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

Present: Selectboard members: Mike Dunham, Peter Hammond, Adrienne Parker, Eben Patch, Paul Warden
Others: John Sutherland, Rosemary Audibert, Doug Molde, Jan Gearhart, Kathy Black, Joe Salerno, Howard Romero, Kelly Vandorn, Aurora Rivers, Jasmine Yuris, Lydia Putvain, Susan Tinker

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. ***Call Meeting to Order***
   Paul 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 Announcement***
   Donna Griffiths said she takes minutes for some other selectboards. At another town's selectboard meeting recently, their highway supervisor said they had been paying a federal excise tax on fuel, but he had learned that there was a form they could submit to get reimbursed for it and that their fuel supplier could use a different code so they would not be charged for the tax to begin with. She wanted to make sure Johnson was not also unnecessarily paying this tax. Rosemary indicated that we are not.
4. ***Selectboard Updates and/or Concerns***
   Adrienne said she made an AI grant scanner. On Fridays, it will send out a list of up to eight grants that it finds. She made spreadsheets of projects based on selectboard and committee minutes. The AI can scan the spreadsheets and look for grants that match the criteria. She did rank them, but that was just based on her opinion. The board might want to discuss the ranking.
5. ***Consent Agenda***
   The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of March 2, March 3 and March 4. **Adrienne moved to approve the consent agenda, Peter seconded and the motion was passed with Mike abstaining as he was not at all the meetings.**
6. ***Clerk and Treasurer's Report: Warrants, Licenses and Any Action Items***
   Rosemary handed out the latest budget status report. She said in April we should get a true-up on school taxes. We should get grand list money this month. Expenses are at 57% of budget. Town report expenses are considerably higher than budget but Rosemary plans to take out the postage expense and put it in the postage line. Eben said we are high on a lot of selectboard expenses such as consulting services. Rosemary said some of that is grant funded. Eben noted that expenditures on buildings and grounds are already pretty high.

   Eben moved to approve renewal of a Class 2 liquor license for Johnson General Store, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.

   Rosemary said the new restaurant in town next to the Woolen Mills has put in an application for a liquor license which will include outside consumption. It doesn't sound like they are close to opening.

   Rosemary said Jim Barlow, an attorney who does tax sales, is interested in doing Johnson's. He will send a cost proposal. It may not be feasible to go to tax sale with some of our properties. He can only charge the delinquent taxpayer up to 15% of the taxes, but the amount needed to cover his fee may be more than that and if so, we have to pay the rest. So we should not go to tax sale for amounts less than $1500. He said the break even point is about $4,500 in taxes. He would be willing to send a first threatening letter to everyone. He would be willing to do a tax sale for the village as well, but the dollar amounts owed for town and village cannot be combined, so the person would need to owe at least $1,500 for each. Village taxpayers are not likely to owe that much.

7. ***Community and Economic Development Specialist Report***

Carl said since he prepared his written report, we received the draft 9050 permit for the stormwater retention pond. It has been posted for public comment. If there are no public comments, the permit could be issued April 7. That was the biggest hurdle we were facing to get the Act 250 permit.

Carl said he sent out a letter February 19 to all industrial park abutters. One of them was in the office for other business and mentioned receiving it but was not interested in viewing the plans. None of the abutters have contacted the office expressing concern about the upcoming application.

There is no news from the attorney who brought up the idea of fencing, delineating or signing the prime ag area on the Gomo lot.

Yesterday the optional pre-bid site visit for tree clearing at the industrial park was held. About eight contractors showed up. They asked a lot of good questions and had a lot of interest. Different contractors seem to have different approaches. Bids will be opened on Monday. Then the board will have a special meeting to award a contract, pending issuance of all state permits.

Today Carl got an email from the state inquiring about trees from the industrial park for the Jericho stream bank project. He will be meeting with them virtually on Monday so he can report to them about the bids we received.

Carl has nothing new about the Johnson visioning project or the Welcome Center lease agreement. Last week he got confirmation from the property management section that they had the lease agreement and were circulating it for signatures.

Regarding the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities grant, we have a first call with the EPA planning assistance team on April 23. Their handbook says no prep work is needed by the local steering committee for that call. Between that call and the second call the steering committee will need to meet to do some work, especially on a community self-assessment.

Carl asked if the board would like to have the playground funded by the Vermont Community Foundations grant as a separate agenda item for a future meeting and maybe invite Isabelle Sullivan. The board agreed that would be a good idea.

Carl said he will be helping with the reporting on the $30,000 grant for Legion Field and he will be working with Rosemary to submit a reimbursement request to the Vermont Council on Rural Development for the Dubois & King invoices.

Carl said he had submitted some recommended motions regarding a change order to the Boulder Excavation contract for the Holmes Meadow project and a Vermont Emergency Management grant agreement amendment.

Mike said every time we do a change order it costs a lot more money. This latest one has a price of $18.30 per cubic yard. Wasn't the price lower previously? Carl said this is for extraction and hauling. The other one was for a more limited amount of work. Eben said he talked to LCPC and SLR about this. Adrienne asked if LCPC gave him an explanation. Eben said yes. Mike said the board always approves these change orders because the project is grant funded and we are not paying, but if we were paying we might want them to sharpen their pencil.

Carl said change order #1 included $45,000 for hauling 6,000 cubic yards, a price of a little over $7 per cubic yard. It included $27,900 for extraction of about 1,000 cubic yards, a price of $27.90 per cubic yard. This change order is for extraction, loading and hauling at a rate of $18.30 per cubic yard.

Eben moved to authorize and execute the agreement with the Lamoille County Planning Commission for the Holmes Meadow Floodplain Restoration Project management services agreement Amendment #2, authorizing the chair or town administrator to sign on behalf of the town, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Eben moved to approve signing of Amendment #4 to Vermont Emergency Management's grant agreement for the Holmes Meadow Floodplain Restoration Project grant, authorizing the selectboard chair or town administrator to sign on behalf of the town, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Eben said they wanted some wording changed on Change Order #1. Carl said that came up last week and he told LCPC he didn't have time to deal with it. Eben said we already approved the expenditure.

Eben moved to approve and authorize Change Order # 4 in the amount of $76,201.20 with Boulder Excavation for the Holmes Meadow Floodplain Restoration Project for the additional gravel extraction and hauling in the amount of $76,201.20, authorizing the chair or town administrator to sign it, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Carl said he sent a recommended motion that came directly from attorney David Rugh. David Rugh and the general council for ANR have come to agreement about wording of the conservation easement for the Prindle lot. Now it will go to the governor's office. The governor has to sign it. There is a 30-day notice period ending March 28.

Eben moved to authorize the chair or town administrator to sign the Grant of Development Rights and Conservation Restrictions to the Agency of Natural Resources on the Prindle lot provided the 30 day notice period is met, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

Carl said he included information in his monthly report about the T-Mobile grant and the Legion Field pavilion. The grant is $50,000 maximum. The proposed pavilion size is 25x40 ft. but 24x40 ft. would be a more standard size. If it is post and beam or timber frame, the cost will be well over $50,000. But if we take the grant funds, we must complete the project.

Adrienne said she thinks we should use the T-Mobile grant for the library. She sent Carl a list of parts of the project that she thinks could be funded by the grant. Paul said he thinks we can rule out applying for the pavilion.

Carl said a question was posed to him about naming rights. He went over the material from T-Mobile and did not see anything indicating they even wanted a sign or marker to recognize their help, let alone naming rights.

<u>Adrienne moved to apply for the T-Mobile grant for the Johnson Public Library project, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.</u>

8. ***Review and Approve Job Description for Community and Economic Development Specialist***

The board reviewed the latest version of the job description, which includes the recommendations made by Carl and the selectboard.

Adrienne moved to approve the CEDS job description, edited to change the hours from 24 per week to 40 per week. The motion died for lack of a second.

Adrienne said she had sent out a spreadsheet earlier in the day showing how staffing costs could be restructured. It takes into account splitting from the village with our employees, giving a 10% increase to two employees and making the CEDS position full-time instead of part-time. It would result in a 7.9% increase to staffing costs.

Mike asked, didn't we discuss John trying to assume some of these roles before hiring another 40 hour per week position? We have never given John a chance to prove himself. He has a background in grants. He said he would do it for free for a while. Mike thinks we would be remiss not to give him a chance. Adrienne said she doesn't think we should ask employees to do free work. Mike said he volunteered to do it.

Adrienne said she doesn't believe someone can do effective grant work part-time. They need to meet grant deadlines. One missed grant can cost more than the increased salary we are talking about. Someone who is working part-time is fitting work in Johnson in around other things they are doing. Their schedule doesn't always align with what the town needs. A part-time schedule might not leave any time for proactive economic development. What she proposes is only a 7.9% increase. She doesn't see why board members would not think that was beneficial.

Mike said he is willing to give a chance to the man who volunteered. Adrienne said she would like him to work on other tasks.

Peter asked about the percentage increase in taxes as a result of the recently approved budget. Eben said it was 3.8%

Eben said employee salaries are 100% paid by taxes. Adrienne's proposal would increase taxes by 1.5% in the future and this year we would need to trim $30,000 from somewhere else in the budget. There would be no tax increase this year because taxes are based on the budget already passed.

Adrienne said we budgeted for a highway employee that we don't have now.

Eben said he saw Adrienne's email but hasn't had time to consider it.

Paul said we voted at the last meeting that the CEDS position should be 24 hours per week.

John suggested the board could approve the job description and discuss the hours at a future date. It seems like Carl will be here a couple more months. Carl said yes, it would be helpful if he stayed at least into May. Paul said he thinks we should discuss the position and the hours together at a future meeting. Adrienne said she thinks we should make a decision now because we also need to make a decision on the town clerk and treasurer and assistant clerk and treasurer.

Paul noted that the job title is supposed to be community and economic development specialist. There are places in the job description where it needs to be changed. And where it says “in person or virtually” we discussed changing that to “in person and virtually.”

Peter said he would love for Johnson to have the benefit of a 40-hour per week CEDS, but he is concerned about the impact of that on taxes. There are some unknowns around how buyouts will affect us. He is cautious about jumping into 40 hours a week at this point, but he feels he would like more time to digest the information.

Adrienne said this is a position that is bringing in revenue, which would help with taxes.

Peter said someone said to him that they think the board is being short-sighted and he thinks we are. But he feels that is necessary right now. Adrienne is right that the CEDS position will have big benefits.

Doug Molde said he is wondering how the board determined that 24 hours was sufficient for this job or to attract the kind of people we would want. He is wondering how much money 24 hours represents. Eben said 24 hours per week will cost $60-62K. Doug asked if that includes benefits. Paul and Eben said no, that is only salary.

Eben said in 2021 we asked for $40,000 at town meeting. That wasn't approved. Then in 2023 we asked for $50,000. We had turnover with the town administrator. At that time, we were advised by two consulting companies that with the workload we have we should go with 3 to 4 days a week for the town administrator and 2 to 3 days a week for the CEDS. That is where the 24 hours came from.

Doug said he thinks there needs to be an emphasis on economic development. He thinks our community needs to move ahead and not be a backwater. Our success in this program would increase property values and bring in more housing. This is a really important job. We are behind the eight ball on housing. Everyone would like to bring in subsidized housing but he feels that is the wrong direction. We need to change the direction of the community. He understands that Carl is working 24 hours a week but he doesn't think Carl will be able to work on housing. We need to find someone who is knowledgeable locally or who can get up to speed. He thinks the board needs to check and see who would be interested in this position and at what rate. He thinks the board should think about sizing the job for who can be attracted rather than only what we can budget for. Jan Gearhart said she agrees.

Adrienne said the Town of Woodstock, which is a similar size, recently hired an economic development director. Their posting was for $85-90K per year for a full-time position.

The board agreed to revisit this at the next meeting.

Eben said he thinks the conversation we are having later in this meeting ties into this. We haven't really decided what we are doing with town and village employees. Maybe there is a way we can structure differently that would allow us to make this position 40 hours. In an ideal scenario, if the person brought in enough grants, which often include reimbursement for staff time, the cost would be a wash.

9. *Review and Discuss Legion Field Design*

The board reviewed the draft layout for Legion Field from DuBois & King. Eben said he feels like the design and construction of the pavilion should probably be farther down on the priority list. Howard said there is not enough money to do the pavilion now. Paul said the board previously discussed that that would be put on the back burner, waiting for grant opportunities. Howard said this year we can get the bandstand placed and get power on the field for sure and depending on timing we can also level the area for the rink. That is about all he can promise. Adrienne said she agrees that the pavilion could go down further on the list but she thinks it should stay where it is because it is an easy thing to apply for grants for. Paul agreed.

Mike asked Howard if he is happy with this plan. Howard said no. He is okay with it, but he doesn't think the field is big enough to support a pavilion. Mike asked if he is happy with the layout. Howard said generally speaking, yes. There is a lot in there that he doesn't think the field needs. Basically all he wants is a field of grass. Mike said the other stuff takes up precious space. Howard agreed.

Adrienne said there will be a lot of green space gained from the buyout properties. She noted that this plan came from two working sessions with community members.

Peter asked what is staked out now in front of the pizza oven. Howard said he staked out the 50x100 ft. skating rink before the meetings. His hope is that once that is leveled, there will be nothing to see there. The rink will appear only once the ground is frozen. The stakes are just meant to show how big the skating rink will be. Paul said the design shows a different size from what Howard stated. Howard said the size doesn't make it more or less expensive.

Adrienne said she asked Brian Raulinaitis if he could store the walls for the rink, etc under the future pavilion and he said they could be stored under the rafters. So the pavilion could double as a storage space. Howard said the storage of the ice rink equipment is planned for the shipping container behind the bandstand. Mike said if we are going to have a nice post and beam pavilion we don’t want it used for storage.

Peter said he feels he needs to understand the benefit of the pavilion. It looks very big next to the pizza oven. Paul suggested postponing discussion of the pavilion until we are ready to talk about next steps.

Joe Salerno asked what installing electric service means. Paul said electric service will initially be installed to the bandstand and we talked about adding service at the pizza oven if there is enough money. Howard said it is easy to bring power to the pizza oven because there is a pole right there.

Joe said he attended one public session and there was a lot of support for the plan and the pavilion. It feels like we did a public process and now we are still just doing what Tuesday Night Live wants. He wonders how the new green spaces Adrienne mentioned will work with this spot. It feels like that field has really shrunk with the library. Mike agreed. He said the field has forever been spoiled. Adrienne said maybe we can have another field somewhere else. Joe said his question is how all the things we want to do fit into the other spaces we are going to have. Adrienne said that is why she has been pushing for a parks committee or group to make these decisions.

Kathy Black said she went to both sessions. She likes the phased process. We are doing three things now, not everything. We are not spending a bunch of money for something we may move somewhere else. What she likes about the plan is that it pays attention to the fact that the field is a grassy space for kids to play, it allows for the ice rink and it works well for events that happen around the pizza oven. She thinks it is a good plan. We will just do the three things that need to happen first and not put a lot of money into the field, not even knowing what it will look like when the library is done.

<u>Adrienne moved and Eben seconded to accept the final design for Legion Field improvements from DuBois & King with the intent to use the existing grant money to focus on grading the field, moving the bandstand, installing a bandstand storage shed and installing electric service.</u> Eben said we are accepting a plan and a future board can change the layout**. <u>The motion was passed.</u>**

Paul said we had a proposal from Howard to serve as general contractor for phase one of the Legion Field work but we need to go through our procurement policy, so we will post the opportunity and ask for bids. We had talked about needing to do the ice rink grading in a hurry, but it is also possible to do it after the upcoming Tuesday Night Live season. John asked about putting out a separate RFP for the grading because of the time frame. Paul said he thinks grading would be part of the same RFP but the timing would be flexible.

Howard asked if the town can help move the bandstand with its machinery. He estimates it would take about 5 hours. Paul said he is sure we can work that out.

10. Library Update: Review and Discuss Library Fundraising, Invoices and Change Orders

Kelly Vandorn said building of the addition has started. We have made two payments to the contractor. That is going fine.

Kelly said last month there was a meeting with Catherine Delneo, the state librarian. John, Peter, Adrienne and Rosemary were all there. Catherine was very helpful. They talked about rewriting the grant parameters, but Catherine said because of the wording of the grant that won't be necessary. There are a lot of really loose words in the grant that are open for interpretation. If we need more time at the end, there are ways to get that. Catherine also said there are several other projects in the same situation we are in. Construction costs have risen everywhere. The Department of Libraries is doing all they can to help us. Catherine felt everything would work out fine.

In the last couple of weeks, the library board applied for an AARP grant for $15,000 and a rural and small libraries grant for $15,000. They have the T-Mobile grant on their list and haven't heard if they should proceed with that. Paul said the selectboard agreed tonight to apply for that grant for the library project. Kelly said they looked at the HUD grant and realized that this project is not eligible because they require that your project hasn't started yet.

Yesterday, the library got news that they will be getting an anonymous donation of $150,000, which will help considerably. Fundraising is going well. At the last library board meeting, they discussed several options. Kelly met with Rosemary and she shared information about bonds. The selectboard can get a 1-year bond without having a town vote. The library board would like the selectboard to consider getting a $400,000 bond that could allow work on the library to be finished. The library board would pay it back in a year with $20,000 interest. At town meeting next March, if they have failed to raise the amount needed from grants and donations, then they would ask the town to vote on a longer term bond to pay off the short-term bond. That gives the library board more time and allows construction to continue so the library can be finished in November. The library has been displaced from a permanent building for almost 3 years. That is a long time. The Masons have been very kind and have added insulation to the space the library is using. But it is cold there and there is not enough room for all the books. They don't want to prolong the building process. They would like to get finished and move in and open up the community room. Kelly thinks that with the new donation they will probably not be out of money until June.

Jasmine Yuris said with the bond, the library board would be able to take a deep breath but they would still be grinding. They will keep acting like they have a tight timeline.

Paul asked, there is extra time available if we need it? We no longer need to have the old building finished and open by the end of the year? Kelly said the library has to be open and occupying a space. The whole building does not need to be finished. We need internet access, ADA access and telehealth. But the library board is hesitant to move in without the entire building finished because they have been in limbo so long and then they would still be in limbo.

Peter asked Kelly to run through the bond scenario again. Kelly said they probably will not need the bond money until June. If we took out a bond at the end of May or the beginning of June, then the bond would not be due yet by the next town meeting. But they would have a good idea of the fundraising and grant situation. At that time they could ask the voters to approve another bond to pay off the short-term bond.

Peter said he has two concerns about that scenario. One is that he is not sure there will be the same enthusiasm about fundraising for something that has already been built. The other is that it potentially puts the library's future in the hands of the town voters. He doesn't know if we can feel secure in that.

Kelly said the library board has a lot more grants on their list. There are other donors they have spoken to who say they are going to donate. John is working on possible Congressionally Directed Spending. John said he has applications in for Congressionally Directed Spending with Rep. Balint, Sen. Sanders and Sen. Welch. He heard back from Rep. Balint’s office that we should ask for about $625,000 if we want $500,000. Congressionally Directed Spending will be in the FY27 budget and chances are it will be available in the fall of 2027. This funding would not be to repay a loan or pay for something that was already built. Waiting for this funding would delay the project.

Eben asked for clarification on amounts spent, the total amount the project will cost and the amount we are short. Jasmine said the total project cost would be $2.4 million. With the donation, the amount needed has been lowered to about $400K.

Eben said if we want bond money available in June, we need to start working on the bond now. We could also do it as a line of credit. That takes less effort to get. If we are going to go for a municipal bond, he thinks we need to rescind the previous board's decision that taxpayer money will not be involved. If the voters say no to a bond next year we are required to pay it. He asked if there is any information on how much can be saved by choosing cheaper windows, flooring, siding, etc. Kelly said they did not choose really expensive things to begin with. They tried to get quality but at as low a cost as possible.

The board agreed to take up discussion of a possible bond at the next meeting.

John said we received a request from Back Forty Builders for a change order in the amount of $6,750. This is to cover shim plates at beam pockets to correct out of level conditions, installation of structural fasteners and foam insulation excluded from the original scope of work and a repair requested by DeWolfe Engineering.

Eben asked, is this work not completed by another contractor? Is that why it was needed? Should we withhold this amount from another contractor?

John said part of it is for fasteners and insulation excluded from the original scope of work. His guess is that they realized it needed to be added although it was not in the original scope of work. A repair was requested by DeWolfe Engineering. And shim plates were needed to correct out of level conditions.

Eben asked what portion of the building the additional exterior insulation was on. Peter said the addition. Eben asked if the RFP or the design specifically called for exterior insulation. Peter said yes. Eben said the contractor that did the addition foundation did not complete the work per design. He thinks we should deduct $6,750 from payment to that contractor.

Peter said before we take that step he thinks we should bring up the original RFP. But as far as the three things on the change order, Back Forty Builders is not responsible.

Peter moved and Eben seconded to approve Change Order #1 in the amount of $6,750 for Back Forty Builders.

Mike said he will vote against this because he wants to make sure the town is not on the hook for it. Eben asked if he wants to delay while John verifies. Peter said Back Forty has already laid out this money and should not wait for the back and forth between the town and another contractor. Paul agreed.

The motion was passed with Peter, Eben and Paul in favor, Mike opposed and Adrienne abstaining.

John said after Mike reached out to G.W. Tatro he reduced his invoice by $7,510 to $197,800.

Eben moved to amend the selectboard's previous motion to pay $184,100 for services from G.W. Tatro by changing the amount to $191,050. He said this amount is Tatro's reduced amount minus the change order amount.

John said part of the change order was for a repair requested by DeWolfe Engineering. Peter said the fire marshal required that work. John said he also doesn't think we can penalize the original contractor for not installing things that were excluded from the original scope of work. Mike said he is sure the contractor will make it right, so he feels we should approve the $197,800. He thinks the amount for the items excluded from the original scope of work is probably not G.W. Tatro's responsibility.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Mike moved and Peter seconded to paid G.W. Tatro the revised invoice price of $197,800.

Mike said there was an $8,500 bill for cutting concrete on the foundation that was unneeded. That expense was caused by the architect. He wants to go after the architect for $8,500 because it was their fault we had to spend that amount to cut into the foundation.

The motion was passed with Adrienne abstaining.

Mike said shortly after the forms were pulled, he went down to the library site and wondered where the hole was to get into the old building for the utilities for the addition. He, John and Lydia found the prints for the foundation. They have dotted lines saying "Cut at a further date." Dale Tatro also talked to the architect and the architect said the cutting would be done at a later date. That is foolish. Mike asked the architect why the hole should not have been put in when the forms were put in and he said there would be no way to support the building. Mike feels a mistake was made by the architect. He thinks we should withhold $8,500 from payments to the architect. Peter asked if the drawing was from the architect or the structural engineer. Mike said it appears to be from the architect. We can withhold payment and let the architect and the engineer fight it out.

Paul asked where we stand with architect invoices. Rosemary said we have one in tonight's invoices for about $6,000. Eben said we will get more bills from them in the future. Mike said he would like to start withholding payments now from the current bill. Peter said he wants to be sure we are withholding payment from the right person. John said he will check the drawings tomorrow and forward them to the board. Paul suggested postponing a decision on this.

11. *Review and Consider Candidates for Marvin Awards*

Eben recommended that anyone with ideas for Marvin Award nominations email them to Paul and John and trust them to select a decent candidate out of the pool. That way the person who is nominated can be surprised. Paul agreed with that idea.

12. *Formalize Committee Reports to the Selectboard*

Paul suggested that committees send a bullet point summary of actions and meetings to John once a month that John can forward it to the board and the board can ask questions as we need to. Doug Molde suggested that once a CEDS is hired, the reports might go to the CEDS instead.

13. *LCPC Board Appointment: Sign Appointment Letter*

Paul said this had already been done.

14. *Review and Consider Membership in Vermont Covered Bridge Society*

John said he got an email from the Vermont Covered Bridge Society. Their annual dues are $100. If we paid dues, we would be eligible for a $1,000 grant for repairs to covered bridges and our covered bridges could be featured in their programs. And if we had issues we could rely on them for expertise. <u>**Mike moved to pay $100 for a year of membership to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.**</u>

Eben asked if John can talk to Jason and see what his plan is for work on Scribner Bridge. If the highway crew has too much other work we could talk about an RFP.

15. *Review and Discuss Office Roles Following Rosemary's Retirement*

John said he sat down with Lydia and Susan and got their input. Susan indicated she would be comfortable taking the clerk position and Lydia said she would be comfortable taking the treasurer position. The personnel policy says we need to post positions for 5 days internally and then post them publicly. He thinks we have two qualified in-house candidates.

Paul suggested that we start by discussing whether we are agreed that we are separating town and village positions. Is it smart to separate town and village duties within the office? Rosemary said the village posted today for a village treasurer. She noted that the village clerk work is very minimal.

Paul asked what separating town and village duties means. Does it mean separate windows? Separate computers? Susan said the village will need new software. They are doing a database conversion and it sounds like their general ledger will not be integrated into NEMRC. A lot of things need to be figured out. Paul asked, they are switching their financial software and we are not? Susan said NEMRC is meeting our needs, so she doesn't see why we would spend the money to change software. Rosemary said the village does not know yet what software they are switching to. Susan said currently the town and village share a cash module that accommodates any village or town payments a customer may make. It sounds like that isn't going to be the case in the future. They won't be using NEMRC for their utility billing. They will be using other software. We don't know how that will work.

Eben said maybe we should have a joint meeting and come to consensus with the village. If the village is hiring a treasurer and we decide to have a separate clerk and treasurer, which one needs a door that locks? Do the treasurer and clerk both need locking offices? Rosemary said we will need more filing cabinets. She noted that Nate Brigham should be moving back to the village garage at some point and not using space in the office. Eben suggested that maybe the back room with its separate entrance could be used for one of the municipalities.

Adrienne asked what percentage of customers come for village needs vs. town needs. Lydia said 90% of the time they are there for village needs. Adrienne said she doesn't think we need separate windows. She thinks for the 1 out of 10 times when someone is there on town business the village employee can let the town employee know they need to handle it.

Paul said he thinks there is a lot to think through. Maybe we should meet with the village trustees before making a decision.

Eben said he believes the town has funds in its budget to fund two full-time positions. He has always been a proponent of hiring from within when possible. He is not sure if we want to split the positions. He can’t see there being hostility in the office by making this decision with current employees.

Lydia said she is in favor of separation from the village. Susan said she is fine with it. She thinks everyone will still work as a team whether they are town or village employees. She thinks there are logistics that need to be figured out. There will be a different way of doing things. Rosemary said the cash piece is the biggest hurdle. Susan said we will have to have separate drawers and separate deposits. We will still have shared bills, like the oil bill. Rosemary said another option is that one entity could rent from the other. She said there are a lot of shared bills for this building.

Adrienne moved and Mike seconded to start the process of separating town and village office employees. The motion was passed with Eben abstaining.

Eben suggested coming to consensus on whether we will have a town clerk/treasurer with an assistant or a separate town clerk and town treasurer. Paul asked Rosemary if there is an advantage to having the town clerk and town treasurer be the same person. Rosemary said across the state about 40% of towns have two different people and 60% have the same person in both positions. Eben said if they were different people we would lose the assistant but each of the two people would have some assistant responsibilities. Rosemary agreed. Susan said the Secretary of State's office has slightly different figures on the split, with about 48% of towns having two different people versus 52% with the same person in both positions.

Adrienne said it sounds like we would have one person who is the town clerk/assistant treasurer and another one who is the town treasurer/assistant clerk. She asked if the employees are in favor of that. Lydia said she is happy to do whatever the town suggests. The board consensus was in favor of that model.

John said we have to post internally before posting externally. Rosemary said we only have to post externally if we don't have qualified candidates. The board agreed that John should post the positions internally. Eben said John can work with Rosemary on job descriptions. John read the wording in the personnel policy about internal and external posting. Board members agreed that it was a little vague on whether the positions need to be posted externally. John said he will provide job descriptions at the next meeting.

Eben asked if employees who are not required to come to meetings intend to be a part of the meetings where the new structure is discussed. Lydia said she thinks so. They are very invested. Eben suggested that in that case the discussion should be put near the beginning of the meeting.

16. Review and Discuss Having a Long-Term Goals Planning Meeting

It was agreed to schedule a long-term goals planning meeting for 6:00 on April 29.

Adrienne suggested changing the meeting time to 6:00 for all meetings.

17. Executive Session: Review and Discuss Town Attorney's Recommendations regarding Purchase and Sale Agreement for Lowe Lecture Hall/Old Town Hall

<u>**Eben moved to go into executive session for attorney/client communications as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a}(2) because premature public disclosure of the information to be discussed would place the town at a substantial disadvantage, inviting all those present other than the minute taker to remain, and the motion was passed at 9:16.**</u> The board came out of executive session at 9:27.

<u>**Peter moved to accept the Purchase and Sale Agreement for the Lowe Lecture Hall/Old Town Hall, to empower the chair to sign the document, to refund $7,090.78 in taxes to the Vermont Studio Center and to pay $3,000 for the closing costs. The motion was passed with Mike and Eben opposed.**</u>

Mike said he voted no because the town hall has a lot of unknowns and with all the additional town expenses on the horizon he did not want to burden the taxpayers with additional ones.

18. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths