

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2026

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

Others: John Sutherland, Rosemary Audibert, Lydia Putvain, Carl Rogers (remote), Diana Osborn, Beth Foy, Michael Patch, Howard Romero, Casey Romero, Charlie Gallanter, Duncan Hastings, Noel Dodge, Lois Frey, Doug Molde, Linda Molde, Mollie Flanigan, Scott Meyer, Jason Whitehill, Matt Reed, Jennifer Sargent, Tori Hellwig (remote), Eric Osgood, Morna Flaum, Charles Flaum, George Pearlman, Gordy Smith, Jeanne Engel, Steve Engel, Steve Smith, David Rugh

**Note:** All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

**1. Call to Order**

Paul called the meeting to order at 6:30.

**2. Consider Additions or Adjustments to Agenda**

Paul added an executive session for personnel.

**3. Public Comment**

Diana Osborn asked who to contact about a large section of buried Fidium cable that has been exposed due to erosion on Prospect Rock Road. Paul said she should call Fidium and let him know if she does not get a satisfactory answer.

**4. Selectboard Updates and/or Concerns**

Paul said David Williams was awarded an honorable mention for community service at the Marvin Awards. His service included 6 terms as village moderator, 11 terms on school boards, 14 years on the Board of Civil Authority, and 47 years as moderator of Johnson town meetings. Thanks and congratulations to David!

Paul said he spoke to Dave Bergh about meeting with him and the incoming VTSU president. It doesn't look like that will happen before Dave Bergh leaves, but it should happen in July.

Eben asked if the town graded the transfer station. John said he thinks so. Eben said he does not think we should be doing that under the agreement that is in place. He doesn't think it should become standard practice unless the agreement gets updated.

**5. Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of June 1, 2026. **Mike moved to approve the consent agenda, Adrienne seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

Rosemary said expenditures are at 73% of budget. That does not include funding the reserve funds. She noted that there are quite a few large invoices on the set of orders to be approved tonight. Overall she thinks we are in pretty good shape. Eben asked what she thinks the end of year surplus will be. Rosemary said she hopes it will be a couple hundred thousand dollars. The state still owes us for a couple of projects.

Rosemary said the library project got an anonymous donation of over \$400,000. They are still about \$70,000 short of the amount needed, based on figures she has.

Eben said we got more PILOT money than we were planning for this year. He asked if there have been conversations with legislators about what to expect next year. John said he will reach out to them.

Rosemary said a check we wrote was whitewashed, which means that the name and dollar amount on it were changed. That has been happening a lot lately to Union Bank customers. The bank has a Positive Pay program where we can upload invoices we pay with the dollar amounts and when a check comes in to be cashed, Union Bank can verify it. The bank did not cash the check that had been altered. Paul asked if there is anything the bank is suggesting that we do. Rosemary said they suggest the Positive Pay program and ACH filtering. There is no charge to the town for that. We are going to start using it.

Rosemary said when Tom Galinat was getting quotes for the server, Superior Communications came in and spent a couple of hours to find out what our server was and they are trying to charge the town for getting that information since we did not purchase a server from them. The bill is \$750. The board agreed that we should not pay the bill.

**7. Commemorate Rosemary Audibert**

Paul said Rosemary has worked for the town since April 1993. She will be retiring June 30 after serving the town for 43 years. This is her last selectboard meeting as town clerk and treasurer. There was a standing ovation for Rosemary. Paul read a proclamation designating June 15 as Rosemary Audibert Day and presented her with a certificate. There was another round of applause.

Eben asked if we need to pay Rosemary for time in her banks this fiscal year. Rosemary said it can be done in the next fiscal year.

Eben asked if we will be able to close out the fiscal year before Rosemary retires. Rosemary said they will try to do a check run on June 30.

Eben suggested that John work with employees to arrange for a gift and a party for Rosemary. Paul said his thought was that the town would coordinate with the village on that.

Paul asked how training is going. Are Lydia and Rosemary finding enough time to work together? Rosemary said they have been doing some training and will do some more this week and next week.

**8. Commemorate Rosemary Audibert**

Carl said he has made no progress on review of the first draft of the bidding and contract documents. He will start working on that soon.

The first reimbursement request to NBRC is ready. Mumley Engineering's new cost estimate is \$1.1 million over the amount we have available. Luke Willey from Mumley thinks the estimate is high, but it is unlikely that bids will come in close to the initial estimate. Carl will study the estimate to see if he sees anything that is obviously too high. He will look at things we could change to get the cost down. One possibility might be eliminating the road and infrastructure for Road B. The best bet right now seems to be to get the project out to bid fairly soon with a flexible schedule that could extend into next year. Then if none of the bids were acceptable, we would have time to reject all bids, make some changes, and go back out to bid in January. January is the optimal time to go out to bid. Luke's estimate is that it will take 60 to 90 days for completing the work. Our completion date is September 30, 2027.

The VOREC scoping study for connection between the rail trail and Main Street is likely to come up during the RERC planning. The selectboard might want to think about discussing that project.

Planning for the RERC Community workshop is underway. Carl intends to submit the completed self-assessment this Friday. Work on spreading word about the community workshop has begun. A few of the chairs of town groups have responded to the email Carl sent out and are interested in the topic. Carl heard about an idea for a grant application from RERC steering committee members and he worked on that with them. The community workshop for the RERC grant is on the evening of August 27 and all day on August 28. It will be held in Johnson at a location to be confirmed. The steering committee is working on arranging space at the university for it. The plan that comes out of the workshop should have a major impact on the town. Some of the recommendations in the plan will be town responsibilities. It would be good if the selectboard participated in the conversation. Members of the public who participate will be able to comment on the draft action plan

The town was granted \$6,500 from two different sources for a visioning project and there is a balance of \$164 left after expenses. Carl is asking if the selectboard would agree to spend the balance on refreshments for the RERC workshop.

The final inspection at Holmes Meadow was held June 11. The gate has been installed. The mulch pile on site is for mulching around plants on the site. Jessica from SLR provided a report after the inspection. In it she listed five punch list items for Boulder to address. Her report states that the first round of knotweed treatment was completed, which implies that there is another round coming. She noted that restoration work at the former town gravel pit has been completed.

Carl was contacted by someone from the VTSU Upward Bound office and he sent information to some town officials, including committee and board chairpeople. He advised the associate director from VTSU about a couple of projects that sounded good for university students to help with and sent him contact information for the appropriate chairpeople

Eben asked if there is any chance of asking NBRC if they can amend the grant amount. Carl said we can ask.

Eben asked if we are required to select the low bidder. Carl said no, but we have to state our criteria for evaluating the bids and show why we selected someone other than the low bidder based on those criteria

Eben said it seems smarter to him to shorten Road A than to eliminate Road B. Carl said Luke has mentioned several times possibly scratching Road B because we could come back to it later if the market is there for the size lots that would be along Road B. The advantage of completing Road A is that probably the most attractive lots will be the ones at the end of Road A. where the land is most level and some of the larger lots are located.

Carl suggested that he could work with Luke on possible cost savings and if the board thinks it would be helpful Luke could come to a meeting.

Peter said before things go too far with the work on Legion Field he would like to say that he has serious concerns about the location of the playground shown on the plan. It is basically next to the road. Some people speed on that road. Before we let things go too far, he suggests giving serious thought to a safe location for the playground.

Adrienne said when water was put in to the pizza oven the ground was badly ripped up near the pizza oven. She thinks we need to either put down topsoil and grass seed or make it into a path. It is somewhat of a tripping hazard now. Carl asked if it can be graded as part of grading work that will be done on Legion Field. Adrienne said that is supposed to happen at the end of the summer.

Beth Foy said she agrees about the playground location. It has been more than 10 years since the demand study for the industrial park was created, probably closer to 15 or even 20. Do we have an understanding of the demand? She questions cutting off the section for smaller businesses without having an understanding of the demand. Knowing about the demand should help with decisions. If we don't have information on the demand, are we shooting ourselves in the foot by not diversifying?

Mike Patch said Mumley is basically guessing with cost estimates. Until the contractors provide numbers, we don't know what the cost will be. Paul asked if he is suggesting that we get the RFP out and see what the bids are. Mike Patch said yes. The board is talking about cutting things from the project without knowing what the cost will actually be. He has concerns about Mumley dragging their feet. He thinks the selectboard needs to put the project out to bid now.

Duncan Hastings said he also has a lot of concerns about cutting out the lower lots on Road B. He suggested bid alternates that could be deducted. He agrees with Mike that we should put it out to bid and see what comes back and then make decisions. He doesn't know if Pat Ripley at LEDC has been consulted on the need for the park, but if not he should be.

Diana Osborn said she wonders about what might happen if the town decides not to develop the property because it becomes cost prohibitive. She read today about a farmer who donated a piece of land to a town and the project of using the land dragged on and in the end, despite the farmer's wishes, the land was sold for \$10 million for a data center. If the project comes through, what control does the selectboard have over who might be at the industrial park, and if it does not come through, how might the town dispose of the land and who might they give it or sell it to?

Eben said the selectboard talked about limitations in covenants and decided not to limit use of the industrial park lots. The board has never talked about what will happen if the project does not happen.

Eben said he agrees we should get out an RFP with deducts.

Mike Patch said once the project is started the town may need to finish it because, depending on the soil, it may be too unstable and there may be too much erosion if it is left unfinished.

Beth Foy said Holmes Meadow looks great.

Paul said he thinks we need to ask whether we can spend the \$164 in grant funds remaining as Carl suggested. He will reach out to ask about that.

**9. TNL Request for Road behind Library to Bandstand**

Howard Romero said a second entrance to Legion Field is needed. It is a safety issue. It is also a convenience issue for access to the bandstand, but we need a second way to get on and off the field if there is an emergency. The best way is to have a road extend from the end of the parking area to go left to the bandstand. It does not involve changing anything on the plans.

Paul asked if we really need a road or just access. Howard said not a year-round road. It would be nice to have it firm enough for an emergency vehicle. There is plenty of soil there from Holmes Meadow. We would probably want to mix in stone or broken rock.

Paul asked if Howard has a rough budget for this. Howard said no; he wanted approval of the notion first.

Adrienne asked if the directional area light shown on the plan interferes with the road. Others said the RFP did not include that light

Adrienne said she thinks we should hold off until the library project is completed.

**Eben moved and Mike second to conceptually accept the idea of a road going behind the library to the bandstand.**

Beth said there are village utilities that run through Legion Field. She suggested the town might want to make sure the village is on board with this concept. Howard described where he believes the power and water lines are – not where the road would go. Beth said she thinks it would be worth asking the village.

**The motion was passed.**

Eben asked if the library is okay with this. Howard said he has no idea.

Howard said the other curb cut on the west side of the field is often blocked by people parking in front of it. He asked if there could be signs saying “No parking between these signs.” Several times he has been unable to get onto the field because of people blocking the access. Paul said the board will take the request under advisement.

**10. LCPC Services Agreement Amendment**

Paul said at the last meeting we agreed to increase the amount in the Holmes Meadow agreement for administrative services. **Peter moved to authorize the chair to sign Amendment #3 to the Agreement for Administrative Services between the Town of Johnson and the Lamoille County Planning Commission, Eben seconded and the motion was passed with Mike opposed.**

**11. Johnson Skatepark**

John said he and Rosemary reviewed what is available for funding for the skatepark project. He reviewed the balances in different accounts. With the total amount available and the cost of the project, there is a funding deficit of \$13,726.16. Could the town provide some funding from the 2025-26 budget to bring that funding deficit down and perhaps consider a loan from the revolving loan fund for the remainder? We got a second extension from FEMA to December 31, 2026. An Act 250 permit will be issued by July 6 unless there are comments from the public.

Casey Romero said the contractor can't schedule the work until we have our Act 250 permit, but she thinks it would be best to accept the bid from the contractor now. Paul said last time the board agreed not to accept a bid until the money was squared away. John is suggesting that we spend \$8-10K from the current year budget and issue a loan from the revolving loan fund for the rest, which the skatepark committee would fundraise to pay back.

Eben asked if there is enough in the grant match reserve fund on top of the NBRC commitment. Rosemary said she does not know. She mentioned the buildings and ground reserve fund. Eben said it could come out of that fund. He thinks a \$10K loan to ourselves is too much headache for the office. Paul said the loan would only be \$3,700. Eben said that is a very small amount.

Adrienne asked if all our buildings that provide services to people are up to snuff. She is thinking about our priorities for spending on town properties like the food shelf.

Paul asked what the projected surplus is. Rosemary said probably \$100,000 after we take out the \$180K for reducing taxes.

**Peter moved to spend up to \$14,000 from the 2025-26 budget to complete the skatepark project, Mike seconded and the motion was passed with Eben and Adrienne opposed.**

Casey said she and John have a list of grants they are working on applying for. Do they need to come to the board for each grant application if they are no match grants? Paul said they can notify the board through John.

Eben suggested that at the next meeting the board can accept the bid from Catamount

## **12. Establish Tax Rate**

Eben said we won't set a tax rate tonight, but we need to select a loan rate and term for the bond so the tax rate can be estimated. He thinks we should use the 30-year Bond Bank term for estimating the tax rate. If the interest rate dropped from what it is now or if we found a better interest rate, our tax rate calculation would be wrong and we would have a surplus for voters to deal with on town meeting day.

John said he got a quote from USDA Rural Development of 4.75%. He got a quote from Union Bank of 5.50% for a 15-year term and 5.79% for 20 years. The Bond Bank rate is 4% for 20 years and 4.43% for 30 years.

**Eben moved to estimate next year's tax rate based on borrowing \$590,000 at a fixed rate of 4.43% for 30 years from the Vermont Bond Bank, which equates to \$45,379 per year in payments.** He noted that the payment in the first year would be less than that amount. John said we would get a construction loan from a local bank for payments during the project, then when the project was done we would borrow \$590K from the Bond Bank and use it to pay off the construction loan. **Peter seconded.** Paul asked, Eben is not suggesting that we commit tonight to borrowing from the Bond Bank, just that we use the Bond Bank schedule to estimate the tax rate? Eben said that is right. We will set the tax rate in July.

Rosemary asked if the interest on the line of credit we would get is part of the project cost. Eben said that is uncertain.

**The motion was passed.**

**13. Gomo Lot – Proposed Easement and Survey Contribution**

Mollie Flanigan of the Green Mountain Club said the GMC is asking for a trail easement for the existing Long Trail route through the Gomo Town Forest. They met with the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Commission unanimously supports this proposal. For the past 40 years, GMC has been working to legally protect the Long Trail route. When they started, they were seeking to protect over 80 miles of trail that was on private land. Today that is down to 4.5 miles. They are asking the town to consider a 1000 ft. wide trail right of way easement for the trail corridor through the Gomo Town Forest. All the easement terms are open for negotiation. The Conservation Commission is interested in formalizing how timber management and the parking lot/log landing would be used. They are also asking that the town consider giving GMC right of first refusal for the property if the town ever wanted to sell it. They would like to offer to cover the town's legal costs up to \$1,000 for granting these requests and they would also offer to contribute \$5,000 for the Gomo Town Forest property survey. GMC has worked with other towns in Vermont to protect the Long Trail in this way. They have gotten easements from Bolton, Proctor and the Village of Johnson.

Paul said the map showing the proposed easement shows the easement would be wider on one side of the trail than on the other, not 500 ft on either side. Mollie said yes, because the trail is close to the property boundary on one side so there is less than 500 ft on that side. Mike said he is not interested in a 1000 ft wide right of way. Eben said it is less than 1,000 ft.

Eben said he wants the board to know that he has been talking with Mollie for a few years, but not about this property. He doesn't see how he would financially benefit from giving his opinion on this, but he can recuse himself if anyone wants him to.

Mike Dunham asked why GMC doesn't just buy the land. Mike Patch said that is a good point. In the past, the town tried to sell that land and the taxpayers said no. Now the town is getting more lots that we will get nothing from. Why not sell the Gomo lot, the Pringle lot and other town land and just keep rights of way that allow taxpayers to walk on the land? Let's see if GMC will buy the property.

Adrienne asked to hear from the Conservation Commission. Lois Frey said the Conservation Commission did not rubber stamp this. They put a lot of time into it. They are stewards of land in the town. They endorse giving this easement. One thousand feet is the standard, but GMC could settle for less. The land is used. The Conservation Commission prunes apple trees and does brush hogging for wildlife. She would hate to see the town sell the land.

Duncan Hastings said 1000 ft seems like a lot. He thinks the town should keep the property. It is not costing us much and it would not add much to the tax rolls if we sold it. But he is not sure that the town can give a right of first refusal on it because there is a statutory requirement that if the town wants to sell the property, there is a period when citizens can request a public vote on the sale. He suggests that before giving a right of first refusal to GMC the town contact the town attorney. He is totally in favor of granting an easement, but at some point it may be that the voters will decide they no longer want the town to own this land and 1,000 ft is a pretty big encumbrance.

Scott Meyer said he is in favor of this. The easement seems big, but Johnson has historically been a restock town for Long Trail thru-hikers. This contributes to making Johnson a recreation economy.

Matt Reed said he is not a resident of the town but he has surveyed up against Long Trail easements. In some places GMC has not gotten a full easement of 500 ft on each side of the trail. The width of the easement depends on the slope and terrain. It is intended to protect views from the trail. He has seen parts of the trail where there is not a uniform 500 ft. from the center of the trail.

Mollie said the 500 ft on each side of the trail is the National Park Service standard. It is the average distance that a hiker can see during the time of year when leaves are off the trees. The width of easements varies and they are open to negotiating.

Mike Patch said he saw in the paper that we are looking for someone to log that lot. The price of wood is low now. If we don't get a good competitive bid we will pay someone to cut it in order to stay in the forestry program. Noel Dodge said the property is not in a state forestry program. It has a forest management plan and the bids for tree cutting are to complete that plan. Mike Patch asked, will it cost the taxpayers, or are we going to make money? Noel said we won't know until we open the bids.

Diana Osborn said she encourages the people of Johnson to look at the value of the easement as being for everyone, not just the town. This is one thing the Town of Johnson could offer to the greater world that benefits many people. She was at the Conservation Commission meeting where they were talking about logging. That will not happen where the Long Trail is. This is an opportunity to protect that corridor. The corridor won't even be a full 1,000 ft wide. She heartily endorses the proposal. There is zero drawback and enormous benefits.

Doug Molde said he is wondering what the current problem is with the GMC using the Gomo lot. He thinks the future of the Gomo lot is as a park. A 1000 ft easement means lost use of all that land. We have to balance the Long Trail's continuous nature against future benefit to the town. He would think since the easement would be giving away ownership of such a big piece of land, we probably would want to ask the voters if they want to let that go.

Mike asked what the problem is with the trail as it sits now. Mollie said this is more of a long-term effort. The nearest term issue is that they need the land to be legally protected in order to put investment into the trail – things like stone staircases or bridges. They can't justify spending grant or donor dollars if the trail is not legally protected. But they are not planning any trail projects in the near term.

Peter asked what the length of the Long Trail is and how much is left to be protected. Mollie said the trail is 272 miles long and there are 4.5 mi that still need protection. There is about a third of a mile of trail through the Gomo Forest. Peter said he would love to help make the trail 100% protected.

Paul asked about the total size of the easement. Mollie said the easement they are asking for would cover 22 acres of the total. Mike said that is \$60,000 worth of land. Adrienne said she would never want to sell the town forest so the potential sale price is zero in her mind. Mike said we would be giving up over 20 acres. Scott said it is not like the town would be signing over a piece of land that we can't use. A well-established club is maintaining a trail for people who are coming to this town to spend cash. If 1000 ft is too much, work with the GMC to narrow it down, but it is not like people in the town can't use it anymore. It is protected land. And the club is willing to spend money

maintaining it for everyone. He is not clear why this is such a giant hurdle, especially when we keep talking about recreation economy and we consider the money this brings into the region.

Paul asked if the board has authority to do this without going to the taxpayers. It seems more like a town meeting warning item to him. John said he reached out to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and was told that because this easement is for public access, approval at town meeting is not required. Paul said it still might be a good idea. Duncan said he would encourage contacting the town attorney to find out for sure if it requires public notice or a vote. If we were selling the property we would have to have a notice in the paper. Eben said we just went through this with the municipal attorney for the prime ag soil and deer wintering easements on town land. The attorney recommended a public hearing and 45 days notice. We did that for both those easements. Duncan said he doesn't see that this is any different. Eben agreed.

Mike Patch said when the town previously wanted to sell land, the taxpayers said no. They were adamant that if the land were ever sold they wanted to make the decision, not the selectboard

Adrienne asked Mollie if other towns that have granted easements held public hearings. Mollie said in the Town of Proctor their town attorney said Vermont statute required notice and a period when people could submit a petition to have the easement go to a town vote. Otherwise the selectboard would have the authority.

Molly recommended discussing terms first before the board makes a motion to grant the easement. Paul said we should also talk to the town attorney.

Mike Patch asked how GMC will feel about logging on the property. Paul asked, logging is not planned where the easement will be, correct? Mollie said that is right. Logging doesn't affect this. Trees can grow.

Paul said we will check with our attorney and invite GMC back to talk about terms. Mollie suggested that maybe she could come up with proposed terms to respond to. Paul said that would be great. Mollie asked if she should decrease the corridor width. Mike said he thinks it should be decreased considerably. Adrienne said she does not think it should be decreased. Paul said there seem to be diverse opinions on the board. Maybe a couple of options should be presented. He is in favor of the idea but he thinks maybe the easement width should be reduced somewhat. And he thinks he is in favor of citizen input. Peter said he is in support of the proposal. He doesn't want the size of the easement to kill the idea. Personally he is happy with the proposal as it stands.

Diana asked if the town might sell the property. Is that an option? Mike said he would be in favor of selling it. Peter said we are stewards of a piece of land that has great public benefit. He is not interested in the town selling it. He thinks we need to look beyond the price per acre and look at the public good. Mike said it would still provide a public good if GMC owned it.

#### ***14. Johnson Summer Blueberry Festival***

Paul said the Blueberry Festival has their own insurance. John said they are not going to have the boat race.

#### ***15. Committees/Task Forces for Julian Scott House and Old Town Hall***

Paul said the board voted at the last meeting to create a Julian Scott House task force. Last Friday he sent out to the board a draft press release, resolution and mission statement for that group. He got clarification from the town's attorney that there is no such thing as a task force under state

statute. It will really be a subcommittee but he suggests using the term “task force” for a subcommittee that we expect to be short-term.

Charlie Gallanter asked if the task force will be subject to open meeting law. Paul said yes. Charlie asked if the selectboard will enforce that. Paul said yes.

Paul said he put 5-9 for the number of committee members. His suggestion would be 5. Duncan suggested starting by appointing 5 members and if other people show up who want to be on the task force, those members can come and recommend that additional people be appointed. Paul noted that people who participate don't all have to be members.

Duncan suggested some small edits to wording in the resolution and the board agreed to them.

Paul suggested that either in the mission statement or in the resolution we could include that the committee would assess how this property ended up in the buyout program. It appears that it didn't go through the proper process. Doug said he agrees with adding that. He feels the town is giving away a lot of leverage if we don't look into how and why this happened. Peter said there is a short timeline. That kind of postmortem could be valuable, but he feels it should come at the end of the group's work so they are not bogged down spending precious time on that now.

Mike asked if the task force is limited to town residents. Paul said we didn't say in the resolution. Mike said it does refer to residents, implying residents of this community. He thinks it should be spelled out that anyone could be involved. He knows people who do not live in Johnson who would be interested.

Diana asked if membership on other committees is limited to town residents only. If we open this group up to everyone, is that consistent with policy on other groups? Doug said non-residents can be on the planning commission. Charlie Gallanter said it is in statute that committees can have non-resident members.

**Mike moved and Peter seconded to accept the press release, selectboard resolution, mission statement and operating guides for the Julian Scott House task force as amended tonight.**

Paul said the edits Duncan recommended will be made and the duties of the task force will be amended to include looking into the FEMA process. He will not show a final report due date but will say the first written report from the committee is due by the first meeting in November.

Scott said he supports trying to figure out why this happened but he doesn't think too much time should be spent on that. He thinks trying to find cash should be the primary task. Doug said he thinks we will get more help if we can say how the process was done wrong.

**The motion was passed.**

#### ***16. Public Works Garage Insulation RFP***

John said we received an MERP grant for the public works garage for items including smart thermostats and garage door sensors. The public works employees felt adding insulation was the best way to spend the grant money. He talked to Tori Hellwig at LCPC and they made some changes. He drafted an RFP for installing insulation in the walls and ceiling. **Eben moved to**

**approve the public works garage insulation RFP as presented, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.**

***17. Riverside School Abutting Property Quitclaim Deed***

John said he was approached by Jennifer Sargent and her surveyor. There is a piece of property on Hogback Road that used to be the site of the Riverside School. The town still owns that property. Jennifer Sargent owns some water frontage and the language is unclear about where the school property is. She would like to quitclaim the section of her property between Hogback Road and the river to the town to straighten out her deed.

Jennifer Sargent said her parents lived on Hogback Road and now the property has been deeded to her and her sister. There is a strip of riverbank property that she is not going to use but the town or VTrans may need it because of flooding and erosion. Surveyor Matt Reed and Jennifer Sargent talked about the history of the school and the large covered bridge that used to be in the area. Matt said he feels there is no way to know where the boundary line of the school property is, due to lack of records. Jennifer said the school was moved but the former school property was never sold to anyone else. Matt said Jennifer can't do anything with the part of her property on the riverbank because of state river corridor rules. If the property is privately owned, a future owner could potentially hold up a FEMA project. If it is town property, the town can decide what will be done on it, such as placing rip-rap. Giving the property to the town gets Jennifer out of any liability and gives the town more flexibility.

Mike said he doesn't see any downside. Eben asked if there are any brownfield concerns, like soil contamination. Matt Reed said he thinks if there is any contamination, the state would have created it. Eben asked, there is nothing he has uncovered? Matt said no.

**Mike moved and Eben seconded to accept the quitclaim deed for the Sargent property and to pay the associated attorney fees.** Jennifer said she will have her lawyer draw up the deed and present it to the town attorney. **The motion was passed.**

***18. Review Bids for Cemetery Monument Maintenance***

Paul said we talked to two companies about cemetery maintenance and got one bid from Hill House Estates LLC, who previously did work for the town. Our purchasing policy suggests getting more than one bid. We tried but we were not successful.

Mike asked how many stones they will work on. John said we had \$7500 in the budget. Mike said he would like to know the per-stone cost. The proposal is for \$7300.

**Eben moved and Peter seconded to accept the proposal for cemetery monument maintenance from the only responding bidder.**

Eben asked if we have spent any cemetery maintenance money this year. Rosemary said we spent it all this year. So this work will start after June 30.

**The motion was passed with Mike opposed.**

***19. Sheriff Contract for Patrol and 911***

**Eben moved to accept the contract with the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department for communications in the amount of \$77,864 for July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Eben moved and Peter seconded to accept the patrol agreement with the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department for the period of July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$589,265.**

Mike said he feels the bid is high. Eben said the patrol cost is calculated on a per capita basis, not based on call volume. Communications is half per capita and half based on the grand list. Mike said he feels we should ask LCSD to sharpen their pencil rather than just rubber stamping their budget every year. Eben said he has had quite a few conversations with them. They sent their budget to us in November. Because of our population, Johnson is responsible for a little over 40% of the patrol budget, Hyde Park pays a little under 40% and Wolcott pays about 20%.

Paul said a good point has been made before that any LCSD equipment we have paid for ought to come to the town if the patrol agreement dissolves. Eben said there is language regarding that in the agreement.

Diana Osborn said she was part of a selectboard appointed committee in 2020 looking at law enforcement expenses. The committee was disbanded when the chair quit. Minutes were kept but they were removed from the website when the site changed. She felt at the time that the selectboard was negligent in managing this large amount of money. There is inadequate oversight and minimal community input. She feels this issue has to be studied. She has taken steps to help make that happen. She served on the committee. She has brought it up at town meeting. She feels the selectboard is not serving the public well by just spending half a million dollars every year. The committee found that the Town of Johnson was disproportionately funding LCSD. We haven't studied appropriately whether we are getting enough in return. She strongly encourages the board not to spend this amount without further study and analysis. She thinks we should involve the public in spending this money. The amount we spend is inappropriately large for what we are getting.

Paul asked, when the committee found that Johnson was disproportionately funding LCSD, how was it disproportionate? Diana said Johnson, Wolcott and Hyde Park have a shared contract for patrol, each paying a per capita amount. But LCSD serves all of Lamoille County. The State Police actually have primary responsibility for law enforcement. If we didn't have a contract with LCSD, we would be served by the State Police. It is in our best interest to have a contract with the sheriff's department. State Police are stretched thin and often do not have fast response times. She is not saying we should cancel the contract and go with the State Police. But LCSD is serving the whole county and Johnson is their main funding source. What Johnson is paying is a huge fraction of their budget.

Mike Patch said about 20 years ago we considered having our own police service but it was not feasible. Their budget is high but there is no other choice.

Adrienne said the intention was to keep the minutes of that committee on the website. She will try to get them on the website.

Eben said Diana and Duncan were on the committee and the final report from their last meeting made it to the selectboard at the time. Diana said it was not a report of the committee because the chair refused to accept the work the committee had done and filed a report on his own. Her point is that the selectboard dropped the ball. This is a huge amount of money.

Mike Patch said in the past the three towns owned the land and building and cars of the LCSD. Since then it has changed and LCSD took over ownership.

Paul said he doesn't see that we have room for negotiation or investigation with this contract in front of us. Eben said the public doesn't see the amount of communication the selectboard has with the sheriff's department. There is a lot of pressure on LCSD regarding cost increases. Roger Marcoux has typically stayed around 3% and that has been painful for LCSD.

Diana said she has no concerns about the quality of dispatch and the communications contract. She supports the sheriff's department and sympathizes with their staffing issues, but she is concerned about the town spending this much to support the patrol contract.

Mike said he will vote no on principle because he thinks we can do better. He doesn't know how, but he hopes we can.

Diana said if there is a lot of information made available to the selectboard that the public is not aware of, that needs to be brought forth.

Peter asked if we have another option before July 1. Mike said no. Adrienne said she wants to vote no on this on principle as well because she also thinks we can do better. Paul said the contract starts July 1. He is not sure what point Mike and Adrienne are trying to make if we do not have another option. Peter said he will vote yes on this motion but he wants to learn more before he votes yes again.

**The motion was passed with Mike and Adrienne opposed.**

**20. *Review Forestry RFP Bids***

Paul said we received one bid for forestry services for the Gomo lot harvest, from Mike Green (Green Forestry Service.) He proposes that he would receive 20% of stumpage and the Town of Johnson would receive 80%. Eben said that is for the forester, not the logger. John said we will get stumpage for what we sell and the forester will get 20% of that. Noel Dodge said the RFP is for forestry services, not for hiring a logger. The forester said nothing in his proposal about who he will hire to do the cutting. We don't know what we will get out of it.

Paul asked, when they sell the logs, what does the logger get? Noel said it depends on trucking and what the logs sell for. Mike Patch said the logger's percentage comes from the 80% town share. We will be lucky to get 30%.

Noel said this is not a timber stand that is worth a lot. In order to grow good trees for the future we need to remove some trees now. This was never going to be much of a money maker. The Conservation Commission was hoping to break even by getting the road fixed and getting some timber removed.

Adrienne said before the RFP went out the Conservation Commission brought a bid from a logger that Mike Green had found. Noel said that was the only one he found. Eben said if the numbers from that bid still applied, we would definitely lose money on this.

Paul said he thinks we need to look into this further. Eben said it is town property and part of our task is taking care of it. If we are going to lose money on logging it, he prefers to ask the town to approve budgeting to have the work done. The public will benefit from the road being repaired. He is not comfortable with signing the agreement. He would prefer to pause until we have more information. He needs to know how much money we would be losing.

Lois said Mike Green had loggers lined up who have seen what is available. Because the work was delayed they are on another job but they probably would be available. Mike Green told her that he does not have any idea whether the town will get any money or not.

Paul suggested holding off until we know more.

Diana said it seems like the Conservation Commission has done all the hard work. They met each request that was put before them. The selectboard are the stewards of public land. This is a land management project to increase the value of the land. The fact that the town has to pay the forester a percentage means that he will work harder to increase his percentage. The town will still get more than the forester does. She is confused about how this requires more thought than the \$589,000 expense for LCSD patrol.

Paul said we don't know how much money we will lose. Mike said we wouldn't lose anything if we go with the logger who previously submitted a bid and said what percentage he would give us. We will make money, but not much. Diana said asking how much money we would be losing is like asking how much money we are losing when we pay someone to mow our lawns. Maintenance has a cost. Mike said, as he mentioned before, the last time he sold hardwood he got half the profit. The logger was offering us a third of the profit.

Eben asked who has to pay to repair the road to access the property. Noel said the contractor. Mike said if the logger is taking care of the road we are getting a deal. He thinks getting a third of the profit and getting the road fixed is fine and we should go with that logger. Paul said we don't have that previous bid from the logger in front of us now.

Paul asked, the information that was brought to the selectboard previously was directly from the logger and not from Mike Green? Lois said Mike Green put it together. Paul asked if Mike Green's 20% was in that proposal somewhere. Lois said yes.

Adrienne said she doesn't know what other information we can obtain. Eben said the original problem was that the project wasn't bid. We have a sealed bid now.

**Adrienne moved and Peter seconded to accept the proposal from Green Forestry Service for 20% of stumpage for administration of sale and 80% to the Town of Johnson.**

Paul asked for an explanation of where the logger's money comes from. Mike Patch said 20% goes to the forester who marks the trees. When the wood is sold, we get some of the remaining 80% and the logger gets some. The town won't get 80%.

Paul said this doesn't make reference to the previous proposed contract with the logger. Noel said the forester could come up with another logger who would do it at a different price.

Charlie Gallanter said whatever the wood is sold for is 100%. Twenty percent of that goes to the forester. The other 80% gets divided up, but we don't know how. The town will get at least zero. It won't cost the town anything. The trucker will get a portion. The logger will get some. The town spends nothing and the forest will be thinned and the gravel road will be repaired.

Jason said it will be a huge thing if we get the road improved to Class 4 standards for MRPG. That is how he would put it in the RFP. Noel said he doesn't think that standard is in the RFP.

Mike said he is not comfortable voting yes on this because he doesn't see all the details in writing.

**The motion failed with Mike, Eben and Paul opposed.**

Paul said he wants more detail about the percentage the logger gets.

**21. *Joint Meeting Follow Up***

The board reviewed a tentative agenda for the joint meeting with the village trustees on June 24. Eben suggested asking the village if they want to take part in Rosemary's retirement party. The board agreed to the agenda.

**22. *Lamoille FiberNet Resolution***

**Eben moved and Adrienne seconded to accept the resolution renewing participation in Lamoille FiberNet and appointing representatives and to authorizing the selectboard chair to sign it.**

Charlie asked why Fidium's rates went up 30%. Paul said when Fidium came in they offered an introductory rate for a certain period. Lamoille FiberNet has nothing to say about rates. That is up to Fidium. They charge us the same rates they charge throughout Vermont.

**The motion was passed.**

**23. *Executive Session – Personnel Matters***

**Eben moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313 Section 3 for personnel matters, inviting John, Jason and Rosemary to remain, Peter seconded and the motion was passed at 9:59.**

Jason left the executive session at 10:18. The board consented out of executive session at 10:31.

**Mike moved to accept Jason Whitehill's resignation letter, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.**

The board directed John and Paul to post the public works supervisor position.

**24. *Executive Session – Discussion with Town Attorney***

**Adrienne moved to enter executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313 Section 1 (F) for discussion with the town attorney, with John and David Rugh attending, Eben seconded and the motion was passed at 10:32.** The board came out of executive session at 10:43 with no action taken.

**25. *Executive Session – Personnel Matters***

**Eben moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313 Section 3 for personnel matters, Peter seconded and the motion was passed at 10:44.** The board came out of executive session at 10:53 with no action taken.

**26. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*

UNAPPROVED