

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2026

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

Others: John Sutherland, Rosemary Audibert, Meghan Rodier, Doug Osborne, Jessica Louisos, Josephine Alling, Doug Molde, Diana Osborn, Kathy Black, Scott Meyer, Buzz Osgood, Lynda Hill, Greg Tatro, Charles Gallanter, Bobbie Rooney, Kim Dunkley, Sue Lovering, Tori Hellwig (remote)

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Paul called the meeting to order at 6:32.

2. Consider Additions or Adjustments to Agenda

3. Eben added an executive session to discuss contract negotiations.

4. Public Comment

No members of the public wished to comment.

5. Selectboard Updates and/or Concerns

Eben said if we are going to start doing roadside mowing soon we should give people a heads up on social media.

6. Consent Agenda

Eben moved to approve the minutes of May 18, 2026 as presented, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.

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

Rosemary said income to date is 97% of budget and expenses to date are 72.36% of budget.

We have received the grant money for the Johnson General Store for their new cash register system. They need to purchase the system and send in a receipt for reimbursement. Rosemary asked if they need to follow the town procurement policy. John said yes. Rosemary said in that case they will need to get more than one bid.

Rosemary said money is starting to come in for Tuesday Night Live.

Eben asked about expenditures for consultant services. Rosemary said some of that was grant reimbursable.

Eben asked if we can purchase salt before the end of the year. John said he was told suppliers probably would not be providing quotes until June. Eben asked if the board wants to try to spend \$35,000 before the end of the year. Some board members said yes. John said Jason thought 300 tons of salt would be enough. Eben said that would cost about \$30,000. Peter asked if Eben is suggesting that we buy salt now. Eben said he is suggesting that if we can adhere to the procurement policy and purchase it before July 1, that would be a good idea.

8. Gihon Confluence and Wescom Rd Floodplain Restoration Projects

Meghan Rodier of the Lamoille County Planning Commission said the engineering team from SLR has been working on the Wescom Road and Gihon Confluence projects and they want the board to select alternatives to move to 30% design for those projects. She suggested that when the board thinks about the costs of these projects, they should also think about benefits such as flood

reduction. She said LCPC favored Alternative 4 for the Wescom Road project and Alternative 5 for the Gihon River Confluence project.

Jessica Louisos of SLR said in April SLR did a much longer presentation. Tonight they are here to get feedback on which alternative to move into concept design. Adrienne asked if the meeting from April is online. Meghan Rodier said there was a recording. Adrienne suggested that the town should post it online.

Josephine Alling said there were previous buyouts on Wescom Road in the early '90s and there are current buyouts at the end of the road. The goal is to create space for the river to spread out to slow the water, and reduce flooding. SLR used a tool to look at how new floodplains would impact flood levels. The idea is that soil would be removed from an area to create more floodplain storage, similar to the Holmes Meadow project.

Josephine said SLR is leaning toward Alternative 4, which involves lowering land closer to the mobile homes and only on the right side of Wescom Road. It would include previous buyout properties. It would not include lowering the road. It is more limited in scope than some other alternatives. The maximum flood reduction benefit would come from Alternative 6, which includes lowering the road, but Alternative 4 has similar results. Both would reduce flood levels by about half a foot. Modeling shows promising results with all the alternatives. There would be phosphorus crediting, ecological and river restoration benefits as well. Jessica said different funding sources often have different values. Phosphorus crediting is important to some funding providers. Other funding sources value riparian restoration.

Jessica said Alternative 4 crosses two private properties. If that alternative is chosen, the town would need to work with those landowners before moving much further. Paul asked how much of the area proposed for Alternative 4 is private property and what the effect would be if we had to omit the private property. Meghan said the property owners have been spoken to and they were open to modeling and exploration. Adrienne asked if they would have to move if the project went forward. Meghan said no. Jessica said the part of their properties that would be affected is a natural area that does not include their houses.

Paul asked if SLR was surprised that Alternative 1 had as much predicted reduction as it did, since it is a smaller area. Josephine said they were surprised. Paul asked if Alternative 4 could be phased, with just the area included in Alternative 1 done first. Jessica said she thinks so. Since there are grant funds available, this is a good opportunity to work through design on the entire project, even if the town only wants to do a piece now.

John asked if there are grant options available for the construction portion. Meghan said all these projects are fairly expensive. LCPC only has funding now for a 30% design, but the idea is that they would cobble together multiple grant sources for implementation. First, they would try to fund a final design and then construction. There are grants out there. There probably would have to be a combination of grant funding.

Mike said for Alternative 4 we are talking about spending \$2.5 to 3.5 million for a 6-inch reduction in flooding. He doesn't really see what 6 inches will do for anyone. Paul said it depends on where your house is and what the height of the first floor is.

Lynda Hill asked if we are talking about a 6 inch difference in where the water comes up or 6 inches in depth. She said when her property in the lower trailer park was flooded, water came to the second step. Six inches in depth would have made a huge difference. If the water had been 4 inches higher it would have gone in the front door. Mike said 6 inches might make a big difference for one or two people but not in the big picture.

Eben asked how much water there was in the municipal building. Rosemary said at least 6 inches. Mike said he thinks it was less than 6 inches. Eben said in that case, wouldn't reducing the flood level by 6 inches put the taxpayers in a better position in the future? Mike said he thinks it depends on how much money the town would have to spend.

Meghan said LCPC would go after grant funding. She noted that there are multiple projects and we have to think about the cumulative effect of all of them.

Greg Tatro asked how much the Holmes Meadow project dropped predicted flood levels. Jessica said a few inches. That project has more significant impacts on ice jam flooding. Greg said he could see the advantage of reducing the potential for ice jams. If we can stop an ice jam we can drop flooding by more than 6 inches.

Mike said Holmes Meadow has been planted full of trees. Once they grow up, where will the ice sheets go? Planting trees was counterproductive to the whole process.

Adrienne said the project is about expanding where water can spread, but also slowing down the water. Jessica said in the section of the river involved in this project, the area across the river from the project location has been filled with soil. That eliminated any floodplain relief on that side. This can counteract that.

Buzz Osgood asked how much the soil level will be lowered. Jessica said maybe up to 10 feet by the river, tapering to a few feet at the back of the area.

Greg Tatro said he thinks the best bang for the buck is Alternative 1. The town could do more if we get more money. He feels starting on the low end is a good idea when doing construction. He agrees with Mike that the trees planted in Holmes Meadow are probably not a good idea.

Jessica said the trees are an Act 250 requirement. We were not allowed to do the project without planting the trees because there was an existing Act 250 permit. The trees closest to the river are actually shrubs.

Paul asked, if we move to go forward with Alternative 4, do we have the option to do Alternative 1 first? Jessica said it seems reasonable to break the project into Phase 1 and Phase 2, with Alternative 1 as the first step.

Mike asked, no grant is a sure thing? Paul said as he understands it money to pay for the 30% design is already in hand, but a new grant is needed for final design and another is needed for construction. Jessica agreed that nothing about future grants is written in stone.

Eben moved to choose Alternative 4 to move forward to 30% design for the Wescom Road Flood Restoration project, attempting to phase the project with Alternative 1 as Phase 1 and

the rest of the area as Phase 2, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Doug Osborne said the Gihon Confluence project area is the section of the lower Gihon from just upstream of Main Street to the confluence with the Lamoille. He described how flood water from the Lamoille can push back into the Gihon so water is backed up trying to get into the Lamoille. The backwater from the Lamoille at times moves all the way up to the Pearl Street bridge.

Doug showed modeling results for different project areas that were considered. Lowering properties closer to the Lamoille doesn't result in a big difference. They are leaning towards Alternative 5, which includes properties on either side of the Main Street bridge and the bridge itself. It includes a proposed dry bridge under Main Street. The existing bridge would remain as is, but a second bridge opening would be constructed on the west side that would be equivalent to the existing one. Most of the time it would be dry. When there was a big flood it would be a place for flood waters to go rather than backing up. The Main Street bridge does back up water into the Gihon. The project would involve lowering the health center property and the Union Bank property. There would be a reduction of a little over a foot upstream of Main Street during a 100-year flood with Alternative 5.

Doug showed information on Alternatives 1, 5 and 8. Alternative 1 includes lowering every area that was considered. Alternative 8 is a smaller version of Alternative 5 with less floodplain restoration but with the dry bridge.

Mike asked why people aren't talking about the bridge dam down by the Hogback Road. The old iron bridge that was there was high off the river. The state replaced it with a much lower bridge. In the last flood we had, it was an actual dam. If it had been higher, it might have been able to make as much difference as the projects we are talking about. He thinks it would make a big difference if that bridge was replaced.

Paul asked, SLR modeled that, right? Jessica said they did. The constriction is actually further downstream at Ithiel Falls. Paul said he was surprised to see that their modeling showed that changing that bridge had little effect. Josephine said they found that what set the water level was the falls. The bridge did not make a big impact. Mike said during the July 2023 flood the water was higher on the upper side of the bridge. It acted as a dam. Jessica said SLR can present their modeling information to the board again or send it through John.

Scott Meyer said some residents on the west side of Railroad Street are having large parts of their yards swept away by the river. Will these alternatives help with that? Jessica said they would probably not change erosion patterns by Railroad Street. Scott said it would be good to have some kind of improvement to that section. Massive amounts of land are disappearing behind those houses. Jessica noted that there is a lot of rip rap in one area, which is not helping. Ideally the river could erode there. Erosion in that area is outside the scope of this project.

Paul asked where the big phosphorus reduction comes from in Alternative 1. Jessica said it is because that alternative includes a bigger area.

Diana Osborn said she understands the modeling didn't show an enormous amount of improvement with Alternative 1, but it could potentially cost less to do Alternative 1 than the upper end of

Alternative. 5. She doesn't see why the town shouldn't choose Alternative 1, which includes all the areas considered, and do a phased implementation.

Paul asked why the cost estimates are so similar for Alternative 1 and Alternative 5. Jessica said a large part of the cost is the bridge. Once the contractor is mobilized, if all the work is done at the same time, an extra amount of digging does not add a huge amount of extra cost. If the work was separated out into different projects, the cost estimate would go up significantly compared to a single mobilization.

Adrienne asked if there is harm in doing too much too fast. Jessica said no.

Jessica noted that the town has the most control over the properties involved in Alternative 5. That would involve two buyout properties and working with VTrans. Expanding to Alternative 1 would involve multiple private properties, including the Sterling Market property.

Doug Molde said he would prefer to leave the Sterling Market property not excavated, for possible future usage

Greg Tatro said he believes Ithiel Falls is a big problem. He believes it is all ledge down there and he thinks that ledge is worth money. Someone could crush and process it and probably open up that floodplain. It shouldn't cost a lot to take those high ledge faces back. He asked if SLR has modeled chopping that down. Jessica said he doesn't think they did. She thinks it warrants follow-up discussion with people in the Rivers Program.

Paul asked how it would change the numbers if we omitted the Sterling Market property from Alternative 1. Doug Osborne said the modeling does not show much benefit with lowering in that area. Omitting Sterling market is a totally viable plan for that area. Paul asked, Sterling Market is not in alternative 5, right? The SLR engineers said that is right. Jessica said the flood benefits are about the same with Alternative 5 and Alternative 1.

Paul asked, isn't the land behind the bank already pretty close to the river? Jessica said it is not as low as it could be. It takes a pretty big flood to get up onto it. It currently floods with a 5 or 10-year flood and SLR wanted it to flood with a 2-year flood.

Paul asked if there has been any conversation with the village regarding utility poles in that area. Jessica said yes. There is a project going on now to stabilize a pole. They will check back in with the village to make sure the design is compatible with their needs.

Diana Osborn said in a recent meeting at least one person felt strongly that dredging was the only alternative that should be considered. In the past, that was the only thing people did. She asked if there could be a short explanation of why this is a better alternative than dredging. Jessica said there are a lot of different reasons. This project would create a larger volume of space than dredging that section of the Gihon to make it 5 feet deeper. There is also the added benefit that when water starts to fill up the newly created floodplain, it can get out instead of being stuck in a trench going fast. This project will reduce velocity as well. Around the state, a lot of people have seen that dredging the river makes it move around and creates erosion. This is a way to create more space that won't fill back in. Spots that have been dredged might be fine for a while, but they tend

to fill in with new sediment exactly when you want that space to be available. With floodplains it takes longer for them to fill in.

Diana said when making a major investments like this in a project, she would encourage the selectboard to do a major public relations campaign. Explaining the science would make spending the money more palatable.

Greg said he thinks the thing to do is to take some islands out of the river rather than dredging. The material can be recycled. He suggests taking out the island by Johnson Farm and Garden so the river is not pushed into the bank.

Greg asked how big the dry bridge is. Doug Osborne said it would be the same as the existing bridge, 70 ft long. Greg asked if SLR has looked at using a box culvert instead. Jessica said it could be a box culvert.

Peter asked if there is any way to model the cumulative impact of the all different projects lowering the floodplain. Jessica said that information was presented at a planning commission meeting in November or December.

Jessica showed a drone photo of Johnson when it was flooded that SLR found on the internet and asked if anyone had information about the source. They are hoping the source of this photo would have additional photos. Lynda suggested asking on Front Porch Forum

Jessica said all the potential floodplains they looked at in Johnson would lower flood levels downstream of the bridge by 1.1 feet.

Eben moved and Peter seconded to select Alternative 5 to move forward to 30% design for the Gihon Confluence project. Jessica said the project could include a bridge or a box culvert.
The motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Eben said Richford has a concrete channel called a weir that is dry most of the time but can collect flood water. The sediment can be reclaimed and crushed for road gravel. He would like someone to keep that in mind as a possibility for Johnson.

9. *Holmes Meadow Update*

Tori Hellwig of LCPC said Change Order #5 for the Holmes Meadow project was included in the meeting packet. Two specific requirements under the Act 250 permit are covered by this change order. All the expenses are eligible under the ARPA grant funding the project. Treatment of invasive species was required and additional larger plants and additional species were required to meet the specified planting density in the permit. The total additional cost is \$20,300.

Adrienne moved and Peter seconded to approve Change Order #5 in the amount of \$20,300 for the Holmes Meadow project and to authorize John to sign it.

Mike said Redstart is requesting a change order largely due to delayed approval for ordering planting stock. Who delayed the approval on this? Jessica said part of the delay was due to seeking approval from the Act 250 people who approved the permit, which included the planting list. Redstart couldn't get the stock that was in the original plan, so they had to have a back and forth with the state. Mike said we should send the state the bill. They are the ones who held it up. This is

the fifth change order with this company. He will not approve it. Jessica said the off-season construction timing we followed to meet grant deadlines factors into this. Doing the project through the winter affected availability.

The motion was passed with Mike opposed

10. *Report on the Future of the Vermont Campuses Symposium*

Paul noted that the title of this item on the agenda was not quite correct. The symposium was on the future of Vermont campuses, not the Johnson campus.

Kathy Black said the symposium was held at Goddard College, which is an example of a campus in the process of being converted to other uses. The Johnson campus is not closing. But it is important to continually express our interest and be in communication with the college so that parts of the campus they are not using could benefit the town. If the Johnson campus of VTSU did close, the closure process would be very different from the process of closing a private college. Many private colleges are closing for demographic and economic reasons and most of those are in the Northeast. Kathy feels the biggest takeaway is the need to see what is coming down the pike and take advantage of opportunities if VTSU is deaccessioning parts of its campus. Funding sources are looking for things to fund that solve broader economic problems, so it is helpful if we are solving a problem in a way that will help the town, the college and the community. The first panel at the symposium featured nonprofits and state organizations. They are looking for ways to solve the issue of the demographic shift. Making sure we maximize use of college assets is one of the ways to address that. Kathy pointed out some informational resources that were included in her report.

Doug Molde said while he was at the symposium, he talked to Michael Stevens, director of operations at VTSU. The college needs to downsize and we need to talk to them and know what their plans are. It was suggested that the selectboard invite people from the college to come and talk about their plans. Doug asked if there are other buildings besides McClelland and Martinetti that are not needed, and Michael Stevens said yes. Doug thinks we need to know what those buildings are. We should look at what land the college doesn't need. Land with infrastructure on could be used for development.

Diana Osborn said her main takeaway from the symposium is that there are many different models for repurposing a campus. She felt reassured that we are connected to good resources.

Kathy said an obvious action item is to communicate with the college. Maybe we could set up a quarterly or semi-annual meeting. The selectboard may want to develop a committee to gather information and contacts across the state to keep the board up to date on what is going on at the college. She has heard that the post office is definitely moving into Martinetti Hall. She heard that from someone at the college. She also heard that it might be good to talk to Dan Noyes or people at the Lamoille County Planning Commission to see if we could make the college campus part of the village designation so projects there would not be held up by Act 250 permitting.

Doug said at the conference there was the idea that that maybe colleges that are closing should get a pass from Act 250. Dan Noyes told him that if we had a downtown designation, that would take us partially or completely out of Act 250. He suggests checking with LCPC to determine what we could do to make conversion easier with regard to permitting. Paul said if we can get into Tier 1A or 1B it could make permitting easier.

Peter said he had an email from David Bergh inquiring whether the selectboard is still interested in talking about the Martinetti project. With the village not moving its sewage treatment plant, it looks like we will be staying in the municipal building. They would like to have an idea whether we are interested in pursuing anything there beyond town/village offices. Paul said he thinks there is an opportunity to invite them to come share what they are thinking. John said he has a meeting set up with David Bergh. Doug said he thinks the selectboard might want to reach out to legislators for help with communication with the college if necessary.

Diana said we don't necessarily have to wait until the college closes to begin looking at some of the things we are hoping to focus on. Communities around other campuses that closed were able use college campuses address their values. Here we have a logical tie-in with recreation. We could start working toward that even before the college closes. It doesn't have to close for us to make forward progress.

11. Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Update

Doug Molde said the rail trail committee is working on replacing the existing outdated rail trail map at the welcome center. It was suggested that they have Charles Flaum attempt to blow up the Discover Johnson pamphlet and use that in the space where the old map is until the next map is ready. The new map will show our downtown and not the rail trail, in order to get people into the downtown. He is asking the selectboard to approve letting the rail trail committee spend money from its budget to get graphics done to display on the welcome center. A list of Tuesday Night Live and Blueberry Festival dates will also be in the space currently taken up by the old map. Charles Flaum estimated the cost would be \$150 at most. We got \$20,000 from the Vermont Community Foundation and we still have some left.

Adrienne asked if what is put up on the Welcome Center will have the Discover Johnson logo on it. Doug said the pamphlet says "Discover Johnson."

Mike moved and Peter seconded to authorize the rail trail committee to spend money not exceeding what is in their budget to have pages from the Discover Johnson pamphlet blown up to replace the current map on the welcome center, which will subsequently be replaced with a new map highlighting village attractions. The motion was passed.

Doug said at a prior selectboard meeting it was discussed that we should do what we could right now to make Railroad Street as accessible as possible. We ran into some issues. In corresponding with Jackie Cassino of VTrans, he learned that VTrans is redoing its standards for how they mark crossings, including the rail trail crossing on Railroad Street. We wanted to paint lines down the sidewalk. It was suggested at an LCPC committee meeting that we apply to Local Motion. They have about \$30,000 in grant funds and they are going to take applications starting June 5 and make a decision by the end of June. It was suggested that the selectboard ask Local Motion to do a design for a demonstration project from the trail crossing to Railroad Street for the purpose of improving access and visibility and getting people downtown. He thinks we should ask Local Motion to participate in the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities meeting in August. They would be a good organization to work with in the future. Jackie Cassino said that if we get a grant from Local Motion she would then bring out her design team.

The selectboard agreed that the rail trail committee should pursue a grant from Local Motion.

12. Interlocal Assessor Agreement

Eben moved to approve the Interlocal Agreement for Town Assessor Services as presented, authorizing chair Paul Warden to sign the interlocal agreement and Attachment A, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.

13. Selectboard Notification and Approval for Grant Pursuit

Paul said a draft policy was sent out that attempts to provide selectboard notification of pursuit of grant, but not bog things down. He thinks it should be amended to include task forces in the list of groups the policy applies to. Eben said he thinks the list should not include task forces, just town groups. Paul said if a group is applying for something that the town will be a fiscal agent for, we should know about it. Eben said he thinks we should not be a fiscal agent for task forces. Adrienne said she thinks task forces should be included if they are town formed. Eben said we didn't approve the existing task forces. We supported the Reimagine Johnson event that led to them but we didn't decide what the task forces would be. Adrienne said we can retroactively approve task forces. Paul said we might want to appoint task forces in the future, for instance, for Lowe Lecture Hall. He was thinking of about including those.

Diana Osborn said it is a problem if there is inconsistency. It is not fair to pick and choose which groups the town will be a fiscal agent for.

Peter said he is comfortable with saying "selectboard appointed task forces." Paul said then we would have to appoint task forces. Eben said they would have to follow Open Meeting Law. Adrienne and Paul said they don't think task forces have to follow Open Meeting Law. Lois said if a task force is going to have a budget provided by the town it seems appropriate for them to follow Open Meeting Law. Paul said if they are successful in getting a grant, he agrees. Mike read a definition of task force. Paul suggested leaving the wording as is and if a task force wants to go after a grant, they would have to go through a committee.

Mike moved to approve the Town of Johnson Policy on Committee Notifications and Approval for Grant Pursuits as written (without the addition of task forces.)

Scott Meyer said he was on a task force appointed by the state. They followed Open Meeting Law. They were told they had to. It might be good to clarify what the requirement is.

Peter seconded.

Paul said the policy applies to all town committees, boards and departments applying for funding. Eben said any other group would have to come and make a request of the selectboard. Paul said in that case the money would have to go through a town committee.

Eben said he would vote against the motion as worded because he thinks the section on exemptions should say that groups can apply without selectboard authorization only when the grant-funded work would include no major changes to town infrastructure or property. Paul noted that there is already language saying that grants that involve property changes require notification. Eben said he thinks people will see the exemptions list, which does not mention changes to town property, and not realize the other language is there.

Adrienne said she would like to have a task force for the Julian Scott house and one for the old town hall. She would like them to be task forces, not permanent committees and would like them to

be able to go after funds. Paul said we can still create the task forces and have them search out funds they want to apply for. They would have to get selectboard approval or go through a committee. John asked, what if the selectboard created committees to look into the Julian Scott house and the old town hall and disbanded them when their work was completed? Adrienne said that is the definition of a task force. Eben said we have created limited term committees before. The rail trail committee is one. Charlie Gallanter said the task force that was looking into broadband was told they had to comply with Open Meeting Law.

The motion was passed with Eben and Adrienne opposed.

14. Posts around Trees on Main Street

Mike said the posts around trees on Main Street are a nuisance and a safety hazard. He thinks people have leaned on them and fallen over. Even though they are in the village, he thinks the town is responsible for them.

Sue Lovering said when the tree board appeared before the selectboard to discuss the posts around the trees, the selectboard said that was a village project and would not even discuss it. Eben said we received grant funds and sent them to the village. We don't own the trees.

Mike said he thinks they are still a town responsibility. Adrienne and Paul asked why. Paul said it sounds like we were the fiscal agent for the grant but the village owns the trees. Eben said the town tree board is taking care of the trees that the village is required to maintain under their 1111 permit for the Main Street project. We don't own them.

Paul said this sounds like a joint meeting item.

Kim Dunkley said she doesn't think the post around the trees look bad. They help protect the trees.

Bobbie Rooney said when she is at work she sees elderly people opening their car doors and denting them on the posts. They grab hold of the posts next to the curb and they wobble and people fall. They look stable to grab on to, but they are not.

Sue Lovering said the original plan was to fill them with concrete. That was going to be done by the road crew and would have been paid for by the grant but the town wouldn't let it happen. The tree board spent \$15,000 on the posts.

Bobbie said the top caps of the posts are all falling off.

Kim Dunkley asked if Bobbie has brought these issues to the village. Bobbie said talking to the village is like talking to a brick wall. She asked them about the handicapped spot that is never plowed in winter and did not get a satisfactory response.

Paul said it sounds like we need to start by finding out who has jurisdiction over the trees.

Bobbie said part of the purpose of the grates around the trees was also to hold the red brick sidewalk, which is now falling apart. Sue said the surround wasn't changed. The village was upset because they wanted the tree board to put in curbing, but the cost just to ship the curbing would have been more than the entire project.

Kim asked if cement could still get put in. Sue said yes, the posts could be turned upside down and filled with cement.

Kim said if someone opens their car door and hits a post she thinks it is their own fault. Diana Osborn said she has opened her car door into them. A passenger sitting in a car doesn't see the post until the door hits it. It surprises people.

Paul said we will discuss this in a joint meeting with the village and establish jurisdiction

Adrienne said she would like to point out that the tree board did a great job in getting the grant to put these in. Our current system with town and village separation is the cause of this mess. Mike asked how. Adrienne said we paid for them but we can't do anything about them because the village owns them. Mike said even if the town was just a pass-through for the grant funds, he wonders if attorneys would find that the town is culpable for someone's injuries due to the posts. They should be taken care of. Adrienne agreed

15. *Architect's Invoice*

John said he reached out to VLCT and asked them about the situation at the last meeting where we had four selectboard members present, with 2 voting in favor of paying the architect invoice, one opposed and one abstaining. VLCT said that in order for a motion to pass, a majority of board seats needs to vote in favor. So three board members need to vote in favor.

Peter moved and Paul seconded to pay the architect invoice that had previously been left unpaid.

Peter said when we put out an RFP for the foundation for the original building we approved an RFP that went out with no cut and now we are dunning the architect for a mistake that Peter doesn't believe he is responsible for. He feels that if anyone is responsible, the selectboard shares the responsibility. We approved the RFP. We should pay the architect for services rendered in good faith. Paul said in his mind the fact that the selectboard approved the drawing shifts at least some of the responsibility to the selectboard.

Scott Meyer said he is confused because the selectboard members are all laypeople. The architect is a professional. How could he not see that there was a flaw? Mike agreed. The architect was working in concert with the engineer. Paul said it was reported to us that there was conversation about the fact that the cut would be made later.

The motion was passed with Mike opposed and Adrienne abstaining.

16. *Summer Blueberry Festival*

John said he got a request from the people organizing the summer Blueberry Festival. They want to have a race for human-powered hand-built boats on the Gihon from the Pearl Street bridge to the arboretum. He reached out to VLCT. They said to be covered by the town insurance it needs to be a town event, not just sponsored by the town. The town needs to be the organizer or supervise the event and people need to be working under town direction. The town needs organizational control. If the town is just providing funding, the group needs their own coverage.

Eben suggested that the tree board or another town committee should be involved.

Sue asked, the entire Blueberry Festival would not be insured? Paul said he doesn't think we talked about insurance with them. We need to check the minutes. This information means that we can't cover the Blueberry Festival unless we turn it into a town event.

Eben asked how Johnson Works handled insurance for their events. Rosemary said they got their own insurance. Bobbie Rooney said it wasn't an issue before Meredith Dolan and Brian Story were working in Johnson. Paul said that was probably because we didn't know better.

Bobbie said there used to be \$1,500 in the budget for events like this. Johnson Works used to apply for it all the time. Where is that? Paul said we are talking about insurance now. Bobbie said that could help pay the insurance cost.

Rosemary said the Holiday Jubilee was able to get insurance for \$150.

Diana Osborn asked if it would be possible to use the race as a fundraising opportunity for a group like the Johnson Fire Department water rescue team. They would be well qualified to supervise. Or we could consider other groups.

Paul said we need to do research and talk to Discover Johnson about insurance. We can't put the town at risk.

17. Julian Scott House Follow Up

John said he reached out to Dan Noyes, who told him that he has reached out to Col. Zeigler of the Vermont National Guard and asked for help with contacts and possible funding streams. John also emailed Hope Sullivan at the Vermont Studio Center to keep her in the loop. She has good contacts. John also connected with David Schutz, the curator of the State House. John wonders what the board feels the next move should be.

Paul asked if we have heard if Dan Noyes updated the state preservation officer. John said he hasn't heard.

Eben asked if the questions Duncan and Doug prepared were sent to the state. Paul said they asked their questions to Stephanie Smith during the last meeting.

Peter said he feels like there should be a group pursuing possible funding leads.

Greg Tatro asked what the buyout figure is. Paul said \$424,000 has been spent so far buying the property, doing the title search, etc. That is the amount we have to pay back to the state if we cancel the buyout. We told them that is not realistic.

Greg asked, the people who own the house aren't getting paid that much? Paul said they are getting a portion of it. Mike said it has already been paid. Rosemary said they got \$360,000.

Paul said at the last meeting it was indicated that the buyout went down the regular buyout process, not a historic preservation avenue with other options. The explanation of how that happened was not clear.

Buzz Osgood said he is surprised the town wants to invest in something in the flood zone. Paul said we want someone else to invest the money. And we hope to move or elevate the building. Mike said he thinks we should just elevate it.

Greg said it will cost about \$35-40K to demolish it. Why shouldn't the state just move it for \$35-40K? It will cost a lot less than \$424K to move it. Mike said it would be cheaper to put a foundation under it than to move it. Charlie Gallanter said if we move it, it saves FEMA the demolition money. So they should give that money to us. They are going to get rid of the house one way or another. They have to hire a contractor. Mike said that contractor has already been paid for. Charlie said he doubts they have been paid before they have done the work. If the house is moved off the property, FEMA's job is done. Paul said that is a point we can raise with them to see if there is room there.

Adrienne moved and Peter seconded that the selectboard establish a Julian Scott House task force as an advisory body of the selectboard charged with investigating and pursuing alternatives to demolition of the Julian Scott FEMA buyout property. Adrienne suggested that John post about the task force on Front Porch Forum and social media and send an email to people who have come to meetings to talk about the topic. She thinks we can have as many people on it as want to be on it and we don't have to appoint them, but she could be wrong about that. Mike suggested that some people from outside Johnson could be on it. Adrienne agreed that she thinks they could be. She suggested that John investigate the rules. **Adrienne and Peter agreed to add to the motion that the committee would be established subject to applicable rules. The motion was passed.**

18. Committees and Task Forces

Adrienne said she thinks we should also create an old town hall task force. Paul said he would like to find out the rules about task forces versus committees. We should probably list all the things we need help with, such as the Julian Scott house, the old town hall and perhaps the college. It was agreed to table this item until the selectboard has more information about the rules regarding task forces.

19. Reduce Planning Commission Seats

Paul said the Planning Commission has vacant seats. John said he reached out to VLCT and they said the selectboard can pass a motion to reduce the size from 9 to 7 as long as planning commission members are appointed rather than elected. Paul said they are appointed.

Charlie said the planning commission is not opposed to this. Paul said Jesse Whitworth and he have discussed it. Charlie said we can always make it bigger again in the future.

Mike moved to reduce the size of the planning commission from a 9-member board to a 7-member board, Eben seconded and the motion was passed.

20. Noise Ordinance Waiver Request

Eben moved to approve the noise ordinance waiver request for Lamoille County Field Days on July 17 and 18, 2026, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

21. Traffic Speed Issues

Mike said recently he and his wife were headed towards Dollar General and there was almost a pileup on the road there. There have been numerous pileups since Dollar General was put up. He thinks it has to do with the speed limit. It is 50 in that area. People accelerate and then someone decides to go into Dollar General or the cannabis shop and they stop suddenly because there is oncoming traffic. When a speed study was done years ago, those businesses were not there. He

thinks we need to have a new speed study done. Possibly the speed limit should stay at 35 mph for longer, at least past Dollar General and the cannabis shop.

John said he got a note from someone on Hogback Road with concerns about speed on the road and people pulling in and out of Hogback Road. VTrans said they do not regulate speeds on state highways. That authority is granted by state statute to the Vermont Traffic Committee. The committee bases its decisions on engineering studies by VTrans. The committee accepts requests for speed studies from town governing bodies but not from individual citizens.

Mike said he thinks we need to look into that. Adrienne said she is in favor and she would like to see the speed limit reduced earlier on the east side of town as well.

Mike moved to request a traffic study on Route 15 on the east side of Johnson from the Nazarene Church westward, and on the west side of Johnson from West Settlement Road eastward to the village, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

22. Consider Tax Sale

Paul said attorney James Barlow sent his terms for the tax sale. There was concern at the last meeting that his rates are pretty high. The estimated cost is \$960 to \$1,140 per parcel, plus \$75 for a demand letter.

Mike said it also says his estimates are not guaranteed. If we go with this attorney, he feels we should strike a couple of the properties from the list because the amount we get will be almost a wash compared to the cost.

Rosemary suggested sending demand letters to all the delinquent taxpayers that are on the list. Then we can decide whether or not to take each property to tax sale if the owners do not pay. The board agreed to that.

Eben moved to approve the tax sale agreement with James Barlow, including the addendum regarding two village parcels, authorizing Rosemary and Paul to sign on behalf of the town, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.

23. Town of Johnson Resolution for Northern Border

John said on the original documents related to the Northern Border grant, Eben signed as chair. The board needs to approve a resolution authorizing Paul to be able to sign documents as chair.

Eben moved and Peter seconded to approve the resolution authorizing Paul to sign documents for the Northern Border grant and the motion was passed.

Buzz Osgood asked when they will get moving on the industrial park. Nothing is happening. Eben said the community and economic development specialist is working on bid documents with the engineer. Buzz asked if they are still working on cutting trees. John said Carl gave the contractor a 2-week extension to get the work done. Buzz said the contractor worked and left, then came back, then left again. Someone needs to wake them up. If they wait too long it will cost more.

24. Town and Village Shared Assets

Adrienne had compiled a list of shared town and village assets. The board reviewed the list and identified some items that are not actually shared. Adrienne said the point was to determine which things we want to keep sharing and which we do not want to keep sharing before we have a joint meeting with the village trustees.

Paul asked if there are items that board members want to own 100%. Eben said the municipal building. Sometimes when work is needed on the municipal building either the town or the village doesn't have capacity or the money. If the town owned the building and the village paid a fixed rent, then when the need for a project came up it would be more streamlined and we would have a better building for the public. He doesn't want this to cost the village more, just make things more streamlined. It makes more sense for the town to own the building. We have a buildings and grounds fund.

Mike said the problem would be that he thinks the trustees would want a large amount of money to buy them out. Eben suggested maybe that could come in the form of reduced rent for a 10-year period. He doesn't want it to disadvantage either side.

Adrienne asked, if the town applied for grants for construction of the building, how is it jointly owned? Eben and Rosemary explained that the town and village also sold property to fund construction of the building and the village kicked in some money. Scott said the town and village have also shared expenses for fixing the building. Paul asked, his point is that the village has investment in the building? Scott said yes. Rosemary said the village has paid for half of the maintenance.

Peter said in matters of divorce the parties are not necessarily in agreement on the value of the house and they are required to get two or three appraisals. Eben said he doesn't know if we have to have a full plan now for acquiring ownership of the building. We just have to decide if we are willing to have the conversation with the village. And if the village is not interested, that is okay. There are other ways to address building maintenance. Maybe we could form a reserve fund specifically for this building and the town and village would each contribute \$20,000 a year.

Board members agreed that they are interested in having a conversation with the village about municipal building ownership.

Eben said he thinks we should separate ownership of the garages. The village just spent \$2 million on a garage that we own half of. The board agreed we should also have that conversation.

Mike said the village would give the town the old mill house. Adrienne asked if we are going to let that building fall apart.

Diana Osborn asked if it is possible for some of these properties to be given to a third party. For example, could the selectboard throw their support behind formation of a Johnson community trust or foundation that would structure itself as a non-profit and would work in close coordination with the selectboard? Perhaps that group could receive something like the 180 acres of shared property and task force volunteers could work in conjunction with the conservation commission to put in recreation trails there. Instead of one entity buying the other out, is there an option to just give the shared property to another entity, like a Johnson community trust? A group like that could take over the Lowe Lecture Hall or the 180 acres of recreation property. That model is working in other towns. Examples are the Civic Standard in Hardwick or the Elmore Store. A community trust could allow forward progress.

Adrienne asked how other community trusts were formed. Diana said there is a different model every time. Community trusts seem to be making the biggest difference in changing our communities. They have nimbleness to make decisions quickly. They have a lot of freedom the selectboard doesn't have. She put in tens of hours on the recreation economy task force trying to get a grant and she abandoned that when she found the town wouldn't even act as a pass-through. Is that in the best interest of the town? A community trust would allow volunteers to actually do something instead of coming to meetings and being rejected.

Mike said he thinks a community trust is a good idea but he thinks the trustees would say that we can do whatever we want with our 90 acres of the property, but they want to get paid for theirs. He thinks they want to be paid in a tangible way, not just have trails put in. We could let them sell half of the property, but who decides which half goes to the town and which half goes to the village?

Scott said we have been sitting on that land for a long time. Let's sell it to private owners and get money for it if there is no plan for it. Eben said the selectboard asked the voters for authorization to sell it and were told no. Scott said we might want to ask again. Paul said the hope is that some of that property will be used for whatever comes out of the RERC process. We don't have an immediate plan for it but there is the potential for a plan in the relatively near future. He thinks Mike has a good point that the village would want to get paid. And some town residents would want the town to get paid.

Scott said there are people in Johnson struggling to find a place to live. We need house sites on higher ground. We are sitting on land and we are struggling with budgets.

Board members agreed they are open to discussion with the village about the property.

Lois said it is out of the floodplain and could become a new village center.

Eben said he would like to buy out the 20% village share of the backhoe. Mike agreed he would like to talk about that.

Mike said he thinks the town and village should continue to share an IT system. Eben said he thinks they should be separate. Paul said he thinks we should get the opinion of the trustees on that.

Eben suggested that the town should own the salt shed and the village should own the smokehouse. The town and village both need some, but not all, of the storage space in the cold storage building.

25. Legion Field Playground Equipment

Paul said Carl looked in the town report and saw that the recreation committee did not mention the effort to put in the playground being initiated by parents contributing. Their report suggests it was a committee project. There is a donor list showing who donated money to complete the project. It was a town project initiated by a committee, partially paid for by donations.

John said he looked at the equipment and did not see any cracking or anything that could harm kids. It is faded from the sun and could use a good cleaning. It seems still usable.

Peter asked where we are with the new playground money. Paul said we have the money.

Adrienne suggested that perhaps the playground equipment could be donated to a local childcare facility. Eben said he loves that idea. He thinks the last time we talked to our insurance company about it they said we should put it in the dumpster because of liability. Adrienne said a good point was made previously that it may not be safe because it is not commercial quality. Paul said we probably should check with our insurance company to see if there is a concern about liability with the equipment in its current condition. It seems to him that we could sell it in “as is” condition.

Mike brought up the question of what is wrong with the current equipment. Paul said his understanding is that the new equipment and the old equipment target different ages of kids. Adrienne said the old equipment is for toddlers. Paul asked if there is a reason to keep the old equipment. Adrienne said she thinks it would be a liability to keep it. Paul said it takes up more space if we keep it. Peter said it serves a purpose now until we have the new playground.

Paul suggested checking with our insurance company to see if it is okay for us to continue using the equipment in the immediate timeframe and we can think about the longer term plan. Adrienne thinks it would be nice to give it away or raise money for a good cause by selling it.

26. Gomo Survey

Peter said he thought the Gomo survey was on the agenda but it is not. He has a question for the board about that. It might need a motion. Paul said the board can't take action because it wasn't warned.

Peter said he had a conversation today with one of the surveyors who previously quoted a price. Peter had misunderstood his original proposal. He did not propose charging \$3,000 just to do research. He said that for \$2,500 and access to some maps he would go to the Gomo lot and identify the line that is currently in question.

John said he went to the site where the neighbors have started work that is possibly on town land and dropped off a letter and a business card. He asked the owners to reach out and if they have a survey of the property to please provide it. He hasn't heard from them.

Mike asked so we could survey one side for \$2,500? Peter said yes. Mike said he thinks we should get that done. Peter said he thinks the prices from the two surveyors to survey the entire property will be comparable – in the \$9-\$10K range. Paul said at the last meeting Peter was authorized to engage whoever was cheaper to survey the whole property as long as they would honor their original quotes. We can't change that tonight. Eben said he doesn't think the whole thing needs to be surveyed. Peter said on the other side of the property it appears that neighbors have done some clearing on our side of the pond. If he hears from the other surveyor, would it make sense for him to get a price from him for just that initial line and see who is cheaper? Paul said yes, he can get a price and we can put this on the next agenda to discuss whether we want to start by surveying just one line.

Peter said the conservation commission has been talking with the Green Mountain Club. The Green Mountain Club asked if we would entertain a 500 ft. right of way on either side of the Long Trail to preserve it. They would be willing to contribute \$5,000 for the cost of a survey if it includes that right of way. Paul said this will be on the next agenda.

27. Executive Session – Personnel Matters

Eben moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313 Section 3 for personnel matters, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed at 10:19. Rosemary and John were invited to remain.

The board consented out of executive session at 10:32.

Mike moved and Peter seconded to follow the attorney’s advice. The motion was passed.

28. Executive Session – Sheriff Contract Discussion Update

Eben moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313 Section 1(A) for a sheriff contract update, with Rosemary and John attending, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed at 10:34.

The board consented out of executive session at 10:39 with no action taken.

29. Executive Session – Contract Negotiations

Eben moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313 Section 1(A) to discuss contract negotiations, with Rosemary and John attending, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed at 10:41.

The board consented out of executive session at 10:56 with no action taken.

30. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:56.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths