

JOHNSON RAIL TRAIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026

Present:

Committee Members: Jan Gearhart, Doug Molde, Mary Lou Kopas, Lynda Hill, Adrian Schmidt, Kim Dunkley

Others: John Sutherland, Daniel Langevin (via Zoom)

Absent: BJ Putvain

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call Meeting to Order*

Doug called the meeting to order at 6:44.

2. *Changes or Additions to Agenda*

No changes to the agenda were needed.

3. *New Members*

Doug said current members have all been reappointed. Kim asked if we have recommended that Daniel be appointed. John asked Daniel if he is interested in being appointed. He said yes. He was asked to send an email expressing his interest to John.

4. *Consider Approving Minutes of February 18, 2026*

Lynda moved to approve the minutes of February 19, 2026, Adrian seconded and the motion was passed with Kim abstaining.

5. *Map for Placement on New Kiosk Has Been Completed*

Doug had brought the new map for the kiosk to the municipal building. He asked if it could be stored there. John said he thought it could go in the back room upstairs.

6. *Discuss Obtaining Permission to Put Sign with Arrows at Corner of Railroad St. and Route 15*

Doug asked what signage we had in mind for this corner. Kim said originally we had talked about an eye catching sign with arrows to multiple places, but she doesn't know what the village or VTrans requires.

Doug said he thinks the next thing the committee should work on is a comprehensive messaging program that would include signage. The state had made their Trail Friendly Business program more complex than it needed to be so now they are redoing their paperwork. They are saying they have the right to control what rail trail related signs look like even for things like the arboretum or the swimming hole. He thinks it is to our advantage to try to do what they want. Their wayfinding guidance is too complex for the selectboard to want to work on it, and they don't have time for it. Directing people is really important. (*Jan arrived at 6:57.*) Doug said he thinks we should defer any action on this and address all signage. That should be the next big thing we work on.

7. *Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee*

Lynda nominated Doug for chair, seconded by Jan. **Doug Molde was elected committee chair.**

Lynda nominated Mary Lou for vice chair, seconded by Kim. **Mary Lou Kopas was elected committee vice chair.**

8. *Next Steps on Bike Racks*

Mary Lou said Duane at Lamoille Woodcraft had told her he thought he could match the price offered by American Recycled Plastic in Tennessee, but his quote is higher than the American Recycled Plastic price: \$959 vs. \$839. Jan said Duane would deliver the bike racks and set them up. American

Recycled Plastic will ship them to a place with a loading dock for free. Her son-in-law has a loading dock on Route 15 that we can use. We will need a couple of people to help take them off the truck. The bike racks from Lamoille Woodcraft would already be assembled. We would need to assemble the racks from American Recycled Plastic. The committee discussed trying to get Duane to lower his price.

Jan moved to purchase 5 bike racks from Lamoille Woodcraft at a price not to exceed \$900 per rack or from American Recycled Plastic if Lamoille Woodcraft cannot offer a price of \$900 or less, Kim seconded and the motion was passed.

The selectboard needs to authorize purchase. Doug said we will get on their agenda after we determine the price and vendor.

Doug said he thinks we should have written agreements with the owners of the property where we will place bike racks. He suggested leaving it up to the selectboard to decide what should be in the agreement. Mary Lou suggested presenting one to the selectboard that they can approve. Kim asked if John or Doug could write one up. John said he will draft an agreement and show it to Doug.

9. *Discussion of Benches, Placement Locations and Purchase*

Mary Lou said Duane at Lamoille Woodcraft said he can't make the kind of bench we wanted but sent a picture of one he can make that looks similar to her. She will ask him if he can match American Recycled Plastic's price for benches or come close to it.

Doug said VTrans is looking at having more pause places along the rail trail so they are now much more amenable to benches. They were previously opposed because they might not be taken care of after they were put in, but a survey of trail users led them to believe they were needed. There will be a project to get benches along the length of the rail trail. Jan asked if they want them all similar. Doug said he hasn't heard that. Jackie Cassino wants to come up again to talk to the town about a stone culvert they are concerned with and also talk to us again about our plans.

Doug said the agreement for the kiosk is basically a done deal.

Jan said Brian Currier is ready to assemble the kiosk whenever we want. He wanted to know if the town is going to drill the holes for the four posts. He doesn't think we need Sonitubes. Doug said it would be the village, not the town. BJ had said the village would do it. Jan said Brian thought it would be good to put concrete in the holes.

10. *Discussion on Next Steps on VHB December 2025 Final Report on Downtown Johnson & Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Connection Study*

Doug said he had sent out copies of the final report from the VHB scoping study. The selectboard said they wanted to do low cost work on Railroad Street – patching pavement and raising grates to make it more rideable.

John said one issue is that the town can pave the street, but storm drains are the village's responsibility. He proposed to Erik Bailey that the village apply for a grant for storm drains for next year and the town apply for a grant for paving.

Doug said the selectboard voted to improve rideability of Railroad Street and also add sidewalk to connect the existing sidewalk to the rail trail. They rejected the long term option of connecting to

Wescom Road. He thinks we should ask to get on the selectboard agenda and ask them to move as quickly as they can with the short-term and medium-term work on Railroad St.

John said Railroad Street is narrow. Where are we going to put bikes? Doug said the idea is that bikes could use the whole road. That is the situation now.

Kim said the selectboard didn't like the long term option of putting a bridge over the river because it didn't bring people into the village.

Kim said she heard that the village said they couldn't fix the drains because the whole thing needs to be replaced – not just the surface grate, but the whole culvert underneath it – and it will take a lot of money. But she doesn't know if that is true. Doug said there is a plan to replace all that, but we need to find a temporary solution. Kim suggested maybe they could use rubber mats that could go over the grates, with matching holes.

Doug said he favors the idea of a bridge across the river from Holmes Meadow. The buyout properties would almost provide a connection between the Railroad Street sidewalk and the bridge. If we could buy a right of way from someone, that would be the best route.

Jan asked if something could be done on Route 15 to make a safe space for bicyclists to ride back to the village. Mary Lou said they are talking about widening the shoulder and adding markings.

Doug said he thinks we should tell the selectboard we hope they can start moving to implement the plan they voted for. Kim asked, aren't sidewalks under the village's purview? Doug said he thinks the town would talk to the village about doing sidewalks. He said if the drains can't be raised, we will be in real trouble as far as getting people into the village. John said raising all the storm drains will be very expensive.

Lynda asked, should we be planning right now how to get people into the village this summer? It seems like lines should be painted on Railroad St. Kim said they are not saying we would make a bike lane. Mary Lou said at least we could paint the rail trail crossing and have signage showing the village is this way. Lynda said we can also have signs warning drivers that there will be bikes on the road. Mary Lou suggested maybe we can beautify the area as well.

Kim asked who is responsible for signs for Railroad Street that say drivers must share the road. John said probably the town, but is that something we would want public input on? Others said bicyclists are already using the road. Kim said sharrows will help. Those are white bicycle and arrow markings showing that cars need to yield to bikers.

Doug said he thinks the Beautification Committee will be doing some work on Railroad Street. Mary Lou suggested coordinating with them.

Doug said we may also want to ask the selectboard for permission to put up signs related to attractions downtown. Mary Lou suggested a "Johnson Village this way" sign with a QR code linking to the Discover Johnson website. Others agreed that would be a good idea.

Doug asked if we can get on the next selectboard agenda. John said that meeting is pretty full. Doug asked if we can be on the agenda for the April 6 meeting. Mary Lou and Jan said they can go to that meeting. We will ask about bike racks, benches and Railroad Street.

11. Selectboard Discussion on Committee Restructuring and CEDS Position

Doug asked where things stand with committee restructuring. John said there have been concerns about the number of committee members dwindling and the CEDS having enough time to go to each committee meeting. The selectboard has discussed how we can have the CEDS work with all the committees. They want to limit that position to about 24 hours a week. They are working on the job description now.

12. Other Business

Jan asked if we know when we want Brian Currier to help us place the kiosk. It would be good to get on his schedule. Lynda suggested the end of April. Doug said we probably ought to have Jackie Cassino come first. He will ask her when she is thinking of coming.

Jan said at the next meeting we should decide what we want the village map to look like so we can advise Adrienne Parker.

13. Set Next Meeting Date and Time

The next meeting will be April 15 at 6:00 pm.

14. New Members

Doug said if Dan joins the committee we will still have one more vacancy. Committee members don't have to be Johnson residents. Adrian said in that case he may know someone who would be interested.

Jan said she will be meeting with an electrician Friday at Jenna's Promise to discuss the electrical work that needs to be done for bike charging.

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11.