**Final Report of Julian Scott Task Force Committee**

Committee members: Duncan Hastings, Chair, Douglas Molde, Vice Chair, Michael Mahnke, Secretary, Maryjean Smith, Representative Daniel Noyes, Michael Dunham and Ad hoc and contributing member John Sutherland, Town Administrator. While not a formal member of the Task Force, Jennifer Theoret of Alburgh was a participant and frequent contributor to the process

**The Task Force and the Process:**

The Julian Scott Task Force was established by Resolution of the Johnson Selectboard on June 15th, 2026. The task force met 7 times beginning on July 24th, with last meeting on November 10th, 2026. The meetings of the task force were open to the public and available on zoom.

The Task Force met with noted Civil War historian and author Howard Coffin, Philip Robertson of Northern Vermont University, Johnson Campus, and Stephanie Smith, Deputy Director of Vermont Emergency Management. Representative Richard Bailey was a frequent member of the public in attendance.

In establishing the Julian Scott Task Force the select board assigned the following specific tasks and duties:

- Conduct research into the building's condition, history, and potential uses.
- Investigate the FEMA process which led to the Julian Scott House being approved for the standard homeowner buyout program. If warranted, based on said investigation, recommend that the Selectboard request that FEMA and the State take appropriate corrective action.
- Identify any and all funding sources, including but not limited to grants, tax credits, donations, state or federal funds, and partnerships.
- Evaluate the feasibility, costs, and benefits of all viable alternatives.
- Engage the public and solicit community input.
- Provide regular interim updates to the Selectboard.

Deliver a written report with recommendations no later than 16 Nov 2026

**Report Summary, Findings and Recommendations:**

The Task Force finds the house worthy of preservation and that Julian Scott was a significant local, state, and national historical figure deserving of recognition. We believe this building and this property is well suited to recognizing his historic importance.

The Task Force finds that a significant error was made in the review and concurrence process, leading to the approval of the buyout application, with the associated requirement to demolish the building and the imposition of deed restrictions;

Further, this error should be corrected, possibly by reimbursement of FEMA costs (resulting in "unwinding" of the buyout approval and release from deed restrictions) or by removing the deed restrictions from the property;

Further, costs associated with correcting this mistake (including the removal of deed restrictions) should not be the responsibility of the Town of Johnson, but rather should be borne by the state and federal governments.

The Task Force finds that a critical first step is to prevent the demolition of the structure and release the property from the deed restrictions.

The Task Force recommends that the Selectboard immediately request an extension of time from VEM and FEMA to explore options to prevent the demolition of the structure.

The Task Force recommends the Selectboard reach out to the state and federal elected officials to seek their assistance with correcting this mistake, thereby enabling the preservation of a valuable historic resource for the town, state and nation.

Critical to completing the tasks set out by the selectboard is answering the fundamental question of how to release the town from the deed restrictions on the property without being responsible for reimbursement of FEMA's costs to date.

While the Task Force accomplished many of the tasks and duties assigned, by necessity, some of the tasks were not completed and remain to be done, should the select board decide to pursue it.

As to the **first task,** several reports have been generated which address this task and are attached as appendices to this report.

As to the **second task,** we attempted to determine how/why this property was accepted into the FEMA buyout process. At times this was a frustrating process.

According to Stephanie Smith, Deputy Director of Vermont Emergency Management there is only one option available to the town to prevent demolition of the building, namely, to reimburse FEMA/VEM expenses estimated at approximately $434,000 and remove it from the buyout approval process.

Ms. Smith stated that it would be the town's responsibility to have the deed restrictions removed, yet she could suggest no concrete process for how to do that. The other option available to the town would be to comply with the terms of the deed restrictions on the property, demolish the building and abide by the perpetual open space deed restrictions and reporting requirements.

As part of fulfilling the second task, the Task Force made a public records request to the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation regarding its role in the application process. Our analysis of the information provided by VDHP is included in Appendix 8.

As to the **third task,** there were simply too many variables to allow time to be spent on this task. Does the building remain on site and is elevated? Does the building get moved to another site? What is the ultimate use of the building? Who would potential partners be? Who would own it? Without a building, these questions seem moot. If the building can be saved, addressing these questions, limiting the number of alternatives and securing funding seems more doable.

As to the **fourth task,** as stated above all meetings were open to the public and were on zoom, we invited people to our meetings to make presentations, prepared a brochure and pledge form for the preservation of the house and coordinated with the Johnson Historical Society to sponsor a presentation on Julian Scott.

As to the **fifth task,** we provided the selectboard with an interim report on September 18th 2026, outlining our progress to date.

The **sixth task** is this report.

Respectfully submitted: The Julian Scott House Task Force, November 16th, 2026

**Appendix 1**: Historical Value Report of Travis Smith

**Appendix 2**: Julian Scott House History of Duncan Hastings

**Appendix 3:** Current Condition Assessment of Duncan Hastings

**Appendix 4:** Possible Uses and Alternatives for Julian Scott House

**Appendix 5:** LCPC Maps: locations and limitations of alternate locations

**Appendix 6:** Brochure and Pledge Form

**Appendix 7:** FPF posting Who was Julian Scott and Why Should I Care

**Appendix 8:** Report and Analysis of Task Force of Public Records Request made to VDHP