JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Present: Selectboard members: Mike Dunham, Peter Hammond, Adrienne Parker, Eben Patch, Paul Warden
Others: John Sutherland, Rosemary Audibert, Carl Rogers, Mike Mignone, Lois Frey, Sue Lovering, Noel Dodge, Paul Persico, Melanie Clark, Casey Romero, BJ Putvain (remote), 2 other people

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***
   No changes to the agenda were needed.
3. ***Public Comment and Public Announcements***
   Mike Mignone said he is requesting that Johnson EATS be the fiscal agent for a grant his store is applying for to upgrade their point of sale system and accept WIC. Eben said it can't be the committee that does it; it has to be the town. Mike Mignone said the Department of Health suggested applying for the grant to get a new POS system that would allow them to accept WIC. The person at the Health Department who approached them is in charge of the WIC program. Apparently they need a fiscal agent that would accept the grant and then pass the money to them. Rosemary said the town would be a pass-through agent. Johnson EATS money comes through her. Mike said the person he talked to at the Health Department is writing the grant. The store just needs someone to be the fiscal agent.

   Mike Dunham said he would like to see the paperwork for the grant. Mike Mignone said it is a federal grant. Rosemary said that is another reason the money needs to come to the municipality.

   Paul asked if Mike Mignone needs a decision tonight. Mike said no. He will email all the relevant information he has. Adrienne said if for some reason he needs a decision before the next meeting, he should reach out.
4. ***Selectboard Updates and/or Concerns***
   Eben said we have an interlocal kennel agreement with Hyde Park. A different kennel has offered to provide kenneling for the interlocal group. They have a lower fixed cost but likely an increased animal care cost. Another one of the towns doesn't want to continue with the agreement. The fixed cost for all towns would be $12,000 for the year. Peter asked, one of the towns that is in the current agreement is not continuing? Eben said yes, a small population town. The board agreed to continue with the interlocal kenneling agreement.

   Adrienne said she is concerned because she has seen a couple of local restaurants close recently. She thinks the board should do anything that is in our power to help local businesses. John asked the reasons for the restaurants closing. Adrienne said she doesn’t know for sure, maybe lack of business. Donna Griffiths said she heard that Moog’s Joint was closing due to landlord issues and the condition of the building.
5. ***Consent Agenda***
   The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of February 2 and a liquor license for Marsala Salsa Restaurant and Bar LLC. **Paul moved and Adrienne seconded to approve the consent agenda.**

Mike said he made a statement during the library discussion that the whole library project has turned into a big boondoggle. That was not included in the minutes and he would like it added. **Paul and Adrienne agreed to amend the motion to include adding the statement Mike wanted to include in the minutes. The motion was passed.**

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

Rosemary said now that the town made changes to holidays, town meeting day is no longer a holiday. Does the board want the office to be open? She and Susan will be at town meeting. Eben said so will John. But village employees will be here. Mike said he thinks the office should be open. Paul agreed. Adrienne said she thinks it should be closed. One of the workers is a town employee and won't be able to come to town meeting if the office is open. Eben said we have a generous combined time off policy and he doesn't think we can deny time off to people who want to take time off to attend town meeting. Rosemary said there would be only one town employee and one village employee in the office.

Peter asked, hasn't it been a tradition in Vermont to encourage operations to be closed on town meeting day to boost attendance at town meeting? It was noted that we have one town employee who doesn't live in Johnson. Peter said they should be part of town meeting in their town. Eben asked if Peter is saying we should have given employees 14 holidays instead of 13. Adrienne said she thinks employees should be paid for attending town meeting day.

Eben, Mike and Paul said they think the office should be open on town meeting day. Adrienne and Peter said they think it should be closed. Eben said it will stay open unless everyone takes vacation time. Then it will have to be closed.

Rosemary thanked the board for the town report dedication. Eben said the board thanks her for everything she has done. There was a round of applause.

7. ***Discussion with Community and Economic Development Specialist***

Carl said the quarterly report for the NBRC grant was submitted on time on January 28. This evening he got an email from the state saying there has been some activity on the stormwater operation permit. The engineers have been in contact with the people reviewing it, addressing a question they had about the source protection area.

Carl sent out a letter to the property owners who have a shed that is partly on the industrial park property. He had a conversation with one of the owners. The owner has no issue with the letter and is glad to hear the town is moving ahead with the industrial park. He hopes to get his house connected to village sewer. He might build another house and would also try to tie that into the new sewer line. Today a letter went out to the other abutters notifying them that the town has applied for permits and inviting them to see the industrial park plans if they have any questions.

Carl said the Welcome Center improvements funded by the Building Communities Grant have been completed, except for painting. The lease agreement the board approved was submitted to the rail trail office at VTrans. We haven't heard back yet. Mike said that is another project that started out small and has turned into a big to-do.

Carl said rail trail committee membership is down from 9 to 6. Did the selectboard accept Peggy Williams' resignation? Board members said they think so. Carl said the chair of the rail trail committee would like to see if advertising could be done to solicit additional members. Adrienne asked if John could work with Lydia to post all the committee and commission vacancies.

The town got reimbursement for the grant funded rail trail connector scoping study.

Carl said there has been a lot of activity on the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities grant. On January 29, the EPA's Planning Assistance Team held their introductory online meeting with the Johnson steering committee. On February 5, the Planning Assistance Team held its peer convening, which was a nationwide meeting. All 25 grantees were invited. There were presentations by prior year grantees. The dates for the EPA Planning Assistance Team to come here to conduct the community workshop will be August 27 and 28. The first day, the steering committee will take the Planning Assistance Team around to various sites in town to help them conceptualize what Johnson has and what challenges we face. The next day will be a full day of meetings. The general public is invited and the steering committee is supposed to invite interested resources. Someone like Jackie Cassino with the rail trail program could be invited. The EPA Planning Assistance Team wants to schedule the first three online meetings with the steering committee. Carl emailed the steering committee members to ask about what nights they want to meet. He suggested they start planning to meet every two weeks.

We have a Vermont Community Foundation grant for a playground. It was determined that Legion Field would be the best location for it. At the second Legion Field meeting, Isabelle Sullivan provided information from the vendor about the equipment and dimensions. People seem to think that products geared toward younger children would be best for that playground.

Carl asked about $3300 in skatepark money. The board will be discussing a skatepark RFP tonight. Is that project going to use the $3300? Eben said the skatepark project will use FEMA money. John asked, if bids come in higher than the amount of FEMA money, could the $3300 be used as part of that project? Carl said he would think so but off the top of his head he can't remember what the $3300 was intended for. We could check on that.

Carl said the second Legion Field planning meeting was good. Thoughtful input was provided. The next step is for DuBois & King to prepare another layout based on the comments and send it to the selectboard. The selectboard needs to approve the final plan, then decide what order the work on Legion Field should be done in. Adrienne asked if there is a deadline for using the funds. Carl said the deadline has passed but the Vermont Community Fund is being lenient.

Carl said the first invoice from Boulder for Holmes Meadow has been received. Carl attended an inspection of Holmes Meadow and the gravel pit. SLR later submitted their last inspection report for the winter. Excavating and hauling sediment has been completed. Final grading was underway at the time of the report. There was a question about who was going to be working with the fill that was hauled to the library. Boulder volunteered to do that.

Change order #4 has been presented. Eben wanted to make sure the grant would cover the additional expense. Vermont Emergency Management has okayed the grant adjustment, but the Agency of Administration still has to sign off on it, so Carl suggests postponing action until the next agenda. Mike asked the reason for the change order. Carl said it was for extra extraction and hauling of gravel out of the pit. Mike asked, shouldn't the engineer be responsible? Weren't they the ones figuring out how much material there was? Carl said he doesn't know how it was determined how much gravel was in the pit. Ledge was not at the same depth in the area where extraction was done as it is in other parts of the pit. The sand and gravel ran deeper. Mike said with the amount of money we are spending on engineers, you would think we would have a better product. The engineering cost is a pass-through, right, or is the town paying? Rosemary said it is a pass-through.

Carl said on March 2, the board will probably be asked to take a couple of actions regarding a second grant for the Holmes Meadow project – the Clean Water Service Provider grant from the Agency of Natural Resources. The grant is awarded to LCPC on the town's behalf for this project. We will be asked to approve a site access license, agreeing that LCPC and state employees can go onto the property for maintenance and inspections and we will be asked to approve a subgrant agreement with LCPC.

Adrienne asked if the grant that covered the VOREC scoping study was just for the scoping study or if we have money to spend on improvements. Carl said the $27,700 was just for the scoping study. If we want to do improvements we have to seek other money.

Adrienne asked, Carl is going to be done at the end of the month, right? Carl said he had said he would be done at the end of March, but he told John that if he is still needed he can be available for longer. He has been trying to do more of his work online to make the situation work better for him. Adrienne asked if he thinks he can submit the Act 250 permit application for the granite stairs before he is done. Carl said he would like to.

Adrienne asked if Carl knows when we will get notification on whether we are awarded the two library grants that were applied for. Carl said he doesn't remember.

Mike said the $2,500 Mumley charged for flagging for tree clearing at the industrial park seems high to him. Carl explained that they were marking the right of way and the area for the stormwater system. They did not mark individual trees. They marked the entire area that needs to be cleared.

Carl said the first contract with Mumley in 2023 was to get the NBRC grant prepared and start the engineering. About October 2024 it was decided that revisions needed to be made to the contract and on December 16, 2024 a revised contract was presented to the selectboard and the selectboard voted to approve the revisions. But apparently the document was never fully signed. Tonight he is asking that the board vote to affirm the action of December 16, 2024 approving the revisions to the contract dated December 11, 2024 and also approve the change order for the Mumley contract for work done on the Highland Heights sewer pump station. That work was done because wastewater from the industrial park will go there and there was concern about its ability to handle the additional flow. There was discussion about the possibility of a $50,000 emergency power generator located there. It was mentioned in the January minutes that Mumley was working on that and then they submitted two invoices that the selectboard voted to approve. It was noted that the work was beyond the scope of services. Mumley hasn't yet submitted a third invoice for $585. The total of all three invoices will be $1,965. Carl suggests approving a change order covering those three invoices for work analyzing the Highland Heights pump station and recommending a solution that the village has accepted.

Peter moved to re-affirm the selectboard's vote on December 16, 2024 to approve the Mumley Engineering industrial park engineering services agreement revision dated December 11, 2024, and to authorize town administrator John Sutherland to sign it, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Peter moved to approve Mumley's industrial park engineering contract Change Order #1 in the amount of $1,965 to cover Mumley's analysis of the Highland Heights sewer pump station and

suggestion to address the concern about its capacity, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Carl said work on the conservation easement for the deer wintering area on the Prindle lot is still in progress. He would like the board to pass a motion to authorize advertising the conveyance.

Eben moved and Paul seconded to authorize staff to begin the required 30-day public notice period for conveyance of the conservation easement on the Prindle lot. Eben clarified that we are not actually selling the lot. **The motion was passed.**

Carl said he had previously explained to the board that setting aside 5.2 acres of prime ag soils on the Gomo lot would require an expensive survey and the board agreed that it would be cheaper and make more sense to pay the mitigation fee for 0.85 acre. Until this week, nothing was said to him about 6.1 acres. But it turns out there is 6.1 acres between the road and the stream and pond that is easily describable without a survey. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture and the attorney have concluded that the selectboard needs to issue a declaration of conveyance on the entire 6.1 acres. We still avoid having to do a survey. Eben asked, do we now not have to pay the mitigation fee? Carl said we still have to because the additional acreage is not prime ag soil.

Paul moved and Peter seconded to approve the Notice of Sale of Municipal Real Estate and conveyance of a Declaration of Restrictive Covenant in favor of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture and Vermont Land Use Review Board on a +/-6.1 acre portion of the Town's so-called "Gomo Lot," subject to final review and approval by the Town's attorney, to mitigate the impact of the Town's industrial park project and development of +/-2.6 acres of primary agricultural soils and to authorize Selectboard Chair Eben Patch or Town Administrator John Sutherland to execute the Notice, Declaration and any other instruments necessary or advisable for issuance of the Act 250 permit and recording the Declaration.

Peter said this declaration talks about making sure the area is hayed and brush hogged every 2 years. How do we keep track of that and make sure someone does it? And who does it? No one offered answers to those questions. Peter asked what a right to farm covenant means? Carl said it needs to be in the deed so future owners know that that is the case. If the property is subdivided people who buy part of it will be aware there could be farming activity on the part with the prime ag soils.

The motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Carl said the deadline for getting trees removed from the industrial park is April 14. During the winter we were contacted by the Agency of Transportation and their partner the Vermont Land Trust about a need for whole trees (about 25 ft of trunk with root balls attached.) They have gone out and marked the trees they want. They told him they marked 113 trees. About 75% of those are in the area the town needs to clear for roads, utilities and stormwater. A local logger is interested in doing the work. Carl has contacted the Agency of Transportation and Vermont Land Trust about the trees they wanted and has not heard back. Should we continue discussion with them? Does the board approve of the idea of not planning to have the work reimbursed by the NBRC grant? The bidding and contracting requirements of the grant can be onerous. It would take more time to prepare the specs and if the target audience saw that red tape they might not want to bid. He feels, and Pat Ripley agreed, that the town would be better served by avoiding the NBRC procurement requirements. We could write the bid specs so bidders are asked to provide a price for harvesting trees marked by the Vermont Land.

Trust in our marked area, a price for removing the remaining trees in our marked area, and a price for pulling 30 or so trees that are outside the area we need to clear. Then we could tell the state how much they owe the town for the work that was done on their behalf. Board members agreed they are okay with Carl's recommended bidding approach.

Paul asked if there is any reason not to proceed with conversations with the Agency of Transportation. Carl said at some point we will need to move forward and award a contract. The board agreed that we should continue talking to AOT for now and that the tree clearing should be done without seeking grant reimbursement.

Peter asked if Carl has seen the draft job description for the CEDS position. John said he has not. He was going to get input from the board first. Peter said he will be interested in Carl's thoughts.

8. ***Beautification Committee Grant Application***

Adrienne said the beautification committee is asking for permission to apply for a grant for doing a mosaic project at the village Cold Spring. Mike said the village hasn't approved this yet. Adrienne said they have. Eben said the grant amount requested is $15K with no match from the town. The beautification committee may use some of their budget to fund a small part of the project. Mike said the last he knew, the village was waiting to see what the mosaic would look like. Adrienne said they saw examples from the artist and approved it.

Peter moved and Paul seconded to support the beautification committee's grant application for a mosaic at the Cold Spring.

Paul said the grant application describes the Cold Spring as a source of drinking water. He doesn't think we should say that because it is not an approved drinking source. Rosemary agreed. Adrienne said they will take that out.

Mike asked, the village trustees approved what the mosaic will look like? Donna Griffiths said they approved the project in concept and approved the beautification committee applying for the grant but they want more information about the mosaic design and how it will be installed before they give approval to actually install it. BJ Putvain said that is correct.

The motion was passed.

9. ***Review and Consider the Skatepark RFP***

John said he and Casey have been working on the RFP for skatepark improvements. They would like to go out to bid for the project. He asked Casey if she found out if Act 250 is needed for the project. Casey said she hasn't heard back yet on that.

The board reviewed the RFP. Paul said it says material for berms can be harvested from the central meadow. Do we want to say that it must be or should be harvested from the central meadow? We don't want material from elsewhere brought into the flood plain. John said it is possible the material on site would not be usable for the project. Casey said if it isn't usable she wouldn't want to lock the contractor into only using material from the meadow. Using material from the meadow is the most economical for them. Eben asked if we could add a paragraph stating that if material is brought onto the site an equal amount must be removed from the central meadow. Casey said yes.

Paul said we are asking for a certificate of insurance. Are we asking for specific limits? John said usually they would have whatever limits they are comfortable working with. It is up to the board if the board wants to set terms. Paul asked if it has been normal for past contracts not to specify the insurance amount. Rosemary said she thinks so. Peter said the library RFP had no specified amount for insurance.

It was agreed to amend the RFP to add that if material is brought in, the same amount of material must be removed

The RFP says, "If required for town and county flood resilience planning, the contractor will track as-built information on volumes of dirt moved and concrete poured." Adrienne asked if it is required. Paul said he thinks it should be. It was agreed to remove "If required for town and county flood resilience planning."

Adrienne moved to approve the skatepark improvements and renovation project RFP with the amendments discussed and the motion was seconded and passed.

10. ***Emerald Ash Borer Trunk Injection Treatment***

John said Sue Lovering brought him a service agreement for continuing treatment of ash trees. She also sent a follow-up explaining that there are eight ash trees at Old Mill Park that are the only trees in the park. The state forbids breaking ground there so we can't plant more, so she feels it is important to save them from ash borer with treatment that is done every 2 years. The total amount that would be charged is $1,026.

Mike asked if this injection treatment is the only type of treatment they can use. He read about a drench poured at the base of the tree. Sue said that is very ineffective. Injection is the only effective treatment.

Mike asked when it has to be done. Sue said they are looking to have it done in June or July. Mike suggested he could get trained, do the treatment and save the town money. Sue said there are also five trees at the arboretum that were treated previously with grant money that the tree board will not get again. Mike said he will take the class and inject the trees. Sue said last year the training cost $25. The board agreed that it is okay for Mike to take the course.

Peter asked if Sue knows how much of the price is for the chemical. Sue said she doesn't know. Part of the price may be travel from Waterbury.

11. ***Review and Consider Signing Certificate of Highway Mileage***

John said the Certificate of Highway Mileage has been updated because three roads were reclassified from Class IV roads to legal trails. John made that change and updated the maps. He also needs to turn in a set of signed minutes showing the board approved the change. **Paul moved to approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage for the Year Ending February 10, 2026, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.**

12. ***Discussion Regarding the Future of Lowe Lecture Hall/Old Town Hall***

John said he wanted to find out what the board was thinking about possible plans for the old town hall. Eben said there is no defined plan.

Mike asked if it is true that the property line is basically only to the eaves. Others said no.

John said neighbors have been using the property for ingress and egress and there may be adverse possession.

Mike asked if everything done is going to be subject to Act 250. Does Act 250 apply or not? If it does, he feels nothing will ever get done. Peter said Act 250 was going to apply for the plans the Studio Center had for fully renovating the building. Mike said in the past the town was thinking of taking the weathervane off the building but there was an issue because of Act 250, because the Studio Center owned it. Will Act 250 transfer to us? If so, he thinks the town might want to revisit whether we want to buy it. Adrienne said once the downtown designation is approved we will be exempt from Act 250. Noel Dodge suggested requesting a jurisdictional opinion to find out if the building is under Act 250. He believes it would be if the Studio Center still owned it, but it is probably not now. Melanie Clark from the Vermont Studio Center said VSC has not done anything triggering Act 250. When the town owned it, was it under Act 250? Noel said no. Melanie said she assumes it will not be under Act 250 then.

Pat Persico asked if the town owns the property now. Eben said not currently. Pat asked if anyone has looked at it this winter. Melanie said VSC has. It is drained and winterized. Peter said he has been in recently.

Pat asked when the town is buying it. Eben said we are in the process. He would like to wait until after town meeting in case anyone wants to talk about it at town meeting. It could be brought up under other business. Peter said that doesn't negate the vote to acquire it. Eben said it would be advisory only and the vote was advisory only as well.

Mike said the article voted on said that that we reserved the right not to buy it if we found any terrible things wrong. Melanie said those inspections happened and all was good. Paul said there is no asbestos. There is lead paint, which we knew.

Board members said there is no contract yet for purchasing it. Peter said he thinks since the Studio Center has been so patient it would be good to move as quickly as we can.

Pat asked if there is a prioritized list of what we will do if we buy it. Where is the money coming from? Eben said there is not a prioritized list. There are some line items in the budget that will be presented on town meeting day for maintaining the building at the current level because we haven't had time to have conversations about what the community wants to do with it.

Peter said there is substantial grant money for historic preservation. We can take it a piece at a time. There are grants that are specifically geared toward things like foundations. His hope would be that we can fund any work on the building with grants and not impact town taxes. Pat asked if there is grant money available even in today's political climate. Peter said yes, for historic preservation. The amount in the budget is for maintenance, not for addressing significant work that needs to be done.

Pat said he is worried about the building deteriorating as we move forward. He would like to see a prioritized list of the most important things to do.

Mike said he agrees with Pat. He sees problems, especially if neighboring properties have been encroaching. Melanie said VSC put the neighbors on notice and had conversations with their landlord. They blocked it off so people wouldn't park there. There is no adverse possession because VSC is a non-profit. Their attorneys have already talked to the neighbor's attorney. Paul suggested maybe we should have our attorney talk to the VSC attorney about the adverse possession issue.

Pat asked where we are with the library. Eben said we are working with and supporting the library trustee board as things evolve. They have made commitments to come up with the shortfall in funding. In our last conversation with the library board, it was discussed that they were going to work on a grant amendment and potentially a contract amendment. Paul said their grant got amended so they don't have to build the whole thing, just open the old building. They can use the grant funding for that and meet the grant requirements and then do whatever else is needed as money allows. Peter said the town will not be responsible.

Pat asked if there is a clerk of the works watching things being done. Eben said no. Pat brought up some work being done recently with an excavator that he suggested was problematic. Mike said when that work was done it smashed up extruded polystyrene that was against the building. Eben said that was the Holmes Meadow material. We do not have a clerk of the works for that project. Mike said he thinks we need one badly. Paul asked if John is planning to reach out to Mumley to see what they would charge. John said that is on his list.

Pat said the rumor on the streets is that there is no money for the library. Eben said there is money. The library has about $1.9 million for the project. The project will cost about $2.4 million. The architect and engineers were surprised at how high the bids came in based on their preliminary numbers. Adrienne said $50,000 more is needed to complete the project. The work will keep going with the money the library has until it is spent. Peter said the rumors are lacking in fact.

John said this week he researched some grant opportunities that include libraries.

13. Plan Town Meeting Day

John said the Historical Society will sell pies at town meeting. Jen Yuris will be selling tea and coffee for the food shelf. Mark Woodward is organizing cooking pizzas.

Paul said Kyle Nuse has arranged childcare. Eben said providing childcare concerns him. Adrienne said Kyle said we need to reach out to the elementary school to reserve the kindergarten room for childcare, let the community know childcare will be available, put up signs and arrows directing people to the classroom and provide a sign-in sheet for parents to put their names and phone numbers.

Mike asked what Eben’s concerns are about childcare. Eben said it is a lot of liability on the town. What happens if the kids get hurt? Who is responsible? He thinks babysitters should have training and background checks. Adrienne said they might have those.

Casey asked about tables for committees. Eben said he thinks any committee that wants to can have one. Adrienne asked if John can send an email to committee and commission chairs offering that and asking them to have signup sheets for people interested in joining committees. Lois said last year there was a shortage of tables that were easy to work from. Many have attached seats. Rosemary said she has always told people to bring their own table. Eben suggested that that be part of the email.

Eben said GMATV wanted to know if the school is setting up the school AV equipment and wants to know the wi-fi password. He will forward their questions to John.

John said Rosemary, Susan and he went over and met with staff at the school.

Eben said the local Boy Scout troop used to present the colors. Lois said she thinks there are no Boy Scouts left. Eben suggested reaching out to Tom Carney to see if there are veterans who want to do it. Lois suggested the Girl Scouts might be interested.

There was a suggestion that maybe the town could find an EMT or nurse or ski patrol member to be in the childcare area. They would all have the necessary first aid. Maybe different people could take 2-hour shifts. John said his wife is a former teacher who has had a background check. Rosemary said when we first started providing childcare, the babysitters did take a certification course. It was suggested that students in the health program at GMTCC may be a resource.

Eben said he will email our state representatives about when they want to come. He will put together a list of potential topics and who might talk about them for the board to discuss at the next meeting.

14. Discussion on Creating Town Revenue

Adrienne reviewed a list of potential revenue sources she had prepared. She said she wanted to see if anyone had any ideas they wanted to try to increase revenue. John said he included some research on local option tax in the packet. Peter said a lot of communities are talking about local option tax. He would like to hear from businesses in town that depend on tourism how they would feel about it. The last thing we want to do is reduce economic activity.

Mike said we could save a lot of money if we didn't have to plow and maintain town roads that are essentially driveways to a single family home. There are a lot of old farms that had roads to them maintained because they had milk. But they are not farms anymore; they are single family homes. We have discussed that some of the residents don't give us room to turn around. The bridge off 100C that goes to two houses (only one of which is occupied) will need to be replaced someday. We are spending money on plowing, maintaining and grading these roads. He thinks Morrisville is getting rid of a lot of similar roads. We need to look at the process they went through. Eben said this conversation is about bringing money in, not saving money. Mike said if we don't spend as much we don't have to bring as much in.

Peter asked about the statement that reappraisals don't create new money. If someone made improvements to their property, wouldn't their assessment go up? Eben said a reappraisal would redistribute the tax burden. We have an approved budget and we use the grand list to determine the tax rate. If your property depreciates, you pay less in taxes. If it appreciates, you pay more. Rosemary said typically when everyone is reappraised the tax rate goes down.

Mike said the abatements for people who were flooded out were an eye-opener for him. He learned that there are a lot of apartment houses whose taxes are not based on income, but on the appraised value of the house. They are not paying their fair share. He thinks we need to revamp how we appraise. Eben said a majority of businesses in town are not assessed on a business model but on a property model.

Adrienne said she would be interested to see if we had any town land or buildings we could lease, for instance for cell phone towers or solar arrays.

Eben said he does not personally want to think about a local option tax. He doesn't think it fits our town. For the most part it would just be a tax on local residents. And we only get to keep about 75% of the revenue.

Mike said at one time we had a piece of property someone was thinking of putting a cell tower on. They were going to pay $25,000 a year for a 30-year contract.

Adrienne asked if parking tickets are an option. Eben said the sheriff's department would have to enforce it.

Eben said he thinks local fees should go up, for instance for recreation. And he would like to try to increase donations to committees.

Adrienne asked if we could charge for violations to form-based code. Eben said we could.

Eben said one thing that would have a tremendous effect would be getting the state to recognize and correct the calculation error in their PILOT payment. That would change our tax rate by 4%. Though we probably still would not get the full payment because they are short-changing every town but Chester. We pushed last year to try to get that corrected.

Lois talked about how helpful it was when Lea Kilvadyova was here and was part of many committees. She would come with grant ideas, the committee would do the legwork and then she would write the grant application and get it sent in the way it needed to be.

Adrienne suggested this could be an ongoing topic. Eben suggested adding it to old business.

15. Town Highway Grant Program

John said Jason applied for a town highway grant last year and was not successful. He is hoping to get a grant to pave Wilson Road. The grants are $200,000. He can use town equipment and labor for the town match. He would like us to apply for $200,000 this year for Wilson Road. The board agreed to that. *(Mike left at 8:57.)*

16. Review and Consider a Job Description for the Community and Economic Development Specialist

John said he got feedback from Adrienne on the CEDS job description. She asked about having the person work with individual committees. Does the board want to identify specific committees the CEDS should work with? Adrienne said she was thinking of all of them. We could set a certain number of meetings the person should go to per month, maybe two, and they could rotate among committees. She thinks they could come up with ideas and insights for committees but mainly would provide support for writing grants.

We budgeted for 24 hours for the CEDS. Adrienne said she would like that to increase to as close as 40 hours as possible.

Eben said he agrees on providing committee support but there are two ways to tackle projects and grants. One is to find a grant and design a project around it. The other is to develop a project and find grants for it. It feels like Johnson has been more reactive than proactive. He would like the CEDS to plan long-term projects and then find the money.

Eben said pretty much all we talk about the CEDS doing is grants. If we just want a grant writer, why not put out a job description for a grant writer?

Peter said he thinks it is great for committees to have support around pursuing grants, but how much of the CEDS’s time do we want directed toward relatively small grants vs. things that make a bigger impact?

There was discussion about planning work the CEDS could potentially do. Paul said when he was on the planning commission he often heard Adrienne saying we need a planner. It seems to him that we need both a planner and someone to support committees with applying for minor grants in the meantime. Adrienne asked, what if we hire a grant writer and the first grant they look for is for hiring a town planner? Eben said that would work great for the first year but we couldn't fund the position in perpetuity with grant funds. He said he could get behind the idea of a 40-hour per week interlocal CEDS. Adrienne said she would prefer to have someone just focused on us. Eben said if they are part-time it is likely that they will have another job. Adrienne said she wants them to be full-time. Eben said then we need to pay for benefits.

There was discussion about possible locations in town for building new housing.

Peter said he is still bothered that the CEDS is not working under the direction of the town administrator. He would like to see the job description include the town administrator in the lists of those the CEDS will work with and collaborate with. Paul said it seems like we really need to focus on a 5-year plan, but maybe that is more the selectboard's job. It requires a townwide effort. Eben said our priority list included items for the CEDS. He suggested reviewing those priorities.

Eben said he wonders if we should rethink the whole thing and maybe hire an assistant to the town administrator and have CEDS duties done by the town administrator and hire LCPC for grant writing on an as-needed basis. John said Carl said his weeks have been averaging 8 to 15 hours. If John was able to take on some of the work so Carl didn't have to come to Johnson as much, Carl might be willing to stay on longer. Eben said in her report Carrie Johnson said this is too small a community to need an employee for community and economic development. She suggested we have existing employees do some of that work and hire grant writers on an as-needed basis. Adrienne asked, didn't the voters at town meeting vote to hire a CEDS? Aren't we bound to have this position? Eben said no, the vote bound us to a dollar amount. Adrienne said the hiring process for town administrator would have gone differently for her if she had known grant writing would be part of it.

It was agreed to discuss the CEDS position more at the next meeting.

17. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths