

JOHNSON SELECTBOARD/VILLAGE TRUSTEE JOINT MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2014

**Present:**

Selectboard Members: Kathy Black, Nat Kinney, Doug Molde, Eric Osgood, Howard Romero

Village Trustees: Ellis O'Hear, Chris Parker, George Pearlman, Walter Pomroy, Gordon Smith

Others: Duncan Hastings (Manager), Rosemary Audibert (Clerk)

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

**1. *Call to Order***

Eric called the selectboard to order and Gordy called the village trustees to order at 6:50.

**2. *Review of Wage and Salary Comparisons***

Duncan said Eric had asked him to do a wage comparison this year. He used two sources – the VLCT wage and salary survey and the municipal electric survey. Rosemary's position is more complex than that of many other treasurers – more like VLCT's Finance Director category. He chose that as the most similar category. Bookkeeper seemed the closest category for Jan, Ann, and Susan. That yields a higher wage than Assistant Clerk, but their jobs are more complex than most assistant clerks' for the same reason Rosemary's job is more complex than most treasurer's jobs – because of the work associated with running the electric department. There wasn't a Community Economic Development Coordinator category. Duncan thinks Planning Director is the closest fit for Lea, based on his knowledge of what Planning Directors around the state do. For the most part, our wages are relatively close to average wages, though we are above in some categories and below in some.

Eric said what is a bit troubling to him, particular when comparing to the municipal electric survey, is how underpaid it would appear Duncan, Rosemary, and Lea are. Have we lost ground since the last survey? The others he feels are very competitively paid. Duncan said last time this was done he, Rosemary, and Lea were all given a bump. He feels he is okay where he is. He also gets a village vehicle as part of his compensation. Eric said if every time we do a survey we find we need to give a bump that would indicate that the annual cost of living increases aren't keeping up.

Duncan said he is comfortable where he is. However, from a financial standpoint, he would be better off retiring right now because he has put in the maximum number of years and his retirement income will not increase any more unless his base salary goes up. If at some point instead of the car a car allowance were added to his salary that would raise his income and give him a higher retirement benefit. But he is not asking for that now. He is probably within 3 years of retiring.

Gordy said he feels village and town employees are well compensated with a good benefit package. He would like to agree on the same cost of living increase for all.

Walter asked if any employees are paying more for the new health insurance. Rosemary said they are paying 8% of their premiums. They didn't pay that before. Duncan said he doesn't think anyone is worse off than before. For those who picked a high deductible plan, we are paying the difference between the platinum and silver high deductible plans. That is more than

we were contributing last year. He thinks everyone is actually paying less overall because they are now contributing less or nothing at all to health savings accounts.

The board reviewed a letter sent by an employee regarding compensation.

**Walter moved to give all joint town/village employees a 2% cost of living salary increase, seconded by Chris. Kathy moved to give all joint town/village employees a 2% cost of living salary increase, and the motion was seconded.** Eric pointed out that we will probably want to match this increase for other employees. Walter and Doug discussed a shift in the form of compensation for Duncan and agreed that would be a restructuring and not an increase. Walter said he thinks that could be done at any time. It was noted that only the village pays for Duncan's car. Nat asked if it is just Duncan who uses the car. Do we need a car for other employees? Duncan said Tim used it to go to training. He tries to get employees to use it for meter reading, but they don't use it much. The only ones who use it much are the listers, but that is only during a limited time of year. Eric asked, so there wouldn't be much value in a shared town/village car? Duncan said no. Duncan said if he no longer had the use of the car he would hope to be compensated the federal mileage rate for use of his personal car for work. He said he sometimes uses the village car for town business. He thinks at some point there was talk of the town contributing \$500 for the car. Since the village pays for the car, the trustees can discuss what to do with it at their next meeting. **The selectboard and trustee motions were passed.**

Duncan asked if board members wanted to respond to the employee's letter. Walter said he responded to it with his motion. Eric said it should be shared with employees that the salary increase is over the cost of living increase. The salary survey information should also be shared to show them they are well compensated. It was agreed that a letter from both chairs should be sent to the employee with thanks for the letter and information about average wages. Chris said we have a fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers as well as a responsibility to our employees. Eric agreed. He said our main purpose in being here is not to provide jobs.

***3. Review of Allocation of Time to Town/Village for Shared Employees***

Duncan said he would suggest changes in time allocation for himself, Ann, and Jan. He is currently 30% town/70% village and he believes he should be 40% town/60% village. Jan's and Ann's positions have been 50-50 and he thinks they should be 60% town/40% village.

Nat asked if there have ever been actual time studies done. Duncan said no. At the time the current allocation of his time was set, there were a lot of village projects. That's not the case now and hasn't been over the past year. He doesn't see a lot of large village projects in the near future. Kathy asked what has shifted in Ann's and Jan's jobs. Duncan said he doesn't think anything has shifted; we just haven't looked at how their time is allocated in a long time.

Duncan said he when he was first hired, his split was 60% village/40% town, then it was changed to 70% village/30% town. Doug asked what Ann does for the village and what she does for the town. Duncan said she collects taxes and does accounts payable for both, but the town has a larger tax base. She also does dog licenses, which is a town function. Jan does all recordings and town payroll and is Rosemary's assistant.

**Walter moved to change the allocation of time for Duncan, Ann, and Jan as recommended, Chris seconded, and the motion was passed.**

**Nat moved to change the allocation of time for Duncan, Ann, and Jan as recommended, Howard seconded, and the motion was passed.**

**4. Shared Equipment**

Duncan reviewed what had been discussed recently with both boards – the idea that the town will buy a mower that will be fitted to the village's Kubota tractor, then a mutually agreeable rental arrangement will be worked out allowing the town to use the tractor. The village would also use the new side mount mower.

Nat asked if the town and village share any other equipment. Duncan said the backhoe is shared 80% town/20% village. Steve Towne recently did a quick calculation and said the time each uses it is coming out close to that. Nat asked if there have been any conflicts. Duncan said he wouldn't say there are never conflicts, but a reasonable way of handling them has been developed. Employees bring any issues to their own supervisors, then the supervisors discuss the issues with each other.

George suggested that at the end of the year we should look at the hours the tractor has been used by the town and by the village and the town can pay rent and maintenance costs accordingly. Gordy asked if the town provides the labor to maintain the backhoe. Duncan said whoever uses it fuels it up and greases it. Generally the town fixes it, but village employees may fix small things if they are using it. Eric asked, if we buy new tires for the backhoe, is the cost split 80-20? Duncan said we were supposed to come up with a more formal maintenance agreement, but that hasn't been done. However, the backhoe is still under warranty. Duncan said he could come up with a basic rental rate for the tractor and divide cost of major maintenance items according to use. There was general consensus that would be the way to proceed.

**5. Merging of Town/Village Plans**

Duncan said the Planning Commission has requested that the boards give thought to a combined town and village plan for efficient use of their time and energy, because there is a lot of similarity between the town and village plans. Walter asked, if the village agrees to a joint plan, does it cede all control to the town, or does approval of the plan require a vote of both boards? In concept, he loves the idea, but he is concerned about what happens to the village's control.

Chris asked how board members feel and how their constituencies might feel about combining the town and village. Howard said he is for it. Wouldn't it be easier for the village just to concentrate on utilities? Gordy and George said there is not enough in the village electric budget to pay for the employees who would still be needed and whose time is now paid for partly from the general budget and partly from the electric budget. Duncan said he doesn't see any significant value in a merger because it would not eliminate the need for any employees, equipment, etc. The town and village have largely merged from a functional standpoint anyway. Board members agreed it would probably lead to tax savings for village residents and would hit town residents harder.

Duncan suggested that he research Walter's question about village control and come back with an answer before the boards decide on a joint town/village plan. The Planning Commission is already starting on the process of updates to the town plan, so it would be nice to decide within the next month or two. Doug said he thinks it would be nice to do away with the jurisdictional boundaries between the town and village. That would solve the problem of village administrative costs for zoning. Eric asked, wasn't there some conflict between the town and

village plans regarding sewer districts? Duncan said if we had made an Act 250 application for the Jewett parcel, there were conflicts between the wording of town and village plans that would have been problematic. George said we have always been successful getting grants because income is so low in the village. Would combining town and village plans make getting grants harder? Duncan said he doesn't think a combined plan would make a difference as far as grants. Doug said it would make a difference for planning money. Duncan agreed. For planning money, such as the grant we recently applied for and didn't get, we were able to ask for more because the town and village were applying together. Eric said it is up to the village to decide whether to have a combined town and village plan, so the village can come back to this question.

**6. *Proposal for Form-Based Code Process***

At the Planning Commission's request, the selectboard is considering putting money into its budget to investigate form-based zoning. But they feel it can work primarily in the village. They don't want to put money in their budget to look into it if the concept is dead before it starts with the village. The selectboard wants to know where the village stands on form-based zoning.

Gordy said one reason he was against it before was because he thought it was intended to work against one particular project. But he is in favor of having a consultant come in and present the idea to voters and letting the voters decide. He has heard from some people who would like the Planning Commission to consider more than just one consultant. Chris said the trustees feel they are driven by their constituency. He thinks that if it were the consensus of the constituency to support form-based zoning the trustees would support it. Walter said he thinks zoning would be more likely to pass in the village than in the town. Howard said he doesn't know of anyone else other than Paul Dreher who does this. Duncan said we can put out an RFP and see if we get more than one response. Walter asked what we will do if the selectboard doesn't put this in their budget. People will want to know what we are going to do about zoning. Eric said he is pretty confident the selectboard will approve it. Doug said he thinks the difficulty will be that there will be quite a few proponents of zoning in the village and less understanding of why it would be required in the town. He sees a hybrid system with form-based zoning in the village and a more typical form of zoning in the town.

**7. *Municipal Office Roof Replacement***

Duncan said there are a couple of ways we could bid roof replacement. We could put out an RFP and get proposals from contractors or we could develop a detailed bid specification that would include means and methods. He is okay doing either, but his belief is that if we have a well-written bid spec all contractors are bidding on, that provides the greatest degree of control over cost. However, he doesn't have the technical wherewithal to create such a bid spec. Do the boards want to hire someone to do that? Kathy asked how much that would cost. Duncan said a consultant would typically charge \$40/hr and the work would probably take 20-30 hours.

Duncan said there has been a 50-50 town/village split in building costs, but he doesn't think use of the building is split 50-50. That is something we need to think about.

Kathy asked if Duncan thinks the cost of hiring a consultant to write a bid spec would be more than regained by reducing the cost of the roof replacement project. Duncan said he does. Board members agreed he should hire a consultant to write a bid spec for roof replacement. Eric asked if the spec would come back to the boards. Duncan said he would work closely with the consultant, then he assumes the bid spec would be given to the boards before putting it out to bid.

Eric said there has been discussion about swapping the Masonic temple and municipal building clocks. Any thoughts about that? George said he thinks it would be a big job. Eric said Brad said it would not be too big. Eric said we don't own the temple and it is questionable whether we own the tower or not. Duncan said we know we own the clock. Doug said he is opposed to swapping clocks. (*Chris left at 8:11.*)

**8. Mill House Paint**

Duncan said convicts can't paint a building with lead paint. Last time they were here they swabbed the building, it turned pink, and they said they couldn't paint it. There is not much paint left on the building. Both boards voted against covering it with vinyl 2 years ago. Kathy asked, can't we get it painted by a professional? Duncan said we can get a price on removal of lead-based paint and painting. We might be able to get someone to remove the old paint and then have prisoners paint it. George said he thinks it might be cheaper to replace the clapboards. Kathy said we don't even know how much money we are talking about. Duncan said he thinks it is worth finding out how much it would cost to properly and legally remove the old paint. Gordy suggested maybe the person hired to write the roof replacement bid spec could look into cost. Nat said it looks like we need a price on replacing the clapboards and on removing the paint.

**9. Skating Rink Legion Field**

The trustees decided to check with the fire department and see if they are willing to flood the rink. Last year the village crew did it, but given the weather conditions this year the trustees decided to see if it could be done the way the fire department used to do it, by making snow berms and then flooding it. Kathy said she thinks providing the rink is a great thing the town can do. Nat said Heather from the Rec Committee has been getting calls asking when the rink will be there. He said having the sides last year was much nicer. Kathy agreed. The sides hold water through a thaw, so it can refreeze afterwards. Nat said it creates a nicer surface.

**10. Other Business**

Doug said he thinks the Conservation and Planning Commissions and the Rec Committee ought to be having conversations about overall recreation in the community – for instance, river access and trails. All should get on the same page and divide up responsibilities. Both boards ought to encourage them to communicate and decide who will work on what.

**11. Adjourn – Village Trustees**

**It was moved and seconded by the village trustees to adjourn at 8:21 and the motion was passed.**

**12. Liquor License Approval**

**Kathy moved and Doug seconded to approve a liquor license for Chris Ferguson and Allison Tafuri of Downtown Management, LLC and a change of DBA from The Hub Pizzeria and Pub to Downtown Pizzeria and Pub and the motion was passed.**

**13. Adjourn – Selectboard**

**It was moved and seconded by the selectboard to adjourn at 8:26 and the motion was passed.**