

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025

Present: Selectboard members: Mike Dunham, Peter Hammond, Adrienne Parker, Eben Patch, Paul Warden

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call Meeting to Order

Eben called the meeting to order at 6:00.

2. Consider Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

Peter added authorization to sign for the lead and asbestos inspection at the Lowe Lecture Hall.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

4. Selectboard Updates and/or Concerns

Selectboard members did not bring up any issues.

5. Budget Review

Eben said the amount of cash we have on hand allows us to avoid the arduous process of estimating the surplus we will have at the end of the current year and deciding how to allocate it. We can have a bigger conversation about that in the future. We have more cash assets on hand than we have ever had since he has been on the board.

Adrienne said she wanted to remind the board of what we decided our top priorities were for the town administrator and the CEDS. The top 3 priorities for the town administrator were to oversee projects, develop a plan for Rosemary's transition, and develop a highway capital plan. The top 3 for the CEDS were the Jewett property, opportunities for economic and community development and exploration of taking ownership of the old town hall.

Eben reviewed revenues in the draft budget. He said we may want to ask Rosemary if we can increase late tax penalty revenue.

The board decided to reduce clerk's office fees to \$18K based on actuals for recent years.

Eben said law enforcement revenue is potentially a place where we could increase our revenue. We get a portion of the amount of any tickets issued. He has been told that we used to get tens of thousands of dollars of revenue from law enforcement.

Eben suggested being more conservative and going back to \$120K for state aid to highways. We are typically conservative about budgeting for that revenue because it is uncertain.

Paul said it looks like current use revenue has been going up \$5K per year. The board agreed to budget \$107,500 for that, based on the trend.

Eben said the PILOT payment we get is based on multiplying by the Common Level of Appraisal, which he thinks will continue to drop. Because of that, he thinks our payment will decrease. If the state doesn't get enough from the local option tax, we may not get the whole amount they would otherwise pay. Last year we budgeted \$421K based on the calculation the

state uses. Mark Woodward and Duncan Hastings pulled hard and we got a little more than what we budgeted. He suggests budgeting \$420K. The board agreed to that. He thinks we can increase the ANR PILOT amount to \$25K. That is based on our appraised value.

Eben said the Holcomb House rental income is wrong. Last year we opted to raise the rent and it doesn't look like that happened. We proposed \$700 a month. For the next budget year, the board agreed to increase the rent to \$800.

Eben doesn't believe we need to budget for revenue for the reappraisal fund in the upcoming year. The reappraisal contract we signed was for about \$150K. The reappraisal reserve fund had a balance as of June 30, 2025 of \$117K, but last year's board had budgeted \$10K from cash on hand as well as another line item to put money into it, so he believes the actual balance is around \$154K. A future board is going to need to plan on \$150K coming in from this fund and \$150K going out for the reappraisal.

Eben reviewed expenses in the draft budget.

Some board members suggested it would be better to separate out the rec coordinator and CEDS salaries from office admin salaries. That will be discussed in the future.

Eben said he has questions about the audit expense. The audit expenses in the budget are higher than what we were quoted.

Eben said there is enough money in the reappraisal fund. We do not need to put in \$13K as we have been doing, but he recommends not zeroing it out. The board agreed to decrease the amount contributed to the reappraisal fund.

It was agreed to reduce the amount budgeted for legal expense.

Paul said he will find out if the planning commission needs any contracted services budgeted.

Eben suggested putting \$500 in the line item for our contribution to the community grant match reserve fund. The fund currently has \$560,222, but a lot of that (over \$500K) is allocated for the industrial park. We could also put money into the fund from cash on hand. Adding it as a line item increases taxes. It was agreed to put \$250 on this line.

Eben asked if the beautification committee has a plan for spending the amount they requested or if they just went with the maximum 2.8% increase. Adrienne said they just went with the 2.8% increase. Eben said the reason he didn't want to set a percentage increase is that he wanted committees to have plans to spend the money. Adrienne said they just went with the recommended increase but they wanted an increase so they can do more things. Eben said he wonders if a lot of committees just went with a 2.8% increase.

Eben will ask Rosemary if the next tax sale will be in the current fiscal year or the next.

Eben said he doesn't think we should have \$60K in the line for the 10 cents on the grand list payment that goes to the village. When we have the village's grand list then we will multiply it by ten cents and that is the actual payment.

Eben asked Peter to find out the cost of the boundary line survey the Conservation Commission wants; then we can see if we can afford it.

Eben said he believes rec coordinator training could go in professional training rather than in the rec coordinator line.

Eben said the computer support figure probably needs to be increased. He suggested \$16K.

Eben said it looks like the line for electricity for the municipal building was increased. There is a note about a heat pump project. The board agreed we should not put a heat pump in the municipal building. We should wait to find out what will happen with the building. It was agreed to decrease that line item.

The board agreed to increase the amount budgeted for municipal building heat. Eben thinks the amount was dropped due to the assumption that we would be putting in a heat pump.

It was agreed to change Holcomb House heat from \$5,300 to \$5K under the assumption that energy costs will go up but they will burn less fuel.

The budget has a large increase for municipal building grounds maintenance not based on actuals. Eben will ask Rosemary or Tom the reason for the jump.

Eben said he doesn't think the \$15K shown for grounds mowing is enough, given that our year to date cost for this year is \$12K and we still have to pay for mowing next May and June. He suggested increasing it to \$18K.

Eben proposed trimming cemetery maintenance back to \$7500.

It was agreed to zero out the line for municipal building maintenance, which removes \$25K from the budget.

Eben said he talked to Hyde Park. He thinks we should budget \$10K for animal control expense for now. That may go up or down. The current contract isn't working great. It might only be for one year.

Eben suggested assuming a 3% increase in the fire department contract cost for now.

Peter said he will contact the library and verify that the numbers in their budget are good. Eben said he wants Peter to tell them that he would be happy if they could get donations. He questioned whether they should be budgeting anything for heating. He doesn't think they will burn any heating fuel in the winter of 26-27.

Eben said he thinks it may be worth budgeting for better insulation at the town garage. The boiler at the garage is as old as he is and it is problematic. He suggests budgeting \$20-25K for improvements at the garage. We can bring in money from the building capital fund to offset the expense, so we are not necessarily talking about an increase to taxes. There may be some payback in heat savings.

The board agreed to increase the amount budgeted for the paving capital plan from \$110K to \$115K.

It was agreed to increase the amount budgeted for chloride and the amount for Class 4 road maintenance.

Eben said he thinks we should try to do a mud abatement project. The mud abatement line is zero now. He suggests keeping that idea in mind.

It was agreed to increase winter sand from \$50K to \$60K.

Eben said this draft budget would result in a 7.15% increase in tax revenue needs. The increase to taxes is not exactly the same as that amount, because it is based on the grand list. As our grand list shrinks due to buyout properties, the tax burden will be higher.

Eben said at the next meeting the board will review estimated salaries, the highway reserve and health insurance. He will ask Rosemary and Jason the questions the board talked about tonight.

6. *Authorization to Sign for Lead and Asbestos Inspection*

Paul moved to authorize Peter to sign to hire Evergreen Environmental to do lead and asbestos testing at the Lowe Lecture Hall for a total cost of \$2300, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.

7. *Adjourn*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51.