

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN  
MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2020

**Present:**

Trustees: Jena Gould-Hopkins, Scott Meyer, Athena Parke, Brian Raulinaitis, Gordon Smith  
Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert, Marla Emery, Rick Aupperlee, Diane Lehouillier, William Jennison, Walter Pomroy, Wayne Elliott, Cal Stanton, Jackie Stanton, Brian Monaghan, Lynda Hill

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

While board members waited for a quorum, Meredith reviewed revenues and expenses for the four departments.

Scott asked if the Studio Center is going to put blacktop on the sidewalk on Pearl St. Meredith said our water and wastewater permits did not make rehabbing the sidewalk a condition, probably because we anticipated that the sidewalk project would happen closer to when they finished. Troy thought that since we will have to rip up the sidewalk in a few months maybe we should just ask them to compact it a little.

Meredith reviewed for the new trustees how the village had transitioned to contracting out for operation of the water and wastewater plants.

Gordy said Jena and Athena will provide new points of view that are welcome. He said their votes are just as important as those of the more experienced trustees and he encouraged them to speak up and ask questions. Scott told them that even if there are disagreements at meetings, outside meetings the trustees are still friends and don't carry a grudge.

**1. *Call to Order***

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:39.

**2. *Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda***

No changes to the agenda were needed.

**3. *Vote to Appoint and Administer Oath to New Village Trustees***

Gordy said at the last meeting new trustees were appointed before there were actually vacancies on the board. He asked Meredith to look into that after the meeting because it didn't feel right to him. Our attorney's advice was that since there were not any openings at that time the board could not vote new members in yet. So now he would like the board to vote again.

Scott nominated Jena Gould-Hopkins as a trustee, seconded by Brian. The board voted to appoint Jena Gould-Hopkins to the trustee board.

Brian nominated Athena Parke as a trustee, seconded by Scott. Gordy said what he likes about Will Jennison is that he is conservative on spending. He will go along with this nomination rather than nominating Will again, but he hopes that in the future if Will still

wants to be on the board he will at least be considered. The board voted to appoint Athena Parke to the trustee board.

Rosemary administered the oath to Jena and Athena.

**4. *Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings***

**Scott moved to approve the minutes of July 13 and July 20, 2020, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.**

**5. *Treasurer's Report***

For the next meeting, Meredith hopes to have information on the extent to which decreased electric department expenses may have offset decreased revenue.

Brian asked how we did with the recent storm. Meredith said there were no issues.

**Scott moved to authorize Gordy to sign warrants on behalf of the board until the board starts meeting in person again and the motion was seconded and passed.**

**6. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items***

Meredith said Dan is on vacation. She reviewed his report. There was one callout to the River Road pump station. All samples met state requirements. The E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted for review.

Dan participated in Zoom interviews with the 5 engineering firms for the River Road pump station design. He and Meredith scored the 5 firms and decided to go with the highest scoring firm which was Aldrich and Elliot. We met with Wayne Elliot at the River Road pump station to look over the site.

Transformer housing and exterior piping at the plant were painted. When Wind River was cleaning out the grit channels we also had them pump out the process water tank after the UV. We hosed the tank clean. It was long overdue to be cleaned.

We performed the EPA lab check samples that are a requirement of our discharge permit for all in house lab tests. We installed flood gates on August 3<sup>rd</sup> due to a flash flood warning, prepared emergency pumps and hoses in case we needed to use them and tested the river flood warning system to be sure it was operating correctly.

There were no callouts for the water system. Coliform results were negative.

Dan and Tim met with Meredith and Troy at Katy Win pump houses to discuss a plan of action to address the deficiencies that were noted in the sanitary survey. Dan met with Elizabeth from Dufresne Engineering to get a better idea of how to address the main pump house at Katy Win.

We received lead and copper sampling results. Our 90<sup>th</sup> percentile samples were well below the Vermont action level. We have moved the coliform sample tap to a better location at Katy Win. This was a requirement of the sanitary survey.

Dan did not have the sales figures yet to calculate water loss for the month.

Meredith said in June there was a sanitary survey of our water system. A report was issued that noted we needed to make improvements at Katy Win Park. There are three pump stations at Katy Win that bring water pressure to an acceptable level. The village owns them and they are not in great shape. One is in particularly bad shape. The state would like us to put in concrete floors. Now the floors are just dirt. We think that one probably needs to be completely rebuilt. We don't see pouring concrete around bad piping in a building that is falling apart. In one of the other buildings we think we can pour concrete around the existing pipes. In the other building we believe that under some dirt there is a concrete floor and we just need to clean it out and replace the roof. The cost estimate to replace the roof is under \$1,000. We are planning to do that work in-house.

We have to report back to the state by August 15 on how we plan to address the issues they identified in their report. Meredith, Troy, Dan and Tim met on site and then Dan met with an engineer. All felt that replacing the pump station that is in the worst shape is what we need to do. Village staff felt the cost could easily be \$100,000 and Elizabeth Emmons said she thinks it is likely to cost \$100-150K. We will have to search out grant funds or get a loan in order to pay for it. Probably we will use a combination of grant funds and a loan. The plan we will send to the state is that we have identified that it is wise for us to rebuild the whole pump station and we will seek funding through state and USDA Rural Development funds. We believe we have two to three years to get the work done. First we would get funds to do the design work. We need to get a state permit to do the work as well. The USDA has up to 75% loan forgiveness. Hopefully up to 75% of the design cost could be paid for by a USDA grant. Then we would get a loan for the construction work. The Vermont Municipal Bond Bank is allowing utilities to delay making bond payments. Anything that was due after June 1st can be delayed for a year. Her recommendation is that we not make the payments this year and the money could be put toward the pump house project.

Athena asked why the state recommendation was just to redo the concrete flooring. Meredith said the sanitary survey was really just looking at whether the system was sanitary. The dirt was the biggest concern for them.

Meredith said we are in the process of finishing up an asset management plan for the water system. When that was done there was question about ownership of the pump stations, but now we know we own them. Elizabeth Emmons will add those to the asset management plan and we will have to identify them as high priority assets to work on. We will revise the asset management plan to identify those as needing work.

Meredith said we have a pump station on River Road East that is from the late 1960s and is in poor condition. We are concerned it could fail. It is near the river and we don't want releases into the river. We are trying to speed up design and construction of a replacement. We followed the state-required process for the Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund. We got proposals from five firms and we selected Aldrich and Elliot as the most qualified. We have been speaking with Wayne Elliott about the next steps. We need to submit an application to the state for a planning loan. We send a draft engineering services agreement to the state, the state reviews it and identifies the proper cost for the work, then approve a planning loan to fund the study. Tonight the board needs to approve applying to for a long from the Clean Water Revolving Fund and, if we get the loan, entering into an agreement with Aldrich and Elliot. Wayne Elliott said the village qualifies for a 50% loan subsidy on engineering and a

40% loan subsidy on construction. Meredith said we are trying to get the design by November so we can get on the current year priority list for funding.

**Scott moved to approve staff applying for a Clean Water Revolving Fund planning loan and entering into an engineering services agreement with Aldrich and Elliot for the River Road pump station, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.** *(Wayne Elliott left the meeting at 7:10. Troy joined.)*

**7. Foreman Report and Action Items**

Troy said over the past month the crew has been working on pole transfers in the right of way off Gould Hill Road. They have been retiring the old line and poles and moving all services over to new poles that were installed during the Gould Hill solar project. They replaced a 200 amp service drop at Johnson Farm & Garden. The crew made repairs to three street lights on Main Street. The ballasts had failed. As mentioned in previous reports, this has been an ongoing problem. At this point, about half the ballasts have been changed. Normal annual right-of-way cutting and brush-hogging throughout our system was continued. A 100 amp service was installed at the village green to allow the food truck to set up its own service and be billed according to our tariff. The secondary service at 511 Route 100C was upgraded from 100 amps to 200 amps. Wire cover-ups were installed at three different customer locations to allow for painting and building maintenance. There was a trouble call at 1375 Clay Hill with a report of trees burning. The crew trimmed the trees and made repairs to the secondary service. Our crew assisted Hyde Park on a mutual aid call for downed wires because they were short-staffed. The crew also completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

Troy I met with Dan, Tim and Meredith at Katy Win to evaluate the three pump stations and needed repairs. We were finally able to repair multiple water meters that had failed during the stay-at-home order. Troy ordered the suction pump discussed last month from Johnson Farm & Garden. It should be in this week.

The crew replaced the front tires on the Kubota tractor. Prior to the annual VLCT property inspection that occurred in late July, the crew made sure the shop was in order.

Troy I spoke with the attorney from MSI related to the damage at 25 Foote Brook Road. After some back and forth, MSI agreed to pay the full cost of the damage, about \$1,325.

Troy placed an order for 15 utility poles to restock inventory. The cost is about \$5,000. He will be placing an order to restock our electric inventory.

**8. New Trustee Orientation**

Meredith said she will have Dan, Troy and Arjay reach out to Athena and Jena to give them tours of village property. If any other trustee wants to join in they should let her know. Scott said the village and town have COVID-19 protocols that should be followed during the tours. Meredith agreed.

Scott said board members and employees have been asked to go through the VOSHA COVID-19 training. We expect that from people who are engaged with the village and town. Meredith said if Jena and Athena haven't had to do that for their work she can email them the materials. Jena said she has done it for her work. Athena said she hasn't and she would like to.

**9. *Beautification Committee***

Gordy has been the village's representative to the Beautification Committee. He has resigned and he is hoping to get someone else to represent the village. Athena volunteered to be the new representative.

**10. *Village Green Food Truck***

Meredith said there has been a lot of public discussion about the food truck on the village green so she wanted to clarify how it came to be there. Over a year ago two residents of Johnson, Kyle Nuse and Casey Romero, were very interested in seeing a food truck come to Johnson, particularly to the village green. A couple of restaurants that closed and we heard that rail trail users were looking for more opportunities. They saw the village green as a place that might accommodate a food truck. She created a set of guidelines and the trustees discussed and adopted them. We discussed trying to make sure we were not offering publicly owned land for free to a business. We wanted to come up with a fair charge but didn't want it to be so expensive that it would be unattractive. We wanted to cover village costs and create parity with those who have to pay rent.

We weren't able to find anyone to come last summer. Earlier this year we approved a gyro truck using the village green but they decided that wasn't going to work for them. Then we were contacted by Mudgie's. We worked with them on placement on the green. Originally we thought the food truck might go at the back of the green but we heard that people didn't want parking to be taken away. We wanted to preserve as much parking as possible. Last summer we added plantings at the back of the green so the truck couldn't be on the grass in the back. Meredith and Troy met with the owner and identified a spot that maintained as much parking as possible as well as a safe flow around the green and avoided having to run electrical wires through the green. Having the truck near the sidewalk allows people to access it that way. The food truck owners didn't want to face away from the road because they wanted people to be able to see what the truck was. Members of the public and the business community had thought it would be a good idea to have a food truck there to interest people in coming to Johnson and supporting other businesses.

Scott said his in his view it is something the village needs. He has heard the food is amazing. Athena said she completely agrees. When she was a student, Maplefields was the only option for quick food. Having another option is great and the food is good.

Walter Pomroy said he is a neighbor of the village green. The village green was part of the Main Street project. The purpose was to have a green space downtown where people could gather. He is in favor of a food truck, but it is too big and ruins the village green. The village should honor the commitment that has been made but before next year he hopes the trustees will reconsider arrangements for the food truck. He added that a portable toilet is probably needed at the green. He has seen people walking into the woods at the back of the green. He commented that Mudgie's owners have done a great job of keeping the area neat and free of trash.

Meredith said her hope is that we will continue to honor Mudgie's use of the space through the rest of the season. Their first weekend went well and they were hoping to maybe expand to Thursdays. We can think about adjustments going forward.

**11. Municipal Website Management Contract**

Meredith said there were issues with the municipal website a couple of weeks ago and Brian Story reached out for assistance. We don't have anyone on staff or on contract who is responsible for website maintenance. Brian got a proposal from a local firm to handle security, in-depth fixes and maintenance. He has heard that another business may also be interested in putting forth a proposal. We will likely have to look at two proposals. We will likely have a joint meeting with the selectboard with that on the agenda.

**12. Short-Term Disability and Life Insurance Policies for Unionized Employees**

Meredith said earlier this year the board approved a union contract for lineworkers. In that contract we agreed to provide short-term disability and \$50,000 of life insurance. She reached out to VLCT to see what they could offer that would meet the contract terms. The contract requires that for short-term disability we provide up to 100% of the employee's net pay. VLCT has informed us that there isn't any short-term disability policy that will provide that level of coverage. She has asked the union to let her know if they know of anyone else that provides such a policy. Her assumption is that if there is not anyone who does then we will have to purchase a policy that provides up to a maximum amount and because of the contract language the village would pay the difference. We can get a \$50,000 life insurance policy for each employee. VLCT couldn't give us an exact quote because it depends on things like age and length of service of each employee. But it looks like it would be about \$92 a month to provide short-term disability for all employees and \$96 a month to provide life insurance for all employees. It would be less than \$1,500 a year for each of those policies. She will continue to try to get quotes on short term disability to see if there is anything that can better match the contract language but she is not expecting to get something better that is affordable.

**Jena moved to authorize Meredith to work with Rosemary to obtain short-term disability and life insurance coverage for union employees as long as the cost is no more than \$1,500 per policy. The motion was seconded and passed.**

**13. COVID-19 Response Check-In and Utility Update**

Meredith said the state has extended the disconnection moratorium. We are not allowed to disconnect for non-payment through September 30. They believe this will be the last extension. If the moratorium expires then that will leave only a small window for us to be able to disconnect before winter sets in and there are more stringent requirements for disconnection.

At this time Meredith is not aware of any grants or loans of federal money to help with revenue shortfalls. The state did approve putting \$8 million of COVID-19 money toward an assistance program to help customers pay utility bills. That is not nearly enough to cover all unpaid bills statewide. The state is putting together a program that they will run in conjunction with community action programs. It will require customers to apply, primarily online. The application will come to the utility to verify the information and then we should get paid electronically by the state. The program will provide assistance for unpaid balances that are at least 60 days past due and are related to the pandemic. We will review to make sure requests meet the parameters, so there will be some staff time on our part.

Scott asked how they are getting the information out to people who need this assistance. Meredith said one of the requirements of utilities is that we proactively advertise this to our customers. We will put something in the September bills.

**14. Request to Fly Black Lives Matter Flags and Blue Lives Matter Flags in the Village**

Meredith said the requests to fly Black Lives Matter flags and Blue Lives Matter flags have brought up billboard law. Duncan Hastings raised the issue of ownership of the utility poles on Main Street. He is right that we share ownership with Consolidated Communications. She doubts Consolidated would want to wade into local political discussions but if we want to move forward with flags on those poles we should probably talk to them. She had forgotten that billboard law had applicability and she is glad someone raised it. Her understanding is that according to billboard law we cannot post banners, flags or signs with writing on them within the state right of way. In 2016 a question came up about Johnson State College banners with writing on light poles and VTrans said they would not approve any banner with writing. Banners with just images can be approved through a permit process. Her takeaway is that a flag or sign with writing is not allowed and the state will not go along with it. If we wanted to put something up in the right of way without words we would need to petition VTrans. Our attorney pointed out that American, state and local government flags are allowed in rights of way under state law. She believes as part of the Main Street project a permit was issued to allow our seasonal flags in the state right of way.

Brian asked, does that make what the board voted a moot point? Meredith said that would be her interpretation – that legally we can't put Black Lives Matter flags up in the state right of way. Brian said we voted to fly them, so where are we going to do it at? Gordy said the vote was to put them on utility poles.

Meredith said Black Lives Matter flags have words. We also got a request to fly Blue Lives Matter flags and her understanding is that they don't have words, that they are a version of the American flag in black and blue. Her understanding is that if there were interest in flying those we would have to get a state permit to fly them within the state right of way.

Scott said he thinks to clean the slate Brian's motion to replace every other American flag on Main Street with a Black Lives Matter flag needs to be undone somehow. What is the legal language to make it go away?

Brian Monaghan said there is not a lot of law in Vermont on this topic. He thinks because the action voted on is illegal it really doesn't matter. A board could always overrule its prior decisions. He thinks the board only has to draft a new motion and that will effectively override the prior motion.

Scott said last month the trustees voted to create a community board to discuss this topic. He is wondering if it is more efficient to defer any decision about flags being flown on any village property to the committee to come up with recommendations. He would love to move forward with the committee. He noted that there was a request in chat to go back to the original request to fly a Black Lives Matter flag at the municipal building but we have still not had widespread community input, which was the purpose of the committee. He would rather have that discussion with the committee so we can get a broader community perspective.

Brian Raulinaitis said he thinks we just need to vote on flying the flag at the municipal building. He thinks it is great to have a committee but citizens came to us with a request and he would like to vote on it tonight. He has heard that a lot of people are concerned about

taking down American flags to fly any other flag but he thinks it is reasonable to put a Black Lives Matter flag under the American flag at the municipal building.

Gordy read a recent letter to the editor from Offie Wortham:

*As a happy resident of Johnson for the past 10 years I am watching the controversy over the issue of putting Black Lives Matter flags on village or town property.*

*I happen to be a person-of-color, and therefore have a little more of an interest in the issue than some others. I believe that no flag should be flown on town or village property unless it is an official flag from the village, county, state or federal government.*

*There have to be limits or rules as far as the public display of flags. If we allow the Black Lives Matter flag, how do we stop the posting of a new flag from some other movement or organization that many in the village might be opposed to?*

Gordy said he thinks that opinion carries a lot of weight. He would like to see the trustees vote not to fly any flags other than what the billboard law allows on any village property and he would like to work with the town on forming a racial justice committee.

Brian said if the committee recommends flying the Black Lives Matter flag we will be right back where we are now. Athena said she is excited about the committee and thinks this question would be a great thing to give to them if the committee had already been formed, but the request was brought here.

Meredith said she has heard that some older folks who do not have internet access or are not comfortable participating in a Zoom meeting don't feel they have had the ability to participate in this discussion. She got a request to give advance warning of discussions on this question along with information on how those people could participate.

Athena asked, do you think there will be more participation on the committee? Will they meet over Zoom? She is interested in ideas on how people will participate in committee meetings with COVID-19 limitations.

Scott said we had a contentious history with regard to zoning. A committee was formed to look at form based code and people came together who loved, hated or didn't understand it. Everyone's views were heard and mostly respected and we came up with what the village has now for guidance. He feels it is even more important to have all differing views for this committee. What he has experienced from living in Johnson is that hearing everyone's opinion makes you more educated. We would want to make sure the committee is diverse and has the respect of everyone. We need a really good facilitator. There have been some good ideas brought up, including using the village green for a racial justice park. He is not in a rush to make a decision because there might be better ideas that would have better buy-in. He thinks the committee is important. Meredith brought up a good point that not everyone has the ability to join a Zoom meeting to be heard.

Gordy suggested a motion not to fly any flags of any kind at this time until we have time to get a racial justice committee formed and come to agreement.

Scott said a difference between the Black Lives Matter flag and other flags such as Blue Lives Matter is that most of those other flags represent something that is by choice but a person of color does not have a choice.

Athena said beyond the flag's impact on people of color, people of all races, including her, will feel comforted by the flag flying. She understands that we need to respect state law but she thinks a Black Lives Matter flag is a lot different than a flag promoting a specific job.

**Brian moved and Athena seconded to fly a Black Lives Matter flag on the center flag pole at the municipal building.**

Scott said he wants a bigger community conversation. Gordy said he would like the fire department to have the opportunity to give more input if they want. He would rather have the racial justice committee address this.

Jena said she thinks the committee is a great idea. She thinks Johnson's inclusivity statement is wonderful and a Black Lives Matter flag is a visual representation of what is being said in the inclusivity statement. She thinks we can still reach the end goal but maybe the committee should address it first and then we can move forward.

Jackie Stanton asked in chat how people would be able to participate in committee meetings if they were also conducted by Zoom. Meredith said that would have to be part of the discussion with the selectboard – making sure that all who want to participate in the discussion are accommodated.

Rick Aupperlee said he received a harassing phone call from a member of the community. The citizens who asked the village to fly a Black Lives Matter flag did not ask to take down flags, they asked to put up a flag. That is an up or down vote. It could be tabled or it could die for lack of a second of the motion. He gets the idea behind the committee and even though he has been harassed he intends to apply for it. He gets the concerns of the fire department. His concern with not taking a vote on the request is that it sends the wrong message. He thinks the board needs to go on record and defend the inclusivity statement. He is hearing the board will take a recommendation from the committee but that doesn't mean the board will vote in favor of it. He wants to know what the board would like from the committee. It sounds like the board is looking for a way not to deal with the issue until board members are ready, if they even decide they want to deal with it. The committee has no approval authority. That is why we elect representatives. The citizens brought the proposal to the selectboard and they made it the village's problem. He thinks Brian has the right idea. If people really want to go on record and speak their mind than they should be at these meetings. He is hearing people in the community speaking out of context because the board is not defending the inclusivity statement. At the selectboard meeting he asked the selectboard to affirm the statement that was ratified by the town at town meeting. He feels the board needs to take a vote up or down and then we move on to whatever we need to do next.

Scott said he had some phone calls to his home that were uncomfortable but they were healthy. People told him where they were coming from and he and they were not too far

apart. Some comments he heard in phone calls were that people are afraid to speak out with other ideas that would still support this movement because they are nervous about being called racist. He mentioned the language referring to this issue as a problem. It is not a problem at all. It is a conversation. We are trying to do the right thing. He also brought up the comment that the board is not backing the inclusivity statement. If we weren't backing the statement, we would have just said no immediately. This is a conversation that needs some deep thought, not negative wording and an assumption of what is going through our heads. He thinks we can do better than that. The community is not too far apart in what we want to have done for racial equality but when something is rammed down someone's throat and they're being called a racist, that is not welcoming and doesn't fit our inclusivity statement. Let's try to keep this positive.

Meredith said she had received a request to read the letter from the fire department again that was sent to her by the chief on behalf of the firefighters at the end of June. She read the letter:

*It has been brought to our attention there may be a request to display a politically-motivated symbol at the Fire Department facility. As with any sensitive situation, there are often people in the community that have strong views on both sides of the isle.*

*The Johnson Fire Department is Political Neutral. It is imperative to our operations, and the safety of our firefighters that we make no indication of political statement or preference. We are here to serve the community and we answer all 911 emergency calls without prejudice or opinion. We must not become caught between any two groups or beliefs.*

*Display of any political symbols outside the firehouse must not happen. That would immediately result in an unsafe environment for our firefighters by exposing them to criticism, anger, or aggression from citizens with opposite beliefs. Further, any representation other than Political Neutral would put into jeopardy our working relationship with other emergency response agencies - police, EMS, air ambulance, utilities, haz-mat response – to name a few.*

*Additionally, I fear this condition would ultimately lead to reduced staffing of your volunteers. Some members have expressed concern when becoming forced to choose their safety (or that of their families) over responding into a politically unstable environment; others have said they will not associate with the department during a political movement where it appears (whether our belief or not) the department is choosing one political direction over another.*

*As with any socially controversial issue we must remain neutral and be confident that we can provide a service to the community without further label, expectation, or confrontation.*

Meredith said she was informed by a member of office staff that they got two calls today from elderly residents who were interested in this discussion but don't know how to participate by Zoom or use the internet.

Jena said she felt some of the wording in the fire department letter was a little questionable. She feels this is not a political issue at all but a humanitarian one. It really can be a neutral thing that is aside from politics.

Brian said he is still interested in meeting with the fire department. He finds the letter troubling and he finds the timeline troubling. The trustees got a letter from the fire department at the same time they got the proposal from the community members to fly the flag. He finds that concerning. Gordy said the proposal went to the selectboard and he believes it was then brought up at a meeting at the fire station. As far as politics it, depends on how you watch TV. It all depends on how you feel. There are different sides to the story. What do we do with other groups who may have similar requests? Do we say yes to Black Lives Matter and no to Blue Lives Matter? Where does it stop? He would rather fly no flags at this time and let the committee address the question.

**The motion was passed with Scott and Gordy opposed.**

***15. Creation of a Racial Justice Committee***

Meredith said the town has been discussing having a racial justice committee. She and Brian Story agreed that it would make sense to have a unified committee. Brian and the selectboard drafted a committee charge and would like the trustee board's feedback and thoughts. She thinks we will schedule a joint meeting with the selectboard to discuss the charge and come to agreement. She read the draft charge aloud. She thinks the selectboard wanted feedback about whether we wanted public displays to be something the committee talks about.

Cal Stanton said he is not clear on which flagpole the Black Lives Matter flag is going to be flown on. When the group proposed flying a Black Lives Matter flag to the town there was an empty flagpole and then there was no longer an empty pole. He is in favor of the racial justice committee.

Meredith said she believes the pole that had historically been for the fire department flag was empty for a while because the flag had become tattered and a new one needed to be ordered. Gordy said the fire department wanted a flag somewhere and thought it would be good to have all three flags together. The flagpoles were put up as an Eagle Scout project and they were put on the edge of the property so there would still be access to the fire station.

Cal asked, do we know which pole the Black Lives Matter flag will be flown from? Brian said no, but we know we will fly it. He would like to stick it under the American flag on the same pole but he doesn't know if we can do that. Cal said he thinks it is important that the Black Lives Matter flag flies with the American flag and doesn't stand by itself in a segregated way. Gordy said he doesn't know how we will deal with it if we have to fly a flag at half mast.

Meredith said she can look into what other communities have done. She noted that there had been a comment on chat that the Blue Lives Matter flag request is still an open item. The request was to install 14 Thin Blue Line flags on unused flag holders on light poles in the village. These are the green poles. There are some unused flag holders on those poles. Meredith asked Will Jennison if Thin Blue Line and Blue Lives Matter are one and the same. Will said Thin Blue Line is how he understands it. Meredith said she understands these flags don't have words. They are just a stylized version of the American flag with different colors.

Brian said we support law enforcement by paying for the sheriff's department contract. That is a job. He can't support this request.

Athena said she respects the work law enforcement does for the community but she and many others don't feel safe or appreciated when law enforcement officers are around. She is ready to appreciate them when they are doing better work for the community.

Gordy said he thinks if a Black Lives Matter flag goes up then the Blue Lives Matter flag should. If we had said no to the Black Lives Matter flag he thinks we should have said no to the Blue Lives Matter flag. He supports the request. People in his social circle feel that if one flag goes up, the other should go up.

Scott said law enforcement is by choice and career and being Black is by birth. Black people don't have the option. They are who they are. He would not be in support of the Blue Lives Matter flags. That does not mean he is not thankful for what police departments do who are following the rules.

Gordy said Sheriff Marcoux is remaining neutral. He and his officers are not getting involved.

***16. Select Dates for Future Joint Meeting with Selectboard***

The board agreed to propose August 24, 25 or 26 to the selectboard as potential dates for a joint meeting.

***17. Executive Session to Discuss a Personnel Matter Pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(3)***

Scott moved to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(3, Brian seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:49. The board came out of executive session at 9:14.

***18. Adjourn***

Athena moved and Jena seconded to adjourn at 9:15. The motion was passed.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*