

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

Present:

Committee Members: Kim Dunkley, Jan Gearhart, BJ Putvain, Peggy Williams (remote)

Others: Adrienne Parker, Kathy Black, Adrian Schmidt, Charles Flaum

Absent: Doug Molde, Mary Lou Kopas

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

A quorum was not yet present, but the committee began informal discussion at 6:05.

Kathy Black said Doug Molde thought it was important for the rail trail committee to connect to the Reimagine Johnson task force on recreation. It seems like there is a lot of overlap between the groups, particularly with regard to the project the rail trail committee is about to start with VHB. The task force is interested in connecting recreation areas. The task forces are not official committees and can't apply for funding but the Reimagine Johnson process was about connecting them to organizations that have funding. Her interest is in making sure Johnson can take advantage of those opportunities. She thinks it is important for the rail trail committee and the task force to keep each other in mind. Adrienne has attended at least two recreation task force meetings. Jan said she wonders if we can combine the groups officially. Kathy said being a task force allows her group freedom, but being an official town group could give them more power.

Adrienne said she went around to all the committees before her second selectboard meeting. At the last selectboard meeting she recommended that the selectboard facilitate a working session with chairs of all the committees, commissions and task forces (and any members that want to come.) They could bring lists of projects they are interested in and the list of projects could be prioritized and given to Randall Szott to go after grants. We could also look at the responsibilities of the committees and consider ways to organize them. At the last selectboard meeting, only 3 board members were there and Tom Galinat was not there. The board needs to talk about Adrienne's idea again when the full board and town administrator are all there.

Kathy said we have a lot of recreation assets in Johnson. We need to look at the big picture and not spend a lot of time on something that may not be the biggest priority.

Charles Flaum said his understanding is that we don't have a rec committee for the town. Kathy said there has been one but there is currently no one on it. That is why it is important to have a conversation about overlap between groups. There might be people on the recreation task force who would like to take on the traditional tasks of the recreation committee.

Adrienne said at the last recreation task force meeting she had mentioned that she thought subcommittees did not have to follow open meeting law. She researched that. She believes if the selectboard creates a subcommittee they have to follow open meeting law but if a committee creates a subcommittee it doesn't have to.

Adrienne said another thing to consider at a joint meeting of committees is what things are outside the capacity of volunteers. For instance, it is not sustainable to have volunteers do landscaping maintenance or trail maintenance.

Jan asked what the selectboard said about the joint meeting idea. Adrienne said they were in favor.

Adrienne said thinks it would be helpful if people could come to the joint meeting with the current responsibilities of their group and also what they wish they could do but are not able to do.

Kathy said we have to be conscious about over organizing, giving the example of the skatepark. What happens for the skatepark happens because Casey and Howard Romero are driven and they want it to happen.

Jan explained to Kathy that the rail trail committee is a temporary committee that is going to phase out. Adrienne described some of the committee's plans to use grant money. We would like to get kiosks for rail trail maps. We have talked about placing kiosks at Old Mill Park and the Village Green. Kathy asked if one would be put at Willow Crossing. Kim and Jan said that is a great idea. Kim said we would have to ask the state for permission to put it in the state right of way. Adrienne said we have also talked about getting benches (either art benches or normal benches) and about putting up public art. Kim said we have talked about charging stations for e-bikes and bike racks.

Kathy suggested there should be parking signs telling people they can use the parking area by the rail trail outside of Old Mill Park. Kim said we would rather have people park inside the park. Jan said she has never heard that. Is the parking area outside the park over-used by trail users? Kim said she hasn't seen it be a problem so far, but if we designate it as rail trail parking then everyone will park there. It was mentioned that people using the food shelf also park in that area. Kathy said she doesn't think that is a big conflict. She often parks there. Adrienne said we could point out parking areas on the map. We have also talked about how it would be beneficial to have secure parking.

Kathy said the new Johnson town plan approved at the end of 2024 includes in its action steps an interest in having lights at Old Mill Park. Charles said there will be lights at Legion Field. There is a grant that will pay for that.

Jan said we got 3 quotes for kiosks. Timber Homes Vermont quoted \$4800 each, based on 3 kiosks. Town and Country Sheds quoted \$1707 each. Their kiosks would have the same look at the ones from Timber Homes Vermont but would use less expensive materials. Brian Currier, a Johnson resident, quoted \$1500 each for 2-sided kiosks. The others are 1-sided. Adrienne said she thought the Timber Homes kiosk was 2-sided. Jan reviewed the quote and said it doesn't say whether or not it is 2-sided. Brian Currier would charge \$1200 for a 1-sided kiosk. That includes plexiglass.

BJ said any contractor the village uses needs to have insurance. He would assume the town has the same requirement.

Jan said Brian will do as much assembly as possible in his shop to make on-site assembly as easy as possible. These vendors would all supply kits and would not do the installation. BJ asked who will install them. Kim suggested village or town crews might be able to do it. Adrienne said we have talked about having an event like the one where people helped build picnic tables. BJ said dealing with the kiosks will be a lot different. Jan said we will need something to lift heavy pieces and trucks

to transport parts. She thinks Brian Currier will help. BJ said it would be a huge asset if Brian could be on site to direct people. Jan said Brian's kiosks would be a little bigger than what Timber Homes quoted.

There was discussion about different wood options.

Peggy joined the meeting remotely at 6:48, making a quorum. The other committee members explained what Jan had found out about kiosks.

Charles said he had just looked it up and found that cedar posts in wet ground will not last as long as pressure treated wood.

Jan moved to ask Brian Currier to make 3 kiosks at his proposed price of \$1500 each, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

Adrian Schmidt asked who will be responsible for what gets added to the kiosks if this committee is ending. Committee members said it is not ending that soon. Kim said once the committee no longer exists someone will still need to be responsible for the kiosks. That responsibility will have to get passed on to some entity. Adrian said he could see other committees wanting to add things to the kiosks. Jan said there should be a point person determined.

The committee discussed possible locations for the kiosks. (*Kathy left at 6:57.*) **Kim moved to locate the new kiosks at the Village Green, Willow Crossing and Legion Field, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

Kim said she will try to find out how to get permission from the state to place a kiosk at Willow Crossing. Jan will email the selectboard and village trustees to get on their next agendas to ask permission to place kiosks at Legion Field and on the Village Green.

The committee discussed the art benches Michael Stanley had proposed. Kim said because they are all metal people would not be able to sit on them if they were in hot sun. It was agreed that an all-metal bench would not be desirable. BJ suggested we could ask him to change the seat to wood and perhaps add wood backing.

BJ moved to have Kyle Nuse ask Michael Stanley if he can give us a quote for a version of the jagged (not rounded) "Mountain" bench with a wooden seat and wood in the back contact area, Kim seconded and the motion was passed.

The committee discussed where to put the bench. Kim said because it is 8 ft. wide she doesn't think there is any place downtown where it would fit well. Adrienne said we had talked about putting it near the bike repair station. Peggy suggested having it along the trail where people could use it to take a rest, not at the trailhead where there are already places to sit. Kim suggested it could be at Dog's Head.

Adrienne said Michael Stanley's family is going after a \$2500 grant, but that still leaves \$2500 that needs to be paid to him. Does this committee want to help pay him? BJ said he thinks we can consider it if we have even money left over from other projects.

Kim suggested contributing money to Charles Flaum's nonprofit to help publicize the rail trail. Charles said his board would love that. The board that has been established is him, Jesse Whitworth, Amy Tatro and Beth Foy. They want to get off the ground and establish credibility so they can get more funding.

Kim said she can look into the cost of a really sturdy bench that could be placed near where the bridge crosses the Lamoille River.

BJ suggested holding off on collaborating with the beautification committee until we are sure how much we will need for our other projects. Kim said she think bike racks for the library, skatepark, etc are more important than public art for our committee.

BJ has talked to Mike Mignone about having e-bike charging at his store. Kim said she has talked to Jenna's Coffee House. Jan said she thinks we should figure out e-bike charging for those locations. Kim agreed. Kim said she will call Kyle Nuse and ask about the cost for charging stations at those locations. Did we talk about having 2 plugs or 4? Kim said she doesn't think we would need more than a couple. The chargers would just be used by the occasional person who wasn't prepared.

BJ moved to approve the minutes of February 19, 2025, Jan seconded and the motion was passed.

Kim moved to recommend that the selectboard appoint Adrian Schmidt to the rail trail committee, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

The next meeting will be April 16.

Adrienne said Doug is having health issues and is hoping someone can step in to serve as chair temporarily. BJ said he will need to step down as vice chair soon because he will be busy with his business. It was agreed to decide at the next meeting who the officers should be.

Adrienne said she would like to send someone the budget she created to help figure out where we are financially. Mary Lou had indicated she would be willing to look at it. The committee agreed Mary Lou could look at it if she is willing.

Kim said she will talk to Kyle about e-bike charging. She will talk to the state about a kiosk location near Willow Crossing. She will talk to Kyle about Michael Stanley's benches. Kim suggested that people could look for other types of benches. Jan talked about using simple log or stump seating.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34.