

JOHNSON RAIL TRAIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2026

Present:

Committee Members: Jan Gearhart (remote), Daniel Langevin (remote), Doug Molde, Mary Lou Kopas, Adrian Schmidt, Kim Dunkley, Lynda Hill

Others: Charles Flaum, Morna Flaum

Absent: BJ Putvain

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call Meeting to Order

Doug called the meeting to order at 6:04.

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

No changes to the agenda were needed.

3. Consider Approving Minutes of April 15, 2026

Lynda moved to approve the minutes of April 15, 2026, Adrian seconded and the motion was passed.

4. Report on the Committee's Available Uncommitted Funds

Mary Lou said Jan got a report from Rosemary of what has been spent so far. The last entry is from November 2025 – the Back Forty Builders deposit. But she thinks Back Forty Builders has been completely paid. Jan said there was \$7,125 paid as a deposit to Back Forty Builders in November. She knows they finished the job. She imagines they have been paid, but she not sure where the money came from.

Jan asked, we were going to get a Building Communities Grant to pay for the Welcome Center work. Did we ever get that grant? Doug said we got a grant. The bid we got was higher than the grant amount and Brian Raulinaitis of Back Forty Builders lowered his price somewhat. We got a Vermont Community Fund grant. He thinks the grant was only for 50% of the original estimate, so there may be more money that has to come out of our budget eventually because of the increase in price.

Mary Lou said apparently there is \$22,000 from the Vermont Community Fund grant. In one place it says \$20K and in another place it says \$2K. Rosemary told her there was an extra \$2K received.

Mary Lou said we spent \$7,125 for Back Forty Builders. We dedicated a little over \$5K to bike racks and benches. She wants to confirm that the number she got from Rosemary is right and find out if it includes the extra we have to pay to make up the difference between the grant and the Back Forty Builders cost.

Jan said we also had expenses from Green Mountain Mobile, Kim Dunkley and Brian Currier. That took out \$3,830. We had \$4,369 left. Mary Lou said if this is correct then we have \$7K plus \$4K left. Jan said we also got an allocation of \$1000 at town meeting last March. Doug said we also have committed to spend 20% of the cost for the stone steps. We are waiting for an Act 250 permit for the steps. Jan said with the additional \$1K allocation from last March she thinks we have around \$13K. The kiosks are totally paid for.

Mary Lou said she believes we have until the end of this month to spend the money, right? Doug said we got an extension until the end of September for spending the Vermont Community Fund grant money.

Mary Lou asked what we are spending on the maps. Doug said we do not know.

Jan said we got \$715 from the village for a bike rack at the Cold Spring. Adrian said they don't think we got that money. They think the village approved spending the money. Doug said the money would come from us. It was a committee expenditure.

Lynda asked if the bike racks have been purchased. Mary Lou said we haven't paid Duane yet, but he has started on them. Lynda asked, that will come out of the \$13K? Jan said no, the \$13K figure is after spending money on the bike racks.

Mary Lou said we also will need to spend money on maps. There was talk about a sign for Lea's playground. She doesn't know if that will happen. Doug said it won't. Eddie Gale said he wants the committee to spend the money on other needs.

Jan asked if we have to pay for signage on the rail trail or if VTrans pays for it. Doug said VTrans will pay for signage on the rail trail. Signage on highways comes out of our pocket unless we get a grant. Lynda asked if we can put any signs we want on the rail trail. Doug said no; VTrans has to approve them.

Jan said we have to get the big village map designed and printed that we want on the Welcome Center.

Mary Lou said she thinks we need to decide how to spend this money and she is guessing the priorities will be the map and signage. Kim said we need to spend on the bench and granite steps also.

Mary Lou said she thinks it is probably correct that we have about \$13K, or \$10K if we take out what we have to pay for the stone steps. There might be some cost for securing benches. There may be some expense for the cement pad the village wants for the bike rack. And there are the outlets we want to put in by Jenna's Cafe.

Doug suggested that Mary Lou and Jan confirm the numbers and list the items we are thinking of spending money on.

5. Status with VTrans of Actions to Improve Safety of Rail Trail Crossing on Railroad Street

Doug said the selectboard had wanted to put down white lines to mark the sidewalk. Paul Warden asked Doug to contact Jackie Cassino because the selectboard was concerned about the safety of the rail trail crossing on Railroad Street and wanted to know what they could do to mark it. Jackie said we cannot mark where the rail trail crosses the road right now because they are redesigning their specs. Lynda suggested we could put up a sign to direct people to town as long as it is outside the rail trail right of way.

6. Report on Details and Proposed Date of Kiosk Installation at Ted Alexander Welcome Center

Adrian said they reached out to Brian Currier but have not heard back about when he is available to work on the kiosk. They think we should pick some dates to suggest.

Jan said Brian gave us a good deal on the kiosks. She thinks he will help us with installation, but we should not rely on him to do too much of the work. Adrian said they think Brian could be more like a foreman to walk us through installation.

Adrian suggested May 30. They can mark ahead of time where the holes will go.

Charles said Yva Rose recently provided important information he thinks this committee doesn't have. He asked if the kiosks will have a map of the town on them or just a map of the rail trail. Doug said there will be a rail trail map on one side and we can put whatever we want on the back side. Jan said there will be one kiosk at the trailhead and another that we originally thought would be on Legion Field, but that is not happening. That one was going to have a map of the village, not the rail trail.

Charles said Yva Rose stated that 60% of their traffic comes from the east. She says people coming from the east will hit the Welcome Center map after coming through part of Johnson, and they won't turn around. So the committee needs to consider other placements.

Mary Lou said the idea is that the map at the Welcome Center will direct people down Railroad Street to the village. The other kiosk will show people where things are once they get into town. Jan said we have permission from the Masons to put it on their property.

Doug said he thinks we need an overall plan for signage, but right now we are only talking about the kiosks we have already committed to put in.

Jan said we are talking about two different maps – a village map and a rail trail map. The rail trail map is the one that will go on one side of the kiosk at the trailhead. She doesn't think we were thinking of having a village map on one side and a trail map on other because there will be a large village map on the Welcome Center building. Doug said we haven't discussed what will be on the back side of the trailhead map. That is for another night.

Adrian said we need to contact BJ to see if we can arrange for village help with digging holes and we need to get Dig Safe to mark the site.

Kim said she wants to work on a kiosk for people coming from the east. Lynda said there is a sign there now. Doug said he thinks we need to plan that, but not tonight.

Kim said she can contact BJ to see if he can set up village help for Friday. Adrian said they can mark the locations for the holes with white paint.

It was agreed to make June 6 the backup date in case May 30 will not work.

There was discussion about getting the kiosk pieces from Paul Warden. It may be possible to use Brian Currier's trailer to move them.

7. *Proposed Revised Johnson Specific User Survey*

Dan said last month we discussed the utility of a trail user survey that could be at the kiosk, on the town website, etc. It would help us with planning and grant applications. Last month he showed the committee a draft survey. He hasn't seen any suggested edits. The idea would be to keep collecting the same information over time, perhaps over a couple of years. There could be a QR code at the kiosk to access the survey.

Kim said her suggestion is to allow people to prioritize the things they think we could do better.

Mary Lou suggested referring to the Johnson portion of the LVRT rather than to the Johnson Rail Trail. She also suggested that instead of asking, “Did you spend money at any local businesses” we could ask, “Did you visit any local businesses?” and then ask which businesses and how much they spent. Others agreed with Mary Lou’s suggestions.

Doug said Chris and Morna said they could put a link to the survey on the Discover Johnson website.

Dan said it seems like Google Forms or Microsoft Forms would be the way to go because they are free. He asked if committee members have any preference. Does the committee use Google or Microsoft more already? Mary Lou said we use Google Drive. She knows Google Forms can automatically download into a spreadsheet. Adrian said he leans towards Google.

Dan said he can take the questions, integrate the comments from tonight, and create a draft in Google Forms. When the kiosk is up, it could appear there, on the town website, on social media, and maybe at the library.

Dan suggested that trail counters could be something to look into in the future.

8. *New Map to be Installed on Ted Alexander Welcome Center*

Jan said we have been working on coming up with a village map for quite a while, trying to get a list of attractions and services we would put on it. She and Adrian met a couple of weeks ago. Adrian was going to come up with a computerized version of the list. We want to make sure we are getting just enough of the right things on the map – mainly things in the village but also some things in outlying areas like Journey’s End or Scribner Bridge. We talked to Adrienne Parker a while ago about doing a graphic layout for that map. She is waiting to hear more from us.

Adrian said their idea is to assemble the points using an open source mapping program so we can see them. That way we can get an idea of what we want to include on the map without it being overcrowded.

Doug asked how this fits with what Discover Johnson is doing. Charles Flaum said Discover Johnson is a 501(c)(3). They made a brochure for fall which is now being edited. Four thousand brochures with a map of Johnson on the back are going to be at welcome centers. They have gotten funding for a website. They are going to brand Johnson. They got an intern from Emerson. They have already gotten a list of assets from Doug. They will put together a map on their website that can be filtered by date. He thinks a paper map will be a great idea. It will have to be updated as businesses come and go. He would love it if the committee’s branding matched theirs. He would love to coordinate and have a cohesive look and feel.

Adrian said he thinks that is a little further along than where we are. Their goal is not a graphic design, just a way to decide what is too much on the map. They will just assemble points on a map and we would pass that along to a graphic designer.

Charles said he might recommend letting Discover Johnson take on the graphic design part so it matches their brochures. Jan and Adrian said they think that is a great idea. Jan said Adrienne Parker knows there is a good chance we may have someone else design the map and she is okay with that.

She has a lot on her plate.

Charles said he and Morna are very busy right now. July would be a better time for them to review potential map points. Adrian said that would work well for them. The July 16 meeting would be a good deadline to have points mapped for the group to review.

Doug asked if there is anything we want to put in place of the old map on the Welcome Center while waiting for the new map to be ready. The committee discussed enlarging the map from the Discover Johnson brochure and putting a panel next to it listing Johnson events like Tuesday Night Live, pizza nights, the Blueberry Festival and Field Days. Charles and Morna said they can check with Great Big Graphics about the cost to print an enlarged version of one or both of the map pages from the brochure.

Doug moved to ask Charles and Morna Flaum to get a cost figure to present to the selectboard for printing enlarged map pages from the Discover Johnson brochure along with a schedule of events, Adrian seconded and the motion was passed.

Doug said he will get on the June 1 selectboard agenda to ask about authorizing the expenditure.

9. *Set Next Meeting Date and Adjourn*

The next meeting will be Thursday, June 18.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths