JOHNSON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, JULY 20, 2026

Present: Selectboard members: Mike Dunham, Peter Hammond, Adrienne Parker, Eben Patch, Paul Warden
Others: John Sutherland, Lydia Putvain, Carl Rogers, Diana Osborn, Doug Molde, Lois Frey, Charles Flaum, Mike Patch, Kelly Vandorn, Christina Cruze, Callista Freeman, Forest Donat-Keys, Katherine Keys, Asa Hunt, Travis Yaratz, Harry Rempert, Tori Rempert

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***
   John said Tasha Wallis has a conflict tonight, so she asked to be on the August 3 agenda instead of tonight's.
3. ***Public Comment and Public Announcements***
   Doug Molde said the rail trail committee just set up five bike racks in town. He described the locations. He and Charles Flaum showed the board the new map and information display that will be put on the trailhead building. There will be an accompanying display with information on events in town that will be changed out every season. Doug said the kiosk at the trailhead will have a regional map on one side and information on Johnson businesses and a college-centric map on the back.

   Mike Patch said he knows the town has applications coming in for a new road foreman. He feels the road foreman should known how to do grading, have OSHA 10 certification, be able to run all the equipment the town has, have skills necessary for safety programs, and understand computers. He thinks it would be helpful for the town to get some inexpensive cameras and put them up on town property to protect town interests. He thinks ideally the foreman would be able to check that things are being done correctly on the industrial park project and be able to read blueprints and build something based on them. He asked if the industrial park project is going out to bid soon. He thinks contractors will be hungry for projects this winter. We may be missing a window if we do not get going on that. We need to find out what is stopping it.
4. ***Selectboard Updates and/or Concerns***
   No members of the selectboard had updates or concerns.
5. ***Consent Agenda***
   The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of July 6 and July 9, 2026 and the appointment of Dan Noyes to the Julian Scott house task force. **Eben moved to approve the consent agenda with the addition of retroactive approval of Tuesday Night Live expenses, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.**
6. ***Clerk and Treasurer's Report: Warrants, Licenses and Any Action Items***
   Lydia said the 2023 audit has been completed. She passed around a copy of the audit report and said she will also put it on the website. This week she is sending attorney Jim Barlow updated figures for the tax sale. We got reimbursed almost $350,000 for the Vermont Electric Co-op stormwater project. We still have another reimbursement coming for that project. LCPC sent a reimbursement for the Holmes Meadow project. Lydia thinks this is the fourth payment for that project.

Lydia said the Plot Cemetery CD is coming up for renewal. The best rate she can find is 3.15% for 7 months at Community Bank. We don't use those funds often so she thinks we could put them in another CD. Board members agreed to that. Lydia said she and John have discussed investing some of the general fund once we get the first installment of taxes.

Lydia said she reached out to the state Division of Property Valuation and Review about some buyout properties we own now, but did not own as of April 1. Tax bills were sent to the owner as of April 1. PVR recommended that the town go through the procedure of applying for abatement on the taxes. Taxes were billed to the prior owner, but the properties belong to the town now. Eben said we will still have to pay the education tax. He asked if Lydia can check whether the properties are eligible for the state grant payment of taxes.

Lydia said at the last meeting Eben asked about the financial impact of paying employees for their accrued CTO. The cost of buying everyone out would be just under $28,000.

7. ***CEDS Discussion***

Carl said work is underway to ensure that the Mumley draft bid documents and contract meet NBRC requirements. NBRC also requires that we meet the requirements of our town procurement policy.

Carl said the procurement policy says that bids will be opened by the selectboard. For the industrial park bidding, he suggests that the select board waive that and let Mumley and staff conduct the bid opening. Reviewing the bids will be time consuming, as unit prices for roughly 25 different items have to be bid on.

Eben moved and Peter seconded to authorize CEDS Carl Rogers and town administrator John Sutherland to open bids for the industrial park project prior to a selectboard meeting. Carl said Mumley should be there in case there are questions about technical specifications. **The motion was passed.**

Eben asked about the timeline for bids going out. Carl said he is hoping to have bidding documents for the board to approve at the August 3 meeting.

Carl said Paul just signed the semi-annual report to NRBC, which replaces the quarterly report we were formerly doing. NBRC switched to semi-annual reporting.

Mike Patch asked if there is any idea when the project will start after the town gets bids. Are the prints done? Carl said yes. Mike Patch asked if they have been checked for elevations, pipes, etc. by someone certified for building roads. Carl said he doesn't know. When he started last summer, the town had a group that was meeting about this project. LCPC was reviewing documents and pointed out some discrepancies in elevation with the stormwater pond, as he recalls. He assumes all that has been taken care of. Mike Patch asked if certain contractors will be invited to bid or if there will be a public notice. Carl said the opportunity to bid has to be publicly posted. It will be in the newspaper. We will probably mail invitations to bid directly to contractors we think would be interested, as well as putting something on Front Porch Forum.

Mike Patch asked if we can try to bid this in winter. Carl said the thought is to go to bid now and if the bids are not acceptable they could all be rejected and we could go out to bid again in the winter. The idea is that we could allow the work to start and/or finish next year, so contractors have as many options as possible. Mike Patch said he feels winter is the best time to go out to bid to get the best prices. Carl said the intention is to allow the contractor to start this season. They could work during the winter.

Mike Patch asked if contractors will be bidding in two parts, with one road as an option. Eben said they will be bidding on Road A with Road B as an add alternate. Mike Patch asked, if the number was good, someone could do the whole thing? Board member said yes.

Mike Patch asked if the town signed an agreement that materials used will all be US made or if materials can be bought anywhere. Carl said because this is funded with federal money, BABA applies.

Mike Patch asked who is doing the paperwork. Carl said the town. Mumley will do field inspection work. Mike said if we get a good road foreman we won't have to hire someone to keep track of the paperwork.

Carl said he learned that no report back to VCF is needed for the $1500 visioning project grant.

Carl has submitted a request for reimbursement for the welcome center project to the Department of Buildings and General Services, the grantor.

Carl said the RERC steering committee has a meeting this Thursday. They will finalize the itinerary for the community tour on August 27. They will discuss this with the EPA planning assistance team in an August 6 phone call. Carl invites all selectboard members to attend the RERC community meetings and to encourage friends and neighbors to do so. If people choose to attend, they have the right to review and comment on the various drafts of the action plan that come out of the community workshop.

Carl contacted the state to ask about the deadline for the grant-funded stone step project. They confirmed that the deadline is December 1 of this year. We are waiting for the Act 250 permit. Carl submitted the application and got back a Notice of Initial Filing. The actual work to be done to install the steps will take about 3 days. We can get someone lined up as soon as we have the Act 250 permit. The work could be done in November.

John said Casey Romero advised him that there was about $1700 left of the $3,300 VCF grant for the skatepark. She has plans to use it for some smaller items and supplies.

Carl said his written report said that there doesn't appear to be progress on Legion Field, but he later learned that the electric line had been installed to the bandstand.

8. Industrial Park Update

Mike said in light of the situation at the college, where there is infrastructure already in place, he thinks that is probably where we should look. He would just as soon sell the industrial park lot for housing lots or to a developer and use the college for industrial purposes.

Paul asked, wouldn't the problem with that be that we would have to pay back the grant? Mike said yes, but look at the money we are going to have to borrow and spend, which will be a burden on taxes. Would it be cheaper just to get out of it now?

Peter said he thinks that is a valid question but he doesn't see how the college meets the same needs as a light industrial park. Mike said there is all that land there with water, power, and roads already in place. There is a lot of space there that can be used. Peter said it can be used if the college is willing to have it used that way.

Mike acknowledged that it might be difficult to stop the industrial park project at this point.

Paul said if we sold the industrial park lot to a developer, we would either have to sell it cheap because the developer would have to put in the infrastructure, or we would have to put in the infrastructure anyway. He asked what Mike is suggesting about how we should move forward. Mike said that is the dilemma. He doesn't have a plan. He is having second thoughts about the project.

Eben said he is not in favor of stopping the project. Peter said he thinks we have gone too far to stop.

9. *Events Committee*

Paul said Adrienne had put together an inventory of Johnson events. One of them is the Johnson Jubilee. Currently, volunteers are not willing to step up to help with that, so it is in danger of not occurring.

Eben said he agrees that the Jubilee is a great event. Originally, businesses ran the event, so the businesses supported the town, but the town supported the businesses. We got a similar request a few years for an Easter egg hunt. The business used to support the event and there was a request for it to be a town event. It has since taken on a life of its own. It seems like private events are being shouldered by the town. Mike said Eben has a good point. It is not the town's responsibility to run the Jubilee. Eben said that is not the point he is making.

Paul said he is in favor of an events committee. He thinks if we had a committee that focused on one major event every season to engage people in town and bring people to the town, that would benefit the town. It is not the town's responsibility, but it may be something we want to do.

Mike said the main responsibilities of the selectboard are roads and records. Where does this end?

Peter said one benefit of having a committee is having people to work on things. An events committee would potentially absorb some committees that are already running events. Paul said he thinks we need to talk about that. We need to bring in the committee chairs. An example Adrienne gave was when two committees combined to form Johnson EATS. It made sense for those committees, but he is not sure that is the case for all the other committees that run events. He is not sure combining Green Up Day with Tuesday Night Live makes sense. Peter said it would depend on buy-in from groups that may not buy in.

Peter said we have already been taking responsibility for town events. We would not be departing from that by forming an events committee. He agrees with Paul about the advantages of an events committee. He thinks we need to be looking at a different way of doing this. Focusing on roads and records sounds like something from the 1950s. He thinks we have moved beyond that type of role.

Eben said he wants to form an events committee but not have it absorb other committees. Perhaps we could give it a budget capped at $2,000. It would make it easier for events like the Blueberry Festival if a town committee was running them.

Diana Osborn asked how some of these things ended up as town events. She is getting the sense that selectboard members feel community groups burdened the selectboard with having to take over events that they started. She doesn't feel that is accurate. She doesn't feel that groups created events and forced the town to take them over. It might be worth investigating how the town got involved in things like the Jubilee.

Paul said he doesn't feel that way. Kyle Nuse has run the Jubilee herself for a couple of years. No one is forcing it on the selectboard. Now it is up to the board to consider whether we want to take it on. Mike said some things have been started by other people and then people say it is the town's fault if they do not continue. He wants to be sure the town is insulated from blame. Eben said it is more than just events. Every year there is more and more pressure on the selectboard for the town to support everything. He is concerned about uncontrolled government growth.

Lois Frey said the town used to have an events and communications committee. One member of the selectboard was the chair. The committee didn't meet regularly. It met informally and used email. It ran the Winter Carnival and put out information about Tuesday Night Live. Various groups such as Johnson Works, the United Church and the Conservation Commission got involved in pieces of each activity. One thing that came up recently was the Pond Keepers event at the college. The Conservation Commission was asked at the last minute to be part of it because the event needed insurance. Agreeing to do that meant that someone from the Conservation Commission had to be there throughout the event. Paul noted that our insurance company has made it clear that for an event to be covered by insurance it is not enough for a town committee to put its name on the event and be present. The committee has to be involved in planning the event all the way through. Lois said she thinks that should be communicated to all committees and the community

Mike suggested tabling this item until Adrienne is here to discuss it, since she was the proponent of the idea. The board agreed to that.

10. Library Update

Kelly Vandorn said the most recent accounting from Rosemary says that the library is $66,373 short on funds needed for the library project. However, that was before the last $60,000 donation that was received. Between that and various other small donations, the amount needed has been covered. However, in this current economic climate, the library board keeps running into things costing more than they were planning. So while as of now everything is covered, that could change.

Mike said if we had a bid on the job, that should be the price. Kelly said that has been the case for the most part, but we paid Tatro more than the bid amount. And there have been a couple of times when Brian Raulinaitis has said something will cost more than we thought it would. Mike said that is not our problem. If someone bids a price, they had better stick to that price. Kelly said she doesn't really have an answer to that. The library board has been trying to negotiate. Eben said the Tatro bill did not come back higher than the bid. We didn't want a hydrant put in, but one was put in. He thinks the hydrant should not have been charged to the library. Mike said we got a rebate from Tatro.

Kelly said the library board had a meeting a couple of weeks ago with the Department of Libraries. DOL said some of their projects have come in under budget, so there is extra grant funding they are setting aside for our project. They don't have a number yet on how much that will be. Because the costs are covered and there is extra money coming from the Department of Libraries, the library trustees would like to put the cupola and the granite steps back into the project. Kelly doesn't have the cost for those items but she feels confident they will have money to do it. Board members said they thought the cupola was originally estimated at $40,000 and the granite steps at about $25,000. Kelly said small donations keep coming in and the library board has other plans for more fundraising. She is asking the board to consider putting the granite steps and the cupola back in the project. There also may be money coming from Rep. Balint's office.

Mike said he supported the granite steps from the very beginning and he still does, but not the cupola. He thinks the library board needs to save that money because there are likely to be some other cost overruns and there should be a buffer. He doesn't see any use for the cupola. He feels it is a waste of money.

Eben said he remembers it had been discussed that we might still have the old granite steps. Do they still exist? Peter said there was some granite at the back of the construction site. He thinks some of it is broken. Eben said the old steps wouldn't be there. They would be at the old library site or stored somewhere. Mike said he thinks it is likely that they got damaged.

Eben asked if the Department of Libraries indicated how much more grant funding there would be. Kelly said Cathy Delneo told her that not only is there some unused grant money, but also a staff member left, so their salary is available. She said our part of the unspent salary funds would be at least $30,000. She doesn't know about the amount of grant money. The Department of Libraries is very committed to seeing that none the money goes back to the treasury.

Eben said we have approved one change order for the project. Have there been any others? Kelly said not that she knows of.

Eben said he is conceptually in favor of adding back the cupola and the granite steps, but he thinks we need numbers before we approve that. The board could authorize putting out an RFP for those things.

Peter asked if this is something that needs to be decided now or if we can wait until we get firmer numbers. Kelly said it would be helpful to decide on the granite steps, because the steps have not been put in yet. The shingles are on the roof and it is watertight. The cupola could be added next summer. She thinks we could save money if we did not pour cement steps and then tear them out. Peter asked if it is possible that we will have a firmer understanding of how much money might be available for the steps and cupola before August 3. Kelly said she doesn't know when the Department of Libraries will get back to the library board, but she was told that our share of the unspent salary funds will be $30,000. She thinks the total amount available will be significantly more than that. The Department of Libraries suggested that they will be able to reimburse any donation money that was spent on construction as long as the funds hold out. The library board paid Back Forty Builders using donations. If the Department of Libraries reimburses that, the library can have donation money to spend on things not covered by the grant, like shelving.

Mike moved to authorize spending an amount not to exceed $25,000 for granite steps for the library. The motion was not seconded.

Eben said according to our procurement policy we need at least two sealed bids if the cost is over $10K. But it is a change order, so maybe the procurement policy doesn't apply.

Paul said he thinks both the cupola and the granite steps are great ideas, but he is reluctant to authorize adding them in when we do not have a firm price and money already available.

Kelly said the library board has demonstrated that they can raise money. Eben said the library has done a phenomenal job with fundraising. He agrees with Paul. He suggested a motion to put out an RFP to get a price. An RFP and sealed bids are required if the cost is over $10K.

Peter asked why we need an RFP vs. a change order. Eben said we have to request the change order price. Paul said he feels we need to follow the procurement policy and put out an RFP.

Eben asked if the library board can ask the contractor not to poor concrete steps in the next month. Kelly said they can ask.

Paul asked if the Department of Libraries is aware that the library board is asking to add granite steps and a cupola to the project. Kelly said yes.

Mike said the general contractor has a certain amount of money set aside for putting in concrete steps. That amount could be subtracted from the $25,000 so the steps may not cost the full $25,000.

Paul said we need to put out an RFP and see what commitment we can get from the Department of Libraries.

Mike said we made an agreement that included putting in concrete steps. We need to find out what the amount is for those steps and get it back. Paul asked John to talk to Brian Raulinaitis about that.

11. Sinclair Road Extension

John said the Sinclair Road extension is a continuation of Sinclair Road. When the assessor and he went up there they saw new construction there. The concern is that the condition of the road is starting to deteriorate. If the hill were crowned, water would run off. There was a request that we grade the road this year.

Paul asked the Sinclair Road extension residents who were present to tell the board more about their concerns. A resident said the road has deteriorated due to all the recent rain. He reached out last year and the road foreman said that there was no money in the budget for Class 4 road maintenance. Another resident said the road has been graded once since he has lived there. Currently it is not possible for two vehicles to pass each other on the road.

Eben asked if any of those present live at the end of the Class 4 section. Some people said that they do. Eben said some "No trespassing" signs were put up on the highway. He would like that not to happen again. Those present said that the property belongs to someone who was not present.

Eben said he drove up the road tonight. It is not in the best shape, but it is passable. He doesn't think a single grading will fix all the problems. The road is too narrow to start with and it doesn't have ditches for water to get into. However we are required to address gully erosion over 12 inches on Class 4 highways. If the highway department decided using the grader on that road was the best approach, he would not have an issue with that.

A resident said she is concerned that emergency vehicles won't be able to get up the road. Service vehicles are having difficulty.

A resident said she talked to an ATV club member who was using Sinclair Road and asked him if the club maintains the road. He said he thought they were supposed to. Eben said it is the town’s highway. But he believes the Green Mountain ATV club has put more money into our Class 4 highways than the town has.

A resident asked the difference between Class 4 roads and private roads. Eben said private roads are not town roads and they are not maintained by the town. Class 4 roads belong to the town. They do not need to be maintained by the town unless there is one foot of gully erosion.

Mike said the town does give Class 4 residents gravel to use on the roads. A resident said the last time residents asked for it they were told no gravel was available for them.

Another resident said people who live on the road pay property taxes. Part of their taxes go to road maintenance. A lot of people live on that road.

Eben said there is a process for residents to make it possible for the road to be reclassified as a Class 3 road, if that is what all residents want. A resident said he thinks ideally people on the road would like to move in that direction. Eighteen people live there, including seven children under the age of 10. If the road can't be reclassified as a Class 3 Road, can we compromise on some form of maintenance? Another resident said the rains have changed and it is amazing what they are doing to the road.

Diana Osborn said according to the Class 4 road policy, the road foreman is supposed to do an annual inspection of Class 4 roads and come up with a maintenance plan. This problem with Class 4 roads is a historical problem that has been worsening. It used to be that the road foreman would come and grade Prospect Rock Road, where she lives. It has a lot of traffic. She feels we need to have a policy that evaluates usage, not just whether there is 12 inches of erosion. There used to be more maintenance done to Class 4 roads.

Peter said it sounds like this is a bigger discussion than we can have tonight, but why can't we just get a grader up there and make some improvements?

Paul said the residents need to be aware that they bought property on a Class 4 Road and Class 4 roads are not necessarily maintained. The town owns the road but we do not plow it in the winter and we do not necessarily grade it. That is the town policy that is in existence. He doesn't see any big problem with the road crew running a grader up there when they are in the area, but he thinks we need to think longer and harder on the big picture.

Eben said he thinks the highway crew should use whatever piece of equipment is best for the situation in their professional opinion. They need a place to turn the equipment around. He does not agree that the town needs to grade the road every year, because it is a Class 4 highway. The biggest difference between a Class 4 highway and a private road is that anyone can drive down a Class 4 highway. If it is a private road, residents can control who drives down it.

A resident said they pay full taxes but don't get full service. Eben said everyone who pays taxes pays based on the appraised value of their property. If the appraisers deem that a property is worth less because it is on a Class 4 highway, the property owner actually pays less than someone on a Class 2 highway.

A resident said he is a father of three kids. It is stressful to think that an emergency vehicle couldn't make it up the road. He feels it is time for the town to step in and take responsibility. Another resident asked if board members think a fire truck or ambulance could make it up the road.

Eben said he is not a firefighter or ambulance driver. There is gully erosion that he thinks the town should address. When that happens, people on the road need to call the town and say they have a gully erosion problem.

Paul said he thinks board members all appreciate where the residents are coming from. They handled the situation right by bringing it to John, who brought it to the selectboard. But he takes exception to the statement that the town should take responsibility. It is not our responsibility. The residents made a decision to buy property on a Class 4 road. But we should fix gully erosion in the way the highway crew feels is best. The board consensus is that the road crew should work with John to figure out an appropriate solution to fix gully erosion on the road. John said he will talk to Ryan about it.

12. Community Trust

Paul noted that Adrienne was a proponent of the community trust idea but she is not here. John said this is an idea that Diana Osborn brought up at a previous selectboard meeting. She is here tonight to explain it further.

Diana Osborn said she submitted a letter to the selectboard and John about her idea. Several people in the community reached out with questions about it after she mentioned it at a previous meeting. Many of the towns that have been doing flood recovery projects similar to our Reimagine Johnson efforts have used the community trust model to develop things like housing or stores. The Elmore store is an example. Another more land-oriented project was the Wolcott Town Forest. A community trust bought it and developed a mountain biking trail network on it. She hears at many meetings that there is a desire for the selectboard to return to focusing on policy, planning and the budget. She respects the work the selectboard does trying to manage so many projects and committees. Another model might help the board be efficient and involve as many community members as possible. What a community trust might look like here has yet to be decided. As few as three people could be a founding board to establish a 501(c)(3). It would then be up to them to decide how limited they wanted their efforts to be. They would not work for the selectboard. The selectboard would not have to worry about another group asking them for things. But at town meeting the town might decide to budget some money for the community trust. The selectboard's relationship to the community trust would be similar to its relationship with the Vermont Studio Center, Vermont State University or businesses in town. They would not come to the board to ask for approval of details.

Eben said the agenda says “discuss and vote” for this item. He doesn't know what the board would vote on. Diana said she is highly concerned that this be something people on people are on board with. She would suggest that the board take action to support it in concept and say that if community members would like to go forward with it, they would not stand in the way. She has no firm numbers or firm project to present, but those are not needed. Nothing would need to change for the selectboard. She just needs to know the selectboard would not stand in the way and would support the efforts of the trust.

Mike said he thinks it is a great idea. Eben said he does not know what it would mean to stand in the way of the efforts.

Diana said the Preservation Trust of Vermont has a link to a page called “What is a Community Trust?” She included that in her letter to the board to answer some questions. One idea she had was that the community trust might be able to assist the Historical Society with their building, events and collections. Maybe then the Historical Society would have expanded capacity to tackle things like the Julian Scott house and the Lowe Lecture Hall. She doesn't think the selectboard wants to run those buildings. Maybe the town could sell them to the community trust for a dollar and the community trust could take on ownership and rehabilitation and run events there. The selectboard would lose control but would not have to make decisions. Those items would be taken off their plate. The only action she requests is an endorsement of the concept.

Mike said what interest him the most is the idea that the town might make money. Diana said there is money out there. She did research looking into grants for the recreation economy task force. The money is there and yet there is something getting in the way of projects happening. One way to grease the wheel would be for the community trust to get funds to buy a building that is a burden to the selectboard and develop it the way community trusts developed the Elmore Store or the Civic Standard in Hardwick. One town started a community trust to make a little housing development because they had identified that they needed more affordable housing. If there were a Johnson community housing development trust they could potentially take over the industrial park project. It will be up to the people involved what they want to focus on. Maybe they could provide recreation on the 180 acres of town/village property or manage the town forests.

Mike said a problem he sees is that people hate to release control. He has no problem with it if it is better for the community. He feels it would be better because the people on the trust would be passionate.

Peter said we had some conversations around a year ago with the college about possibilities there. It was clear that town government was not interested in some of those possibilities. In great frustration, he looked into forming a community trust. A community trust multiplies resources. What the town as an entity can do is finite. By creating something like this, a whole suite of things become possible that probably could never happen if small town government had to do it. He is very excited about the possibility.

Eben said he likes the concept. He suggested that maybe Diana should come back with a structured plan. He doesn't know how to make a motion about not standing in a private entity’s way.

Diana said she has had a hard time getting over that the town wasn't willing to handle a $2,000 pass-through grant. Selectboard members said the town can't do everything. This is a way not to have to do that. The trade-off is that the selectboard may not know the details.

Paul said he likes the idea. He thinks the selectboard could say they endorse the concept. He doesn't think they can say they won't stand in the way of the trust. What if the members of the trust wanted to do something immoral or unethical?

The consensus of the board was that they endorsed the concept

Eben suggested working with Discover Johnson. Diana said the problem is that their plate is full. They are already spread thin and asking them to take on a building might be too much.

13. Lowe Lecture Hall / Old Town Hall Task Force

Mike said this item connects to the community trust item. He thinks we could go ahead with creating a task force. If we do, the people involved need to know that this might eventually fall under the purview of a community trust. John said the task force could act as an intermediate between the town and the community trust.

Diana said her dream would be to turn Lowe Lecture Hall into a community center. But she doesn't know if that idea would be shared by other founding members of a community trust.

Eben said he loves the idea of a task force. Back when we acquired the Lowe Lecture Hall it seemed what we were talking about was more like the Legion Field hearings we did. Could we get a grant for a planner to facilitate community conversation, in order to structure the task force a little? Peter said he thinks there is money available through the Preservation Trust to help with that.

Paul asked if we are forming a task force to decide what to do with the building or if we are going to get community input and the task force’s mission will come out of that. John said one responsibility of the task force could be to get community input. Eben said he would rather see community meetings first and then have a task force come out of that. Peter said the task force may need to refine ideas that come out of the community meetings. He thinks it is a good idea to start with community conversation.

Paul said it seems like there is consensus that we should look for grant money for a planning process.

14. Public Works Insulation Bids

John said we got no bids for insulating the town garage. He would like to put the project back out to bid. The board agreed to that

15. Discussion of Future Bid Opening Process

Paul said we have talked about not opening bids in selectboard meetings for efficiency. The idea would be to authorize John to open them along with a witness and then bring results to the board, after addressing any questions that come up. The board agreed to update the procurement policy to allow this.

16. RERC Grant Proposal Update

John said the RERC grant proposal was submitted on time.

17. Munro Brook Request

John said this right of way request was mentioned previously at a joint meeting with the trustees. Munro Brook has a piece of property off French Hill. He would like to have a sugaring operation there and he would like access to the property across the food shelf area of the town/village property. He would also like to subdivide part of his property and that right of way could possibly become access to a subdivided lot.

Paul said the village previously said that they would be willing to provide a right of way for the market price.

Mike asked, why not find a way for the food shelf to take over the ownership of that building from the town and village? Paul said he thinks that is not a bad idea. The building needs attention. Peter said his understanding is that that the food shelf group is coming to the next meeting. Paul said that is correct.

Eben said he feels this request provides no good to the general public. Its sets a precedent. We are talking about a right of way for the Long Trail on another piece of property. That is a trail with well documented use that any member of the public can access. This is for access to private property. He doesn't see that it serves the general public good. Mike said he does not either. Peter said it potentially complicates discussions about dividing the property between the town and village. Paul asked if the mill house is part of the 180-acre parcel. John said yes. Paul said there are brownfields on the property too. There are a lot of complications with a right of way through there.

Mike moved to table discussion of the right of way request from Munro Brook, Peter seconded and the motion was passed.

Paul asked what we are tabling it for. What is the next step? Mike suggested we should decide what we are going to do with the food shelf first.

18. On-Call Pay

Eben said he learned that the employee filling in for the public works foreman was not receiving pay for being on call. **Eben moved to retroactively pay 8 weeks of on-call pay to the stand-in public works foreman.**

Mike said this should be brought forth using the established union process. **Peter seconded.** Paul said the union contract says that if you stand in for the foreman you get the same pay as the foreman. Eben said weekly on-call pay is in the contract. He doesn't know if Ryan did not receive it because he did not mark it down or because of an accounting error, but it is in the contract.

Mike asked for the dollar amount is. Eben said $1000.

The motion was passed with Mike opposed.

Mike said he feels employees should rotate who is on call. Eben said he can ask if Ryan and the other employees want to rotate.

19. Update Personnel Policy

The board reviewed the draft updated personnel policy John had developed. Paul suggested changing some wording to clarify that the town clerk reports to the town administrator and the town treasurer reports to the selectboard. The board agreed to that.

Paul asked for clarification on the statement that accrued leave cannot exceed 6 weeks and may be used for parental and family leave. Does the limit apply only to parental and family leave? John said he thinks it is for all leave. He will take a look at the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Mike said he thinks employees should not use sick leave for parental and family leave. Paul said we don't have sick time; we have CTO. Mike said he thinks there should be designated sick time.

John said Susan gave him a list of employees' accumulated time. Only one person is accumulating sick time currently.

Paul said Lydia said the amount to buy out everyone's CTO time would be $28,000. He asked if we are going to look seriously at making changes to the CTO banks. One suggestion was to limit the amount employees can carry over into the sick banks. Another was to call one of the sick banks "short-term disability" and the other "long-term disability."

Eben noted that library employees are not town employees, but he believes the library uses the town personnel policy as their own. It might be a good idea to let them know about changes that we make. They don't have to accept our version.

Paul described one possibility he had thought of for modifying the way the banks work. The maximum CTO carryover amount would be 1 times the annual accrued hours. Any excess hours above the maximum CTO carryover amount would be converted to dollars rather than hours at the employee's current rate and put into a bank. Employees would bank dollars rather than hours. He would also consider giving the employee a choice of having extra CTO hours paid out at 50% at the end of the year or having them put into the sick bank. He thinks there should be a maximum accrual of CTO during the year. Anything above that would be lost. Payout on separation would be 100% of the hours in the bank. We could think about tracking pay rates when the time was saved and pay out the time at that rate, but he thinks it would be more trouble than it was worth. The short-term disability bank would have dollars not hours. The maximum carryover at the end of the fiscal year would be the dollar equivalent of 480 hours. Any excess dollar amount would be rolled into the long-term disability bank as dollars. Payout on separation would be 25%.

Eben said he doesn't think we need three banks. Another possibility is just to buy short-term and long-term disability insurance. The maximum amount that can be carried over into the long-term bank is one year's pay. If we continue to use that bank, we should be aware every year of the potential payout if someone is disabled and budget for it.

Mike said he thinks we need to look into disability insurance. He thinks excess hours over the amount of CTO that can be accrued should be forfeited and employees should get no payout on separation. He said he won't approve an updated personnel policy until we look into disability insurance. Paul said buying out the current sick banks and purchasing insurance is another option. Eben suggested that if we got rid of the banks, then at the end of the year we could buy back 2 weeks and let 1 week roll over.

Paul said he will send out the ideas he wrote up.

Eben asked if John could work with Lydia and ask her to get quotes on short-term and long-term disability insurance.

20. Executive Session – Public Works Supervisor Candidates / Town Administrator's Evaluation

<u>Eben moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313 Section 3 to review public works supervisor applicant resumes and for employee evaluation, inviting John to remain, Peter seconded and the motion was passed at 9:05.</u> The board consented out of executive session at 9:50.

<u>Eben moved to retroactively pay John Sutherland his pay increase back to 6 months after hire, based on a positive 6-month review per John's acceptance letter, Mike seconded and the motion was passed.</u>

21. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths