

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN
MONDAY, JULY 21, 2020

Present:

Trustees: Scott Meyer, Brian Raulinaitis, Gordon Smith, Bob Sweetser, Phil Wilson

Others: Meredith Dolan,

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order*

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:01.

2. *Alternative Black Lives Matter Flag Proposal*

Gordy said the village has received an offer from a private property owner to install a flagpole on his property on Main Street to fly the Black Lives Matter flag as an alternative to flying Black Lives Matter flags on every other Main Street utility pool. Last Monday the trustee board voted 3-2 to replace half the American flags on Main Street with Black Lives Matter flags. After that Bob Hoag called and, in order to diffuse the tension and save the community, offered to put \$500 toward installation of a flagpole on his property at the corner of Main Street and Railroad Street. He does not want to see the community further divided. That same day many people called Gordy opposing taking down American flags. He feels something this magnitude should have a widespread community discussion and vote. There is a movement to put Blue Lives Matter flags on all the lamp posts. That will be discussed at the next trustee board meeting. Another citizen wants a special meeting for a vote to remove Black Lives Matter flags. Gordy's question is: when will this all end? It could have a negative impact on people of color. There will be two new trustees in August. Gordy hopes this divisive issue will be solved before then. This social movement has consumed much time from the trustees and the selectboard. He got a lot of phone calls from veterans who want American flags to stay and also say that they respect Black lives. He wants to keep the American flags flying. He respects all people. People of color deserve the same rights and privileges as others. About 95% of the calls he got were in favor of keeping the American flags in place. He and Scott have discussed how we can find common ground. He has two suggestions. One is a motion not to fly the Black Lives Matter flags pending further discussion. He would also support a motion that the village and town form a citizen committee on racial justice. He feels we should not allow 10 to 15 people to dictate how the town will look without input from everyone.

Scott said he is pretty passionate about this subject. He thinks it is a human rights issue. He got a lot of feedback about the decision to fly Black Lives Matter flags. He has noticed that we are starting to categorize and name people without knowing the full intent of the person. That has him alarmed. At last Monday's meeting he was quite clear that he did not want to divide this community. He was worried about backlash and a divide. That was brushed off by a lot of people. His father and brother are veterans. His brother-in-law was a part-time sheriff and his cousin is a retired New York City cop.

He reached out to his brother to see how he would feel about an American flag being lowered respectfully for a Black Lives Matter flag as he suggested last Monday. Scott read the flag

code and learned a lot. There are ways to mitigate how we would put up Black Lives Matter flags on Main Street. We have flags on Main Street that should be taken down due to their condition according to the flag code. His brother went to Iraq as a medic. His comment to Scott on alternating American and Black Lives Matter flags was that it would be one of the more emotional things he has seen in a long time. He thought it would be a thing of joy if he had seen something like that. He fought with people of color and he felt his work would be complete with that kind of symbolism. He is conservative and slightly religious with a well-balanced approach to life. He is also the father of a Filipino daughter who has seen nothing but racism since she moved to this country. He lives in a slightly conservative town in Ohio. The Black Lives Matter movement came to that town. Scott's brother gave the advice to put it on pause and get everybody in the room – people who really want this to happen and people who really don't – to learn from each other, and to have people of color in the room for the conversation. There is also a huge push to defund police departments and Scott's brother's advice was to have them as part of the conversation. After everyone in his brother's town came to a conclusion on how the Black Lives Matter movement would be dealt with in their Ohio town, town officials, the mayor, fire department, police department, clergy, etc. marched through town in unison to try to get change moving in the right direction. Everyone's voice was heard and they came to the conclusion that it was worth the effort. The need to involve the police department was made very real during the parade. White supremacists came to town and threatened people. Without the police department being fully in knowledge of what was happening they may have been put more at risk.

Scott honors his brother's advice. He has spoken with a lot of people in the Johnson community who really want this to happen. He is part of that. He also spoke with people who were passionate about their need to be heard. It is not that they are racist. Their inaction may enable racism. But for them to be called racist because they differ in opinion on approach is shameful. Does he draw the line at some opinions? Yes, but for folks just trying to figure this out we need to pay attention. Last Monday some board members were asking for more thought. He may have been caught up with what he thought was right but he wants to hear from everyone. It is a community decision. The people he spoke to who were against the decision to fly the Black Lives Matter flag didn't have hatred in their hearts. They believe that all people deserve the same footing. They just wanted a different approach. A lot are afraid to speak up. They are nervous they will be called out unfairly. Last night Eric Osgood put out a request for a town racial justice committee because during a selectboard or trustee board meeting we can't give everyone a fair shake. Time is limited and business has to go on. There is not sufficient time to hear everyone out. In the conversation Scott heard last night, everyone threw things in the way of that idea to not make it happen. He noticed there was good discussion between people who did and didn't want it to happen. That was the community trying to wrestle out differences of opinion. When there is hardship in the community, like COVID-19, the community comes together. We had a diverse group of people working on form based code and they came up with something that worked. Everyone was heard. He was frustrated listening to Eric's idea fizzle out. Are building shapes and styles more important than someone else's life? His heart and soul are still supporting his friends and co-workers of color, his niece, and everyone who has been down the road of racism.

Bob said he thinks Scott is on the right track. Let's see if we can take this flag business out of the hands of town and village officers so we don't divide the town and the village. These people need a fair shake and he hopes he lives long enough to see it. Where the flag is going is not a government issue, it is a personal issue. He has had many phone calls from veterans and he is a veteran. The American flag stands for all of us, no matter what color. We all fought for it. We have to leave that flag up there and let it represent every single one of us.

Phil said he agrees with a lot of what Scott had to say. He thinks it would be great to support or participate with the racial justice committee that the town hopes to form. This question could be something that could be tasked to them. He does think it is important that if we do end up putting up a Black Lives Matter flag we put it on government property – either shared town/village property or village property – to show that the government supports Black lives.

Brian said he has gotten some calls from community members around this issue. It has been helpful talking to people about it. He is a firm believer that we should put up a Black Lives Matter flag. As white people we have been very privileged. There is an event in his life he has been thinking of more lately that he is not proud of. When he was 21 he was arrested for breaking and entering and charged with a felony after he stole a newspaper from someone's front steps when he was on college break and drunk. It is hard not to think about what the consequences would have been in that wealthy Cape Cod neighborhood if he had been a person of color. He doesn't think the charges would have been dropped. He doesn't think he would be here now. Thinking about that helped him realize how privileged he is. Black people have been killed for less and he got a slap on the hand. That whole interaction would have been different if he had not been who he is.

Peggy Williams said in talking about an alternative proposal the board is suggesting they want to entertain a motion to reconsider a previous motion. Such a motion has to be proposed by someone who voted in favor at the last meeting and as she understands it the motion should be proposed within the same day the action was taken. In addition, flying a flag on private property doesn't reflect what the community might want to say and requires no approval or authority. She would not suggest the board take any action to support a private property owner flying a flag.

Jon Gregg asked if it is possible to uncouple addressing systemic racism and white privilege from the American flag. Taking down American flags is not connected with those other issues. There are plenty of other ways to put the community's commitment to justice and fairness in place without taking down American flags. When people say the flag represents all of us and all lives matter, we are finally coming to acknowledge that that has not been true for 400 years. Some form of extra effort and concern is justified in trying to be honest about the situation of people of color. It hasn't been true that we are all equal and we have to acknowledge it, but not by taking down the American flag.

Cal Stanton said he would like to hear a response to Peggy Williams' concerns. He would hate to waste this time if she is right. Can anyone confirm or deny what she mentioned?

Meredith said the way the agenda was written was perhaps not as clear as it should have been. The trustees are not proposing to vote on putting a flag on private property. It was someone's suggestion of something he might be able to do on his own that would make some people feel better. She agrees it is not village business to make a motion to put a flag on private property. The idea was that with that offer in place the board should re-discuss the idea of putting Black Lives Matter flags up on Main Street. Her understanding is that the board can choose to change its mind and make a new motion. She believes someone who previously voted to fly the Black Lives Matter flags would be making a new motion not to fly them. As far as needing to do it in the same day, that is a new piece of information to her that she was not aware of. We can move forward with the meeting tonight and if we get word from our attorney that we need to do it some other way then we can correct tonight's action. If the board wants to vote tonight, she would advise that they do that and if we hear from the attorney that we need to do it a different way then we will do that.

Cal Stanton said he understands that this is uncomfortable territory. When trustees joined the board he imagines none of them anticipated dealing with subjects like this. He has heard the word "divisive" used. This is uncomfortable. This is democracy. He wants to make sure the timeline of what happened is accurate. As he understands it, a group proposed to have a Black Lives Matter flag on municipal property. At that time he believes there was an empty flagpole. Then it turned out that the flagpole was on village property. The town sent the question to the village. Arjay West wrote his letter, which spoke volumes. We ended up with the proposal of having flags up and down Main Street. A bold proposal, though he is not sure it would be bold to a person of color. That proposal passed. Black Lives Matter flags up and down Main Street is not a terrible thing. It is a good thing. But the initial proposal was one Black Lives Matter flag in solidarity with the biggest national movement ever seen. His perception is that the letter from Arjay tweaked people and the response was, why not just fly flags up and down Main Street? He understands trying to appease the community. The trustees voted to have flags up and down Main Street. We didn't talk about funding. Bob Hoag can fly any flag he wants. It is awesome if he flies a Black Lives Matter flag. Cal would not encourage any town entity to get behind any individual whose mind could change. The original request was to see if we wanted to do this as a community. He feels this doesn't have to break us. We don't have to say that we hope there isn't trouble or violence.

Rhoda Vis said she is all for supporting our brothers and sisters of color but she feels we need to keep our American flags up. The American flag stands for everyone. We can't keep dividing our country. This is dividing our town. We are all Americans. If we are going to do it as a community it needs to be done by community vote. It should not be up to five trustees to make this big decision for the entire town.

Lynda Hill said she has a tenant who is a man of color. The other day he left and came back right away saying he needed to have his driver's license with him. He said he had been stopped three times in four months because of his color so he makes sure he has his driver's license whenever he leaves the property. That shows what people of color experience. There are 35 American flags up. It was approved to put up 8 Black Lives Matter flags. It wasn't approved to take down half the American flags. She doesn't think 8 is an unreasonable number. The community is divided because of misinformation and people blowing things out

of proportion. She doesn't understand why we cannot have American flags, Black Lives Matter flags and Blue Lives Matter flags. We live in a college town with all kinds of people of color. The Studio Center is here with all kinds of people of color. It is a welcoming thing for them to see the Black Lives Matter flag. All the divisiveness going on boggles her. Common sense and compromise go a long way. If a committee is formed she would love to be on it. Some people have gone too far in one direction.

Kyle said she appreciates this ongoing conversation. It is important to have. She wants to make it clear that it is racism that has divided our nation, state and possibly our town. It is not people's passion and affirming of Black lives that is dividing our country. This is about affirming Black lives. It is not about how we as white people feel in our comfort and privilege that we have had for 400 years. It is an incredibly important statement to make and one that we have already made in the town and village inclusivity statement. We have already said in town and village meetings that this is what we believe. Now she is hearing that we need to have another town or village meeting about this flag. But the people in tonight's meeting are the people who would come to that meeting. We have had an opportunity for everyone to speak. We are doing that right now. It is important to remember that it is not about white people. It is about people of color who have been systematically oppressed. She is talking about systems, not individuals. This is affirming that their lives matter, they are worthy, they are part of our community and we recognize and embrace that.

Greg Tatro said we were ahead of the curve with the inclusivity statement. He is proud of Johnson for doing that. He has a couple of ideas for a compromise. One would be, if we need to put the flag on town or village property, to use the park next to Kyle's business, almost like turning it into a freedom park with the American flag, Vermont flag and Black Lives Matter flag. Maybe we could even come up with some kind of granite piece with our inclusivity statement. People are a little sensitive about the Black Lives Matter flag going on the municipal building or our utility poles, but people have been expressing their first amendment rights on the village green on Tuesday nights. That seems like a good place. He supports the people demonstrating there on Tuesday night. Everyone should have a right to speak. Maybe that could be a freedom park where visitors could see what we believe. He also doesn't know why we couldn't just put the Black Lives Matter flags under the American flags on the utility poles if we are only going to put up eight.

Sarah Stearns said she has no problem with the Black Lives Matter movement. She does have a problem with the Black Lives Matter flag due to everything that is going on – the looting, the rioting, the vandalism. Who's to say that won't happen here if the flags get put up? Or who's to say people won't start boycotting businesses if Black Lives Matter flags are hung in front of a business. She has a war flag for the army, a Confederate flag and an American flag and it has been brought to her attention that someone in the village said that her flags are upsetting them. She flies those flags because we all have had people die under those flags. To her it's not racist flying them, it's just heritage.

Jackie Stanton said she is glad we are having this conversation. She is proud of us for having it. It is saddening to her that we aren't able just to affirm that Black lives matter, that it has to be this complicated, that we are somehow unable to communicate this very simple and

powerful message that Black lives matter. We talked about compromises. She would ask who is getting compromised? What is getting compromised? Is it that Black lives matter? Is that what is getting compromised? If so, we need to dig deep. It shouldn't be this hard. We have to make a commitment to ourselves and each other that this should be something we can declare in solidarity in this moment we are in. The Black Lives Movement is a global movement. We've never seen anything in our lives like this. This movement surpasses any movement in the history of our country. We have a kinship with every American. We have to be able to rise to this moment in honesty and trust in each other that we can do this. She is sad that it has to be this complicated.

Phil asked if every single light pole has a flagpole and if each one has a flag on it. It did not appear to him that every single light pole had a flagpole and flag. Meredith said, just to clarify, the motion that was passed was to alternate Black Lives Matter flags with American flags – not to put up 8 Black Lives Matter flags but to alternate on all the utility poles. Those are the flags on utility poles, not the green street lights. There are green light poles, some of which have a place for a vertical banner. Currently summer flower banners are up. In the winter there are snowflake banners. We are not talking about those. The people who put in the request for the Blue Lives Matter flags have requested to use open flag brackets on light poles that don't currently have anything in them. The two requests are separate. The motion approved last time was to alternate Black Lives Matter flags and American flags on utility poles and there is a separate request to put Blue Lives Matter flags on unused flag brackets on light poles. Phil asked, the village owns both the green light poles and the electrical poles? Meredith said yes.

Elizabeth Perry said she agrees wholeheartedly with Jackie. She is also saddened that it is this complicated. We have a nation with a deep history of systemic racism over 400 years. We all are affected by the systems in our culture that brought us where we are now. Racism is the foundation of how this country was built. The economy in the South early in the history of our country depended on slavery. She thinks putting up a Black Lives Matter flag is a little thing we can do to acknowledge that Black lives matter as we tear down the white supremacy we all experience in our daily lives regardless of our skin color.

Diane Lehouillier said the Black Lives Matter flag shows that we will have people's backs. It shows that more if the flag is flying on village or town land. She thinks it is important to remind people of what that flag means. When people look at the Black Lives Matter flag they should think of equality, fairness and respect.

Meredith said, regarding Peggy Williams' question about Robert's Rules, her understanding is that the board can make a motion to rescind a previous vote – not reconsider, but rescind – and that does not need to be done at the same meeting.

Rick Aupperlee said when the group brought the original proposal that the flag be flown on municipal property, the selectboard said they should talk to the trustees. They are looking for a unified response of both governments. He spoke to the selectboard last night. We have elected officials to take stands on tough issues. He thinks it is great that there was a compromise. He would have been happy for an up or down vote on flying the flag on the

municipal building site. He thinks we are losing sight of what we are really trying to accomplish. He is in favor of a committee and he would be willing to be on it. He wants the trustees to commit to standing up to people who want to use the threat of violence. The request was not for 8 flags or for every other American flag to be taken down. These are all divisive issues. It was for an up or down vote on flying a Black Lives Matter flag on municipal property and we found out that we had more work to do. He wants to see the Black Lives Matter flag with the American flag, state flag, and fire department flag.

Phil said he is walking in the village and so far he has counted six flagpoles on green light poles. Four are empty and two have American flags. There are certainly empty flag poles on the green light poles. Meredith said yes, there are open spaces on some of the green light poles, but the motion was to take down American flags on the utility poles.

Scott said he feels people who are not in agreement about the path leading to what everybody wants are not being heard. Greg brought up a good avenue we could pursue with the village green. He thinks that is a phenomenal idea. And if there are flag mounts open on poles we could use those. He is not apologetic for making the proposal to fly Black Lives Matter flags on utility poles. He does apologize for people getting pushed to the side for their views. He got a lot of calls from people who are passionate about doing the right thing but are just not in agreement with the path we are taking. They should not be ignored. When you have a room full of people that agree on something, things happen. When people are not being included in the conversation or are on the fringe they throw up barriers because it is the only thing they know how to do or because they are not heard or worried about being tagged with a racial slur. United we stand, divided we fall. Look at the chat. The language shows divisiveness.

Scott would like to take a pause and have a conversation about this and figure it out. He still likes his idea but community members have concerns on it. That is democracy. He thinks there are two things we could do. We could make a motion to take a pause and not fly Black Lives Matter flags on Main Street utility poles at this time, pending further discussion by community members. Or if there is an issue with that because of Robert's Rules he believes the trustees have the ability to tell Meredith to wait to direct village crews to put the flags up while we wait to see what the community comes up with. He feels the village and town both should be flying the Black Lives Matter flag somewhere on their property.

Meredith said she thinks the board would want to include the word "rescind" in making a formal motion on the past action. She thinks that would satisfy Robert's Rules. Or the board could give her direction not to move on this right now.

Brian said he would like to see the Black Lives Matter flag flown with the American flag. He still stands behind the proposal voted on at the last meeting. There are a lot of American flags and we would not take down all of them. But he respects the people who brought the original proposal saying that was not their proposal. We never really gave them a yes or no on flying the flag on municipal property. He appreciates Greg's suggestion of a flagpole on the village green. He thinks that is great, but we have a flagpole at the municipal building. He doesn't know if we need two flagpoles a mile apart. He really likes the idea of the inclusivity

statement being somewhere permanent in town. He would personally not like to take any action tonight. He is not going to vote down the idea the board voted for a week ago or vote to do something that not every community member wants. Last week's motion was approved pending funding and he doesn't know where that is at. He thinks it is important to stay true to what the people who originally brought the proposal were trying to do. Not offending people by taking down flags is also important.

Meredith said she thinks the board could make a motion to rescind the vote to put up Black Lives Matter flags alternating with American flags on utility poles on Main Street and there could be a separate motion to take a pause, form a committee and look into an approach the community can support with regard to the flags.

Bob moved to rescind the vote to put up Black Lives Matter flags alternating with American flags on utility poles on Main Street, seconded by Gordy.

Gordy said he thinks we are moving too fast on this. He heard a lot of good comments tonight from both sides. With the inclusivity statement we had a lot of discussion, it went to a public vote and once it was passed it was more apt to be accepted than if it had been approved by just three board members. He supports what Scott said about not flying the flags *at this time*. He thinks we need to get people on both sides in the same room and get more ownership and acceptance.

Phi said he doesn't see any reason why we need to rescind the previous motion. We haven't even had a regular meeting to discuss how we would go about doing it. Surely there could be some discussion at the next regular meeting about the best course of action based on the discussion tonight. He doesn't favor rescinding the motion that was passed last week.

Bob said his reason for wanting to rescind it is that he has been listening all night and he thinks there is a lot of confusion. He doesn't want to see put things up so that rascals could come through and damage our town or set fire to things because they believe differently. All of us want people of color to have equal rights but he thinks we need to take time to study and look things over to make sure we make the right move. He would like to rescind the previous motion and start from scratch.

Scott said starting from scratch worries him. There is a lot of energy in the room. His proposal, which was backed by a lot of community members, shook the tree. We learned from the conversation. He doesn't want to go back on that. He doesn't want to lose the proposal that was made and agreed upon by a majority of the trustees. That doesn't mean he will charge into this blindly. He does not want to rescind the motion and start from scratch. He wants a pause. Too much of a pause and people will just walk away. That isn't what he wants for his friends and family and community and his niece. He is open to options but he doesn't want to start all over. He would support putting a pause on this by directing Meredith not to act on last Monday's motion until we have a community gathering where ideas can be discussed. If there are some poles without flags, putting Black Lives Matter flags there might be something people can agree on rather than taking flags down. We do need to take one down because it is a mess. Looking at the flag code he feels it shouldn't be flown. Greg's idea

about the village green is an option. He would like to see a committee formed to have this figured out within six months' time. Then we can talk about other flags being flown. He asked his brother about the Blue Lives Matter flags. His brother said the difference between that and the Black Lives Matter flag is that law enforcement is a career choice but someone who was born with a particular color skin did not have a choice.

Phil said he knows there are things we vote on but don't take immediate action on. He thinks there is still time. The time to rescind the motion would be if we came up with a better plan.

Brian said he doesn't want to lose sight of the people that brought this proposal to us. As Phil and Scott said, we just voted on this last week. Usually we would vote and then talk about it a month later before it happens. He won't vote to rescind the motion. He liked the initial idea. The board went with it because of concerns that were brought up and it brought up more concerns. He has gotten a lot of out of these conversations. He thinks the racial justice committee meetings will probably happen on Zoom. They will not be closed meetings. A lot of conversation will continue there. There was a comment about hearing through the grapevine about people planning to do acts of violence. He has not heard any of that. He would announce it to everyone if he did. He doesn't think raising the Black Lives Matter flag will bring violence. We're talking about flying a flag that affirms where we stand on a humanitarian issue. He doesn't want to rescind the previous motion but that doesn't mean we are going to put the flags up tomorrow. We don't have them. We said we would put them up pending funding and that hasn't been discussed. We won't move forward before the next meeting.

Gordy said one of his concerns about leaving things the way they are is that three board members voted to put those flags up and quite a few people will want the flags up. There will be more pressure on us to get it done sooner rather than later. Would it be possible to make a motion to table last week's action and not fly the flags at this time pending further discussion by community members? Scott said he would agree with that. Meredith said she believes a motion to table is taken on something that has not yet been voted on. Phil said he thinks that is correct. Peggy Williams agreed. She said you can table something that hasn't been voted on to a time certain.

Meredith said she doesn't think taking a vote to rescind means everything we've done has to be forgotten. If three board members still support the previous decision after the public discussion she doesn't think it is difficult to just make the same motion again if everyone still thinks it is the best idea. Maybe those who are opposed to it will be more comfortable with it. She does think rescinding is cleaner.

Brian said he would vote to rescind last week's motion if we had already made another decision about where we were going to put the flag. But he doesn't want to take off the table that we agreed to fly the flag. He still want it to be something we passed that we are going to fly the flag.

Phil agreed. We haven't even discussed how it would work. If it is not feasible or is cost-prohibitive or we decide we shouldn't do it based on community input, then we can choose to rescind the motion. He doesn't see why we need to do it tonight.

Bob said he will go along with putting any action on the burner for now. He just doesn't want to see it pushed through and have the village start tearing down flags and putting up flags.

Bob and Gordy withdrew agreed to withdraw the motion.

Scott said he wants to move to form a racial justice committee.

Phil said it seems like the selectboard was close to forming a racial justice committee. He doesn't necessarily think we need two committees.

Scott said it was suggested that the selectboard put it on pause until they see what the trustees do. If the trustees agree with forming a committee he wants the committee to be directed to discuss placement of Black Lives Matter flags first.

Scott moved to form a committee of both town and village residents to discuss placement of the Black Lives Matter flags on village property and to have a recommendation within 6 months.

Bob asked, will we have the entire village vote on that rather than just the committee? Scott said he thinks a village vote is a great idea, but that is not part of his motion. He feels community input is needed. He thinks the committee should consist of people having a difficult time with the idea and people who are totally for it. He would love to have people of color involved as well.

Phil said a six-month committee process seems rather unwieldy and lengthy. It seems like the town would like to be involved but wasn't willing to pass a motion last night. He would be more in favor of the trustees and the selectboard coming to consensus and doing something with public input.

Gordy seconded. He wants to see this committee not be just one side of the spectrum. After the committee makes its recommendation he would like to see it go to a village vote and if the vote is affirmative, action would be a lot better received than if just the trustees had voted for it.

Phil said he thinks this should be worked out by officials elected to make these decisions, with public input.

Scott said through the conversations tonight and last night some good ideas have come forth that we otherwise would never have heard. That is why he is asking for more community conversation.

Brian said we could fly the flags now and keep talking about it. We could still form a committee. There is still more work to do. It won't end when we fly the flag.

Bob said he is confused about what Scott wants. Are we just starting a coalition or we will be able to put directions on it?

Scott said what was voted last week still stands. We are putting it on pause to get more community feedback. There may be better ideas out there.

Bob said he is not against that but the direction Scott is headed is totally different from what he was thinking of. He is talking about legality and Scott is talking about discussion.

The motion was passed in a roll call vote with Scott, Bob and Gordy voting yes and Phil and Brian voting no.

Meredith said we have gotten quite a few comments in the chat and she has had a request from Kyle Nuse to read them aloud.

Kyle said she feels the comments in chat are public comments that need to be reflected in the minutes and considered. Not all are able to read or see the chat on their devices. She feels it is very important and potentially required by open meeting law, though she is not sure of that. At selectboard meetings Brian Story will read chat comments aloud so they are on the record. She is asking Meredith to do that.

Meredith read all the comments that had been made in chat during the meeting. In addition to thanks, agreement, or requests to speak, the following comments were made:

Casey Romero mentioned something a Black woman explained to a white man in a novel she recently read that she thinks captures a lot.

Kyle said she thinks Meredith should get a legal opinion first. Robert's Rules of Order clearly state you cannot overturn a ruling a week later because you feel like it. It is a protection for the board and the voters. She asked the board not to take any action tonight but to keep the previous vote. It is not legal to do otherwise.

Rhoda Vis said she doesn't believe everyone even knows this is going on. Her family just found out. Things are done without the majority of the town even knowing.

Kyle said it was on Front Porch Forum at least once.

Cal Stanton said in his opinion Blue Lives Matter is a separate issue that should not be conflated now.

Walter Pomroy said the lamp posts are about one-third banners, one-third flag stanchions and one-third cross-arms for flower baskets. He noted that the town owns the Pearl Street bridge lamp posts.

Lynda Hill said there are 25 flags on Main Street and 9 on side streets. The village is not taking all the flags down.

Greg Tatro suggested flying the Black Lives Matter flag under the American flag on the village green.

Cal Stanton asked who we are compromising for.

Rhoda said she doesn't believe any of us are racist, just concerned. Diane Lehouillier asked, concerned about what?

Sarah Stearns said Black Lives Matter flags are not unity. They are bullying and destructive. The American flag is unity.

There was a suggestion to put a Black Lives Matter flag up at the college.

Jackie said this flag is not divisive. This is democracy. Cal agreed. He said this is uncomfortable but not divisive.

Pam Aupperlee said people are forgetting this is a humanitarian issue. Do unto others.

Elizabeth Perry said this is how we grow and learn. She needs to confront her own racism in any way she can.

Walter Pomroy said Peggy Williams was right about reconsideration of a motion and Meredith was right about rescission.

Rhoda said she thinks a committee is a good idea. She and her husband would both be happy to be on it. It is important that we come together as a community.

Sarah Stearns suggested having one of each military flag, a Black Lives Matter flag, a Blue Lives Matter flag, a Confederate flag and a state of Vermont flag all on the village green.

Greg Tatro suggested the freedom park could have the Vermont, USA and Black Lives Matter flags in one place with our statement.

Lynda Hill said the inclusivity statement was really a vote by the community at town meeting, not something developed by a committee.

Lynda Hill asked, rescinding the motion would be starting from scratch, wouldn't it? Phil said yes.

Rick Aupperlee asked if this means the original proposal for a flag at the municipal building will be reconsidered.

Lynda Hill said there are a few flags on School Street that are in bad shape.

Sarah Stearns asked where we stand on the Blue Lives Matter flag if we rotate Black Lives Matter and American flags.

Jackie asked if any of the board members have received information from any of their constituents that they are planning, or hearing through the grapevine that others are planning, violent acts such as setting fires, etc. Why is this inflammatory language repeatedly being brought up? Can we please have this board strongly condemn violence rather than stating it as some kind of expectation?

Meredith indicated that we will look at the flags in the village.

Kyle asked for Jackie's comment to be read aloud for comment to the trustees.

Walter suggested just not approving the warrant to purchase flags as a delay tactic.

Lynda commented that the word rescind seems to be important.

William said the motion was pending funding. No one said to use public funds.

Cal said this is where we make decisions. He asked, are all the people who called you on this call?

Kyle said you will never have consensus. That is why you are our leaders. We task you with making decisions and standing behind them.

Cal said there is a group of community members who have worked for years already.

Rick said the town deferred to the trustees the authority to site a pole based on village ownership of the land.

Kyle said please don't ask people of color to do white people's work in getting rid of white supremacy. We've created it, we get rid of it.

Cal said not all sides want racial justice, which is why we are here.

Jackie said six months is a long time frame, too long.

Lynda said six months is winter. No flags will go up.

Kyle asked Meredith to read the public comments out loud for the record and minutes. She commented, "You say you want to hear voices but you don't read them." Scott asked, "What makes you think I don't read them?" Cal said not everyone reads the chat. He suggested getting it on the record.

There was a request that in the future comments be read when they pertain to the conversation so they can be added to the minutes at the appropriate time.

Lotty Roozekrans said Black Lives Matter was just painted across Burlington Main Street last week. That was passed by the town council. There are so many instances like this all over our state and country. Putting up a flag on village property shouldn't be this hard.

After Meredith had read all the chat comments, Scott said he wanted to comment on the one saying that a person of color is not needed on the committee because it is a white issue that we have ownership over. A long time ago we were trying to do the politically correct thing for Native Americans and we decided to use the term Native Americans. He had some Native American friends who dismissed that as a white man's term to make us feel better about what we have done to their civilization. That is why you put people of color on committees like this. When he asked his friends what they wanted to be called, one of them said, "I'm an Indian, a Mohawk." Having people of color involved in the committee keeps us in balance. He doesn't agree with that comment. He thinks it is misguided based on his friends that have been labeled by a white person's term.

Rick said he is all in favor of a committee. He would also really like the board to consider that the inclusivity statement was approved by both the town and the village. After the original proposal was made to the selectboard they said it was not their flagpole and they deferred authority to the trustees to make the decision. He would like the trustees to make a decision regarding the flagpole on village property. He is okay with an up or down vote. That is the way democracy works. Other ideas about flagpoles are great but our municipal building is the symbol of our town and village government. We need to hear from our government on this issue of who owns the flagpole and where the government stands on putting up the flag.

Kyle said she did not state that people of color should not be on the committee. She thinks they should if they want to be. We should not put the onus on them to do the hard work of undoing the systemic racism we have created. She thinks people of color should be on the committee if they feel moved to do it but we should not be asking them to be on it because we feel they should do the hard work we need to be doing.

3. *Adjourn*

It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 8:35.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths