is projected to dip under \$100K. The board chose to allocate money from cash on hand to increase the buffer rather than raising the tax burden for the next 10 years. This year we are proposing to add \$10K, not \$20K. Walter said in the prior year we added \$20K and now we are putting in another \$10K. That is \$30K more than was budgeted. Are we saying the capital plan is not adequate? Are we going to update it? Eben said we

did an overhaul of the capital plan a couple months ago. It showed that what we are putting in does not keep up with the needs. The board felt it would be appropriate to use cash on hand to shave the peaks. The new board can take up whether to increase the contribution. Bob Hoag said he thinks the board has to increase the contribution.

Eben reviewed the proposed allocations of cash on hand. He said if your property was worth \$100K last year, your tax bill would have been \$908.60. With this budget the tax bill for the same property would be \$945.93, a \$37.33 increase per \$100K value.

Mike Dunham said he agrees with Jon Gregg. He has been on a lot of boards and doesn't think he has ever seen anyone handle facts and figures like Eben Patch, other than maybe Beth Foy.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 6. Shall the Town vote to collect property taxes to the Town Treasurer in four equal installments (32 V.S.A. § 4792), as listed below; with delinquent taxes and assessments have charged against them an eight percent (8%) commission after the fourth installment (32 V.S.A. § 1674) and interest charges of one percent (1%) per month or fraction thereof, for the first three months; and thereafter one and one half percent (1 ½%) per month or fraction thereof from the due date of such tax? Such interest shall be imposed on a fraction of a month as if it were an entire month (32 V.S.A. § 5136). Payments are due in the hands of the Treasurer by 4:00 p.m. on the below due dates.

First installment to be paid on or before Thursday, August 11, 2025.

Second installment to be paid on or before Monday, November 10, 2025.

Third installment to be paid on or before Monday, February 10, 2026.

Fourth installment to be paid on or before Friday, May 10, 2026.

Beth Foy moved the article as printed, Walter Pomroy seconded and the motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 7. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to appoint a town clerk as provided in 17 V.S.A. § 2651e?

Beth Foy moved the article as printed and Bob Hoag seconded.

Mark Woodward said Rosemary is irreplaceable but will not stay with us forever. Rumor has it that this coming year will be her last as clerk and treasurer. This article will allow us to recruit for clerk and treasurer from a larger area. Currently the people in those positions have to be from Johnson. It will also allow Rosemary to train the new recruit for several months. It could be hard to find someone from this town with the necessary skills. Rosemary read a list of town clerk duties. Mark said if this article passes, the selectboard intends to appoint Rosemary to continue for the next year.

Casey Romero said it seemed like Mark was saying that if the position continues to be elected candidates have to be residents of Johnson. Is that true? Mark said yes.

Beth Foy said Rosemary may be the most trusted person in the town of Johnson. She may have more integrity than anyone Beth has ever met. If we don't pass this article it ties our hands in terms of who

the town can select. We would be assuming a high risk for our town. We don't know who the candidates would be. If there were only one person on the ballot, that person would get the position. We should seriously consider the implications if we do not pass the article.

Walter Pomroy said we need a third article which is not warned. According to Title 17 § 2646, we have to have a separate article to allow a non-resident to be appointed to this position. Without that, we are limited to only appointing someone from Johnson. We will need an article at a future special or annual town meeting to allow us to appoint from outside Johnson. Mark reviewed the statute and said Walter is right. His guess is that we would probably have to have a special town meeting.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 8. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to appoint a town treasurer as provided in 17 V.S.A. § 2651f?

Mark Woodward said there could be two separate people in the clerk and treasurer positions. There likely will be. Rosemary said according to a Vermont League of Cities and Towns survey in 2024, 30% of municipal treasurers are appointed. She reviewed the main responsibilities of the town treasurer.

Jon Gregg said it sounds as if the treasurer has more responsibilities than the clerk. Is that true? Rosemary said yes.

Jon asked how the remuneration for the two positions will be assigned if they are different people. Will the two be weighted equally? Mark said he guesses there will be increased cost. If there are two separate people there could be two separate healthcare policies. He would think the positions could be part-time.

Kyle Nuse asked if the village trustees pay part of Rosemary's salary. She knows she is also the village clerk and treasurer. Mark said the town pays 60% and the village pays 40%. And she is not a village resident. Kyle asked, if the town votes one way and the village votes the other way, then would we pay 100% of the cost for the town clerk and treasurer, with the village paying separately for village clerk and treasurer? Mark said the village already voted on this, but not with the third article Walter brought up.

Beth Foy said Rosemary helps with committee funds. She accepts money they raise and handles reimbursements for projects. She manages committee reserve funds and receives grant funds. She thinks it is a pretty big job. We have so many committees, she is sure it is complicated. She appreciates everything Rosemary does.

The moderator called for a vote on a motion to authorize the Selectboard to appoint a town treasurer as provided in 17 V.S.A. § 2651f, although such a motion had not yet been made, and it was passed by a voice vote.

Article 9. Shall the town authorize the elimination of the office of Town Auditor, with future audits to be provided by a public accountant licensed in this State in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2651b(a)?

Eben Patch moved the article as printed and Beth Foy seconded.

Eben said elimination of the office of auditor is something he wishes we didn't have to do. Since he has been on the board we have lost an auditor every year. Our last remaining auditor is not seeking re-election. We are already using a state licensed accountant. The selectboard asks the voters to support the article.

David Williams said there are two ways to read the statute on eliminating the office of Town Auditor, which refers to voting by ballot at an annual meeting. One way would allow the town to vote on this by paper ballot as we would for a close voice vote. The other way requires treating this vote merely as an advisory action, with further action required at a future annual meeting. He asked if voters want to vote by paper ballot now or leave it to another meeting.

Jon Gregg said we are already talking about another special meeting. Couldn't this be tacked onto that meeting?

Eric Nuse moved and Beth Foy seconded to vote on the article at this meeting by paper ballot.

Walter Pomroy said the statute doesn't say "Australian ballot."

David Williams said the only opinion he hears is that voting should be by paper ballot. He called for a paper ballot vote.

The motion was passed 61 to 5.**Discussion with Legislators**

The moderator invited Sen. Rich Westman, Rep. Dan Noyes and Rep. Richard Bailey to address the voters.

Richard Bailey said he was appointed to the Energy and Digital Infrastructure Committee, which is a new committee that oversees bills relating to energy and global warming and reviews computer systems being requested. All the agencies have come in to give background on what they are doing and now they will start working on bills. There is an energy bill submitted by the governor that modifies previous legislation to make it more palatable and less costly to track by changing mandates to goals, etc.

Dan Noyes said he is on the Human Services Committee. In the budget adjustment for the FY25 budget they spent a lot of time on nursing homes. They recommended adding \$21 million for extraordinary financial relief because some nursing homes were in financial trouble. There has been increased utilization of nursing homes so another \$24 million was added to keep nursing homes able to function. In the FY26 budget the increased utilization of nursing homes was moved into base funding. His committee has recommended language in the budget to look at extraordinary financial relief for nursing homes. We don't have resources to help people stay in their homes or in residential care facilities. We put money towards the most expensive care, which is not the best use of funds. They have been working on how to reduce nursing home costs so we can make better investments so people do not get to the point of needing a nursing home.

Rep. Noyes said the PILOT payment is tied to the insured value of the state college and the grand list. It is a problem. He has been talking to the Ways and Means Committee. They had no idea this was an issue. They took testimony on it Friday. The chair said they would deal with it when they look at school funding formulas. It is a problem not to have the predictability communities need for PILOT.

Rich Westman said usually at this point in the legislative session it is apparent which are the hot items and where the legislature is headed for the rest of the session. That is not true this year because there are so many things up in the air. So much is going on in Washington, particularly around healthcare issues. Nursing homes are in trouble. Eight hospitals in the state are in deficit. A number of home health agencies are in a hard place. At least 4 Federally Qualified Health Centers in the state are in financial difficulty. The federal government is talking about adjustments and reductions affecting states like Vermont that have expanded their Medicaid programs. All that will make the end of the session hard to deal with. It connects to education finance reform. If we are short in the Medicaid area it will be harder to get a formula change this year. Over the next 2 years he thinks the legislature will do something about education funding reform. He chairs the Senate Transportation Committee. They are having trouble putting together budgets because of the decline in their revenues. His afternoon committee is Appropriations. All these fiscal issues will land there. More and more towns are putting in local option taxes. That is where the money to fund PILOT comes from. There is a surplus. He expects toward the end of the session there will be discussion about not building that surplus up and being fairer to communities that get PILOT.

Bob Hoag asked what statement the legislators have for President Trump.

Rep. Noyes said he is concerned about potential cuts to Medicaid. It keeps him up at night. A 1% drop is \$19 million to Vermont. We don't have the capacity to handle that. It will hurt healthcare providers in this state.

Bob said the healthcare providers will come to the town and the state trying to get money.

Beth Foy asked about FEMA and state funding for emergency situations. If federal funds are in jeopardy, is the state considering what that means for short term and long term impacts for communities like ours if there is a flood or other major catastrophe?

Sen. Westman said the legislature did put money in the midterm budget adjustment to help communities that got flooded last summer. The money provides matching funds for FEMA. There is discussion about creating a separate fund to rely on for matching funds for communities going forward. The truth is that we don't have the capacity to deal with all of it alone. There is a lot of talk about making sure the state is ready to help communities make the match if floods like that are going to be more common.

Beth said that suggests that we need to be proactive in thinking about the way we are building. It is related to housing and food. Are there talks at the state level about how the state can play a more active role in building out communities in floodplains, so we do not have primary housing and critical infrastructure in flood zones?

Sen. Westman said there are many conversations about that. Until the flood 2 years ago development was mostly encouraged in downtown areas. But a lot of traditional downtowns are built in floodplains. Conversation about spreading out development is happening. It is slow. It has taken him 3 years to get

permits for a duplex he is putting up. He thinks we have to streamline the process so wastewater, septic and stormwater permitting don't hold someone up for 3 years, because we are starved for housing.

Rep. Noyes said most of our infrastructure was built in downtowns and village centers that flood. A lot of towns don't have the necessary infrastructure to build outside of village centers. There is talk about funds for communities to extend infrastructure and about senior housing. We need to make investments in senior housing so people who are overhoused can move out.

Sen. Westman said before the last flood Morrisville Water & Light consciously drew down Green River Reservoir to give it capacity to take on more water. They were notified by ANR that if they did it again they were breaking the law. He has introduced legislation in the Senate, and similar legislation has been introduced in the House, under which the governor could call an emergency and allow dams like that to be drawn down. We have to think differently about preparing ourselves better.

Rep. Bailey said his focus now is on making sure we can make things affordable in Vermont. We need to step out of the box on some issues and have discussions with ANR on things like the dam issue.

Vanessa Tourangeau said she thinks the state needs to consider rent caps. Her rent just went up \$400. It went up \$100 last year. She can't afford it. She has one income and two kids.

Margo Warden asked if there is anything to share about the thinking in Montpelier about the VTSU Johnson campus. Rep. Noyes said the state is making the investments they said they would make to ensure the campus is still open and viable. Legislators have met with the chancellor and president there, making sure they know how important the college is to our community. The state will continue to make investments to keep it going.

Sen. Westman said the last \$5 million transfer to VTSU is in the budget. They are still on track for the nursing program at the school. The legislature puts up the money but the VTSU board is in control of a lot of the decision making process. He wishes legislators had the ability to have more of an effect on the VTSU board.

Margo asked if legislators are able to push VTSU about the impact on the community if the college were closed.

Sen. Westman said the state will have put nearly \$200 million into the system since COVID. The legislature has taken care of back debt for the system and helped bring on a new IT system. They helped with funding the nursing program. The legislature can't manage day to day operations. They have ponied up as much as they can when asked for money. He is hopeful VTSU will find a path forward to make sure the Johnson campus is stable and has enough students. Legislators are doing everything they can think of. There is nothing they wouldn't do to keep the campus here.

Jon Gregg asked if there is anything townspeople can do. Rep. Noyes suggested telling friends and people on social media that the Johnson campus is open, needs students, and is a good place to go to school.

Rep. Bailey said he thinks online learning will be a great resource to keep the colleges going.

Sen. Westman said the selectboard has sometimes had the chancellor come to a meeting. That keeps the college on notice that people in the community are watching what is happening. He would suggest that the selectboard plan on inviting college representatives to an open meeting twice a year. It is good for the VTSU board, the chancellor's office and the president to understand what the community is thinking and what support the college has.

Jon Gregg asked if the selectboard can schedule the type of meeting Sen. Westman is talking about and encourage more townspeople to come so we can make it more evident that we care what happens to the college.

Charles Flaum said Johnson's online presence is working well for them, but they broke the faculty contract and they are paying people in Alabama much less than they were paying professors here. He was part of the town-college task force and the college didn't even want to give them a room to meet in. Another issue is that programs like the Council on Aging, Lamoille County Home Health, the Family Center, Meals on Wheels, etc. will all be impacted by federal cuts. Maybe the legislators can give some voice to that.

Rep. Noyes said he has no idea how we will backfill cuts that are proposed to Medicaid. Millions and millions of dollars come into the state to fund those agencies. The Older Americans Act that funds the Area Agencies on Aging is in the continuing resolution that ends March 14. He wishes he had an answer.

Sen. Westman said all state spending totals \$8.5 billion. Of that, \$2.3 billion is Medicaid. Our federal match is about 56%. It is the largest single spending item within the general fund budget. He couldn't have kept his parents at home as they aged if not for Home Health, which gets Medicaid funding.

Glo Weibel said she is a former director of the Out and About adult day care center. The proposed cuts to Medicaid and the Child and Adult Care Food Program would kill their budget and close them down. She is retired and gets social security. There is so much happening right now at the federal level that will decimate a state like Vermont. She encourages people to get to the streets. The courts won't be listened to. There have been injunctions to unfreeze money and it's not being unfrozen. Courts are not being listened to by the executive branch and Congress has not stepped up. She encouraged people to call their legislators and also to call legislators in other states and encourage them to take back Congress's responsibility over funding. It will require people getting in the streets. This can't continue. We will get into World War III. Trump said the official language of the country will be English but she bets soon it will be Russian.

Jon Gregg asked if the selectboard can agree on having meetings with the college and their board so they understand the importance of the college to the community. Eben said yes. Rep. Noyes said he will come to the meetings if he is not in Montpelier.

The meeting was recessed for lunch from 12:00 to 12:40.

Article 10. Shall the town establish a reserve fund to be called Johnson Public Library Reserve to be used for the purpose of offsetting future expenses to be funded by any one or a combination of: unexpended funds from the Library Equipment Capital, Building Maintenance, Equipment Purchase Current Year, the Building

Capital Expense lines of the budget, or a reservation of year end budget surplus in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804?

Eben Patch moved the article as printed and Mark Woodward seconded.

Eben said this reserve fund is proposed to set aside funds for projects. It will help stabilize the tax rate and prevent spikes.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 11. Shall the town establish a reserve fund to be called the “Beautification Committee Reserve Fund” for the purpose of funding the operation and expansion of the Beautification Committee to be funded by unspent funds annually allocated to the Beautification Committee in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804?

Kyle Nuse moved the article as printed and it was seconded.

Adrienne Parker said the Beautification Committee works with public art, beautification projects and planting. They are looking to be able to do larger projects. They are always looking for volunteers. She suggested that people follow their Facebook account, which they use to call for help with plantings, etc.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 12. Shall the town establish a reserve fund to be called the Class IV Road Reserve Fund to be used for the maintenance of Class IV roads, to be funded by any one or a combination of: a dedicated budget line item, year-end balance from the Class IV Maintenance budget line, or a reservation of year end budget surplus in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804?

Mark Woodward moved the article as printed and Eben Patch seconded.

Beth Foy said she wonders if grant revenue should be included as a potential source of funding. Eben said he believes the board would be open to that idea. There was discussion about the wording of an amendment. **David Williams asked for and received unanimous consent to amend the motion to change “or a reservation of year end budget surplus” to “a reservation of year end budget surplus or grants.”**

Nat Kinney said he is wondering if this signals a desire from the board to start putting more money into Class IV roads. Eben said the article was a request from the Johnson planning commission. Part of the thinking was to plan better for projects. Municipal Road General Permit compliance issues are starting to trickle down to Class IV roads. The selectboard has not talked about raising funding for that item but he is sure it will come up for next year’s budget.

Charles Flaum asked what will happen to Class IV roads that have become trails. Eben asked, roads that have been reclassified as legal trails? Charles said or those that are in the process. Eben said he doesn’t know of any that are in the process. The selectboard has talked about reclassification but has not started the process on any roads.

Aubrey Wagner said she lives on a Class IV road, the Sinclair Road extension. She is interested in funds supporting the road being maintained by the town. Seven kids live on the road. There are 3 permanent residences and a lot of traffic from snowmobiles and ATVs. It would be helpful to have the road maintained by the town. Residents don't have the funds to maintain it. It is a complex road with steep embankments. They maintain it with pickaxes and shovels. It would be nice to have support from the town. She speaks on behalf of everyone on the Sinclair extension.

Paul Warden said the planning commission feels strongly that Class IV roads are a town asset. They support this article.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 13. Shall the voters of the Town of Johnson advise the Selectboard to investigate and pursue subdividing jointly owned property with the Village of Johnson? The properties to be included and not limited to are the Mill House, Village Garage, Town Garage, Lower Storage Building, and the 180+/- acres off of Lendway Lane behind the Town and Village garages.

Eben Patch moved the article as printed and Mike Dunham seconded.

Eben said this is an advisory article. There are buildings that are jointly owned by the town and the village. The village came to the selectboard in the fall and expressed interest in subdividing the land behind the town and village garages. This selectboard was not opposed to hearing ideas but felt the voters should weigh in. If any town property is to be sold it has to be warned in the paper. If the town is not interested in the selectboard talking about subdivision of properties the board wants to hear that now so they don't spend time on this if the townspeople are not interested.

Kristen MacDowell asked if what is meant is subdividing property to sell pieces of it. Eben said not necessarily. There has been conversation about multiple different properties. For instance, 50% of the town garage is owned by the village and 50% of the village garage is owned by the town. That has caused issues for past boards when maintenance or changing the look of a building comes up. It would make sense for the village to own the village garage and the property it sits on and for the town to own the town garage and the property it sits on. The board hasn't extensively discussed the 180 acres. The municipal building is also 50% owned by the town and 50% by the village. Maintenance is often difficult because one entity has funds and the other doesn't and the times when they have funds don't always line up. The boards have talked about one entity owning the municipal building and the other paying rent. Nothing is set in stone. He doesn't think we have talked about selling any assets.

Beth Foy said she thinks it makes sense for the buildings to be divided up. But she doesn't understand the intention for the 180 acres. Are the boards talking about splitting up the 180 acres between the entities separately from discussions around the buildings? What does this mean?

Mark Woodward said this is just the beginning of the discussion. The town has voted in the past to keep that land and not sell it. This just allows the town to talk to the village about different options. We would be more likely to sell the whole parcel. But anything we do has to come back for a vote. The village wants out from a few of these properties. His sense is that they would like the town to give them money. But it can't happen without coming to a vote.

Nate Kinney said he has long been frustrated by lack of maintenance on the mill house. It has always been inhibited by the dual ownership. When talking about a potential transfer of money we should keep in mind not only value but also liability because these are old mill sites. There is lead paint on the mill house. He thinks it is a good idea to separate our stakes in these properties but we need to be realistic about what they are or are not worth.

The motion was passed by a voice vote.

Article 14. To transact such other business as may be properly brought before this Town Meeting.

Beth Foy thanked the board for its work. She said it has snowed a lot this winter and the road crew is always out making sure our roads are safe. She appreciates it. There was a round of applause for the road crew.

Beth said the Lamoille Lancer girls are in playoffs. She invited people to come see them on Thursday at 7:00 at Lamoille Union.

Eric Nuse said the task forces developed as part of the Reimagine Johnson effort have been working. They have produced notes about what they have done. They need input. He urges anyone with time to look into what they have done, talk to members or show up at their meetings to give input.

Seth Jensen, deputy director of the Lamoille County Planning Commission said LCPC is in the process of updating the regional plan. They have a survey on the regional plan available on their website and in the library. There will be a big focus on flood recovery and resiliency. They would like as many responses from Johnson as possible.

Nat Kinney moved to adjourn and the motion was seconded and passed by a voice vote at 1:11.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths