JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2025

Present: Selectboard members: Mike Dunham, Peter Hammond, Adrienne Parker, Eben Patch
Others: Tom Galinat, Rosemary Audibert, Jason Whitehill, Lois Frey, Bruce Lyon, Melissa Manka, Tasha Wallis

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***
   It was agreed to add to the agenda approval of an amendment to the contract with SLR for Holmes Meadow and discussion of a letter to property owners on dead end roads. Tom said items 9 and 10 could be removed from the agenda.
3. ***Public Comment***
   Bruce Lyon asked why the board is thinking of buying the old town hall and how the decision on whether to buy it will be made – by the selectboard or by a vote of the town?

   Eben said he believes the selectboard does not need permission from the voters to take ownership of a parcel if any note taken out for the purchase is less than 60 months. The board is discussing whether to buy it.

   Bruce said he thinks the townspeople should be able to vote on whether to buy the building. He doesn't think the selectboard should have the authority to purchase it themselves.

   Eben said it may or may not be on the town meeting warning. If the board decides to buy it there will be a motion made in open meeting.

   Bruce asked why board members think the town should purchase it. Mike said it is a historic building. It has been in the town for about 200 years. This is the very beginning stage of the discussion. There could be grants out there. There are a lot of historic preservation grants. It is within the selectboard's right to purchase the property if they see fit. He is starting to lean toward caution himself. Maybe it would be prudent to let the townspeople decide if they want to buy it. Maybe there should be meetings ahead of time to discuss a possible purchase. It will be discussed in open meeting once we get through the negotiation process. He imagines the board may come to the conclusion that the townspeople ought to weigh in.

   Tom said it is important to note that the selectboard did not reach out to the Studio Center about purchasing the building. There was a covenant in the deed requiring that the town be given right of first refusal, so the Vermont Studio Center approached the town.
4. ***Selectboard Updates and/or Concerns***
   Eben said his email account was spoofed. If anyone gets a request from him asking for Apple gift cards to fund a surprise project, that is fake.

   Mike said the agenda for the August 7 meeting to choose a new selectboard member shows a public question and answer session. He doesn't believe we went through that process previously. It was all done in executive session. He thinks we need to stick with what we did last time. If we ask questions in open session with more than one candidate, it may not be fair to all candidates, as those who are not first can hear the questions ahead of time.

Eben said last time the Vermont League of Cities and Towns said we could legally interview candidates in executive session. He sees how it could be unfair to do it in open session. He is open to doing it either way. Peter said last time members of the public could ask questions in open session and the interviews were in executive session. The board agreed to follow the same procedure on August 7. Eben said since the agenda was already posted, under Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda the board can clarify that interviews will be in executive session.

Adrienne said the Beautification Committee got an $8500 grant to help put art sculptures on Main Street. She congratulated Kyle Nuse and artist Michael Stanley for working on the grant application and getting it approved. Eben asked if we know whether the village has given permission for the sculptures. Adrienne said they have.

5. ***Consent Agenda***

The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of July 7 and 21 and appointment of Jesse Whitworth to the Planning Commission. **Adrienne moved to approve the consent agenda, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

6. ***Clerk & Treasurer's Report: Warrants, Licenses, and Any Action Items***

Rosemary noted that she does not yet have a final budget status report for the fiscal year that ended June 30. Eben noted that the budget status report shows revenue at 108% of budget and expenses at 93% of budget.

Rosemary said she will not be at the next selectboard meeting.

Rosemary said Susan Tinker got a quote of $14,759 for scanning all land records that have not yet been digitized. Rosemary proposes using money from the land records reserve fund to cover the cost**. Peter moved and Mike seconded to allocate an amount not to exceed $15,000 from the records preservation fund for digitization of land records.** Adrienne asked if they will just be on our servers. Tom said he thinks we will have paper versions, digitized versions on a thumb drive and they will be in the cloud. **The motion was passed.**

7. ***Road Foreman Report and Any Action Items***

Jason said the Gould Hill project should be wrapped up by next week. The crew will go back to the Codding Hollow project in about 2 weeks or sooner. He is hoping for board support to return to a 5 person crew. We have less personnel power than ever before and are falling behind a bit. Taxpayers have gotten used to certain expectations and there will come a time when we can't meet those if we stick to 4 people. The 5th person who used to work here has shown great interest in returning.

Eben asked how other board members feel about it. Adrienne said she thinks we need the 5th person. We hear at least once a week why we need the 5th person. She doesn't understand hiring a part-time person in winter and using contract employees. Why not just have a 5th employee? Mike said he thinks this is a decision that should be made when the selectboard has 5 members again. Peter said he thinks we pulled the plug too quickly. He wishes the board had had a more accurate picture when we made the decision.

Eben said Tom wants to know whether we should use a sealed bid process to get paving bids. Eben would like sealed bids. Tom said that would be in line with policy but would affect turnaround time. Jason said quality is also a potential issue. He is in favor of quality, especially with paving. A paving contractor told him it wouldn't cost that much more to add paving from the bridge to the transfer station on Wilson Road. He thought that would be worthwhile. Eben said we aren't held to selecting the lowest bidder. He suggested an RFP for sealed bids with a 2-week turnaround time. Jason asked if the board wants to pave from the bridge to the transfer station. Eben said if we can afford it he is willing to take Jason's recommendation. Mike said it probably wouldn't hurt to go all the way to the transfer station. That road is used a lot. The board agreed to what Eben suggested.

8. LCPC CDBG-DR County Wide Application

Tasha Wallis of the Lamoille County Planning Commission said there is $67 million in CDBG funds related to the 2023 funding available in the state. Of that, $3 million is allocated to planning. Melissa Manka has worked to create an application for Lamoille communities to help take projects the community is interested in further along in design so they are more ready for funding in the future. Melissa said this is a regional application for planning services for Lamoille County. One aspect is flood restoration and mitigation. Tom has provided a list of projects Johnson would like included in the application, including bridges on Route 15 in the center of town and near Hogback Road, buyout properties along the river and portions of the MSI and Foote Brook Farm properties.

Mike moved and Adrienne seconded to support the Lamoille County Planning Commission's county-wide pre-application for CDBG-DR funds. Tasha said if the state deems we should go to full application there will be a public hearing where the community can comment on the planning application. **The motion was passed.**

9. Amendment to SLR Contract for Holmes Meadow

Eben said a previous board gave Tom authority to sign documents for the Holmes Meadow project that don't incur any additional cost but Tom wanted to be sure there was board approval for him signing an amendment to the contract. **Peter moved and Adrienne seconded to authorize Tom to sign documents for the Holmes Meadow project that do not incur any cost.** Adrienne asked what has changed in the contract. Tom said the scope of work got slightly larger. PFAS was found and design work to remove it is part of the scope. It is taking longer than originally anticipated in 2021. **The motion was passed.**

10. Review and Award Bid for Lendway Lane, Lamoille River Armoring

Eben said the engineer's recommendation is to award the contract for Lendway Lane armoring to Dale Percy, the low bidder at $235,000. The other bidders were King's ($344,000), Manosh ($359,695.70), Boulder ($483,000) and Walker ($524,405.)

Mike moved and Peter seconded to award the contract for armoring of Lendway Lane to Dale Percy in the amount of $235,000, as recommended by Mumley Engineering.

Adrienne asked if there are options other than armoring. Eben said the armoring is being done to protect the river bank, which protects the roadway. Probably the best option is to get out of the way of the river. But this is similar to what we have done in other places. This is the state's recommendation for preventing banks from eroding. Adrienne asked if the armoring boulders are temporary. Eben said no. The armoring stays until water moves it out of the way.

The motion was passed.

11. Library Relocation

Tom said he participated in a final walk-through today. All the foundation work was completed as specified. Mike asked if Tom is happy with the grout. He thought it had cracks in it. Tom said the structural engineer confirmed it was okay. Mike asked, how can it be okay? He would like it addressed somehow. He said he will rescind his signature from the directors' orders he had already signed tonight that included payment for that work.

12. Industrial Park

Melissa Manka said when the notice of Finding of No Significant Impact from the NEPA review is received then we can apply for notice to proceed.

13. Parking for Old Mill Concert

Tom said the parking plan for the next Tuesday Night Live concert at Old Mill Park has changed. Parking will be in the center field and the stage will be on the lower field. The Tuesday Night Live Committee is maxed out and would like someone to mark that there is no parking on either side of Railroad Street from Jenna's Promising Goods to Old Mill Park and also mark the area around the village shop so the village crew can come and go if needed. We could ask the road crew or volunteer ourselves or put out a call on Front Porch Forum.

Peter said it sounds like the road crew is maxed out too. He would be happy to help with marking but doesn't know that he could do it alone. It was agreed that Tom should post on Front Porch Forum asking for other volunteers to help. Adrienne said she can help too. It was agreed that Tom should also post on Front Porch Forum to let neighboring landowners and other community members know about the new parking plan.

14. Interlocal Assessor Liaison

Eben said Duncan Hastings served as the liaison for the interlocal agreement for assessor services. Now the board needs to appoint someone else. Peter asked for more information about what that means. Eben said there are 5 towns that have an agreement to share an assessor. Johnson hires the assessor and the other towns reimburse us after they are billed for their costs. The liaison would be the connection between the other towns and the board. The work would mainly be in April and May. The liaison would report to the selectboard if there were any issues. He thinks there will be a lot of emails around April and May and this year there were 3 Zoom meetings. Duncan filled out the sheets for costs – insurance, FICA, retirement, etc. Eben said he would be willing to serve as the liaison.

Peter moved to appoint Eben Patch as the liaison for the interlocal agreement for assessor services, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

15. Lister Errors and Omissions

Eben said one error on the Grand List was due to a tiny home that was removed before April 1 and the other was due to a property that was purchased and should have been combined with another property on the Grand List. **Mike moved to accept the errors and omissions to the Grand List as presented, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.**

16. Lister Training and Mileage Allocations

Eben said our employee who works through the interlocal agreement also works for another town separately from that agreement. That town has agreed to pay for a percentage of his training if we bill them for it. That saves all the towns money. The board agreed to that.

17. Union Negotiations

Eben said the last time we went through union negotiations, two board members, the town administrator and the town attorney were involved. The union contract is up December 31. Adrienne volunteered to be involved. Peter said he is a little worried about having time because his other job gets busy in December. He is willing to do it. But he suggested it might be good to have someone with experience involved. Eben said he would do it.

18. Letter to Property Owners on Dead End Roads

Tom had included in the packet a proposed letter to property owners on certain dead end roads stating that the town may refuse to plow roads if there are obstructions in the right of way and that the town is considering placing turnarounds for plows at the ends of roads or discontinuing roads if landowners are opposed to turnarounds. The board agreed that the letter should be reviewed by the town's attorney before it is sent out.

Adrienne said she had talked to Aubrey Wagner, who spoke at town meeting about Sinclair Road. She was confused by some of the terminology in an email from Tom. She was wondering if she could have an in-person meeting to discuss whether there is any way to get funding for upgrading her road. Maybe Tom, Adrienne and possibly Carl could meet with her. Tom suggested we could show her information about what is required from landowners who want to upgrade their roads. Adrienne said they don't have any funding for it. She wonders if there are any grants available. Mike said a lot of people in this community have spent their own time and money to do this without any government entity looking for a grant for them. To him it wouldn't be fair if we helped these people get funding when others footed the bill themselves. Tom said there might some grant funding related to MRGP for a section of the road if it is hydrologically connected. Adrienne asked if the board would be okay with her and Tom meeting with Aubrey. Mike said it's not the board's responsibility. Eben suggested Aubrey could come into a meeting to talk to the board. He thought he had already answered her questions. Tom suggested he could call her. He wrote her an email, but it used some technical terms. If the board is okay with it, he could reach out and explain what he wrote. The board agreed to that.

19. Executive Session

Mike moved to go into executive session for negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2) and for employee evaluation as al1owed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), with Tom invited to remain, Peter seconded and the motion was passed at 7:50. The board consented out of executive session at 8:20.

20. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths