

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2020

**Present:**

Trustees: Scott Meyer, Brian Raulinaitis, Gordy Smith, Bob Sweetser (by phone), Phil Wilson  
Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Dan Copp, Denis Cote, Teresa Cote, Michelle McCutcheon-Schour, Sue Lovering

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

**1. Call to Order**

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:02.

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

Meredith added an update on the new furnace for the garage as part of Troy's report.

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

**Scott moved to approve the minutes of December 9 and December 30, 2020, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.**

**4. Treasurer's Report / Review and Approve Bills and Warrants / Budget Status**

Rosemary said total water sales for 12 months were 103% of budget, water sales were 105% of budget and sewer sales were 103%. All fire contracts for 2019 have been paid.

Scott asked if we have started to buy computers yet. Rosemary said yes, we placed an order today. They will be coming out of the coming year's budget. We are getting a new firewall as well and the battery backup to the server went down and needs to be replaced.

**Phil moved to release the \$13.75 lien against Allen Moulton's property at 120 Sinclair Road as it has been paid and the motion was seconded and passed.**

**5. Request for Water Bill Adjustment for 333 Lower Main West**

Denis Cote said he got a \$4K water bill but has not found any leak. He asked to have the water to the house turned off after Susan notified him of the high usage while he and his wife were out of town. When they came back, they had the water turned back on. Since then they have been told their usage is a little higher than average although they have used very little water. In the past he has had some water bills that were \$300 or more. He thinks there might be a problem with the meter and he would like it replaced. A village employee looked at the meter and said it showed usage of 430 gallons per hour. The board agreed to replace the meter and address this again next month. Meredith asked if the board would like the village to test the meter that is removed at village expense. The board agreed to that. *(The Cotes left at 6:35.)*

**6. Efficiency Vermont 2020 Targeted Communities Program**

Michelle McCutcheon-Schour said Efficiency Vermont has been trying to develop more targeted efforts for communities with high needs. Johnson has a relatively high energy burden and VPPSA had an interest in Efficiency Vermont doing work here. A group of stakeholders got together to look at factors around the state and Johnson kept coming up as place for a targeted effort. Johnson is one of 4 targeted communities this year. She will be a dedicated community manager for Johnson. She will try to be here at least once a week. The program will provide tailored outreach and educational programs, home energy visits for residences, free walk-throughs for businesses, a

20% business bonus, and free walk-throughs and products for landowners. Scott asked what the 20% business bonus is. Michelle said it is additional incentive on top of the regular incentive.

Meredith asked how these offerings will be advertised, especially for landlords. Michelle said Efficiency Vermont works with a marketing firm that purchases a list of landlords. They will advertise on Front Porch Forum. They would like help from community partners with Front Porch Forum posts. They will also have ads in the newspaper and in other places.

There is a \$4K bonus incentive for municipalities that can pay for up to 100% of a project. There is one bonus allocation for the village and one for the town. It can be used for any project that can be funded by Efficiency Vermont at any municipally-owned facility. It is a one-time bonus that can be used for one project. The project can include different components such as lighting and HVAC but all the work has to happen at the same time in the same building to be considered one project. The village and town incentives can't be stacked on a building owned by both, so \$8K couldn't be spent on the municipal building.

Scott said a few years ago the municipal building needed revamping. Windows had failed and additional insulation was needed. We asked Efficiency Vermont to help us out and they said they would not help with windows or insulation. That left us frustrated. What is the difference between what we are hearing about now and what happened then? Michelle said she is not sure. Their incentives have changed. The legislature has opened up different possibilities. They still can't incentivize windows but they can do insulation.

Scott asked if we are done with the work on the municipal building. Meredith said no, we still have to do the tower. She is not sure if we need more insulation. Scott asked, if the contractor determines that part of the building is not sufficiently insulated and windows and doors have to be replaced, how do we get reimbursement? Michelle said the first step is to have an Efficiency Vermont engineer come and do an assessment. They will tell the contractor what has to be done to receive the Efficiency Vermont incentive. Once the work is done someone will evaluate it. It depends on the building but sometimes pre and post blower door testing is required.

Scott said he thinks in this building we won't see the damage and needs until the clapboards come off. Then we may see voids in insulation or windows that have failed. What is the turnaround time for what Efficiency Vermont needs to do? We can't leave the building opened up for long. Michelle said having the engineer come out is the best thing she can say to do. She doesn't get involved in those specifics. If we already know what we want done and a contractor is involved the contractor can speak directly to the engineer. A blower door test should detect any holes in the building. They are concerned with efficiency. She doesn't think we would have to pull apart building to see that. She thinks the test would show it.

Phil said we had thought of the old mill house as a possible place for a project. Meredith said we think there are other issues with the building like lead paint or asbestos. Efficiency Vermont doesn't get involved in that? Michelle said they do have a business energy loan that can be used for complete projects that have safety issues. Half of the money has to go towards efficiency and the rest can go to health and safety.

Scott said a new furnace is needed at the village garage. Michelle said only wood boilers or heat pumps can be incentivized. They have done smart thermostat projects. Gordy asked if the village garage needs insulation. Troy said yes.

Michelle said as a first step Efficiency Vermont asks each town to assign one liaison. Scott asked, one liaison for the town and one for the village or one for both? Michelle said one person can be liaison for both or there can be two.

Gordy asked how many projects we can do. Michelle said there have to be two projects, one for the town and one for village. All the money for the village has to be used on one building and it has to be a separate building from the one where the town does its project.

Michelle said incentive agreements will need to be signed by November 1. Meredith asked if work needs to be completed by the end of the calendar year. Michelle said that is their preference but the village and Efficiency Vermont just need to have a discussion if that is not going to happen. (*Sue Lovering arrived at 6:55.*)

Michelle said for non-profits they offer \$10K that can cover up to 90% of a project cost. It can be used for any facility owned or operated by a non-profit that serves Johnson and provides health, welfare or safety services. Phil asked if the non-profit needs to own the property. Michelle said no. Phil asked, so the food shelf would be eligible? Michelle said yes. Phil asked if they have to be paying rent. Michelle said nothing in their bylaws addresses that. Meredith asked if they need to be a registered 501(c)(3.) Michelle said yes. Only one project per non-profit can be funded. Lea Kilvadyova put her in contact with Jenna's Promise.

Meredith asked what the best place is for us to find a list of eligible projects. Michelle said the Efficiency Vermont website does list everything but it is best to have someone from Efficiency Vermont come in if someone is thinking of doing a project. The business and municipality incentives have more flexibility in what can be incentivized than residential incentives.

Phil asked if Michelle has been in contact with the town. She said not yet.

Michelle asked the village to let her know about any events coming up that she should be involved with. Board members mentioned Tuesday Night Live and Green Up Day. Sue Lovering mentioned Arbor Day. Meredith suggested Michelle could come to the annual village meeting on April 7.

#### **7. *Tree Board Plans for Arboretum***

Sue Lovering said the Tree Board is going to start an arboretum. Last week they got permission to use Duba Field. There will be a walking path, lots of different trees and shrubs, birdhouses, and benches. She is writing a grant this week for it and she wants to know if she can list the village as a supporter. She also wants the village to be in the loop. (*Michelle left at 7:04.*) They are going to plant some trees on Arbor Day. Hopefully by then they will have paths laid out. They are working on a tree list and trying to get donations.

Phil asked, the field is not used much currently? Sue said it is not used. People used to play ball there but it was difficult because they couldn't drive to the field. There was talk about a dog park there but this is really the only place the Tree Board could put an arboretum.

Sue showed a map of the area. The Tree Board is talking about getting permission to extend the existing path on Studio Center property along the river and get permission from the Studio Center to cross two other Studio Center parcels and create a walking path that, with an easement, will loop around Union Bank to Route 15. That is a very long term project. They will need volunteer help, with hole digging etc. That would go a long way toward the match for the grant. Gordy asked what kind of digging. Sue said like what they have needed in the past for Arbor Day. With the amount of funding they have now they are talking about planting a couple of trees a year. She is applying for a \$5K grant. She thinks the Tree Board can take care of the infrastructure for \$3K with help from volunteers, which would leave \$2K for trees.

Gordy asked if the Tree Board has any plans for trees for the village for this coming summer other than this. Sue said she met with Nate in September. The Tree Board originally thought of planting trees in different locations and having a walking tour of village but Nate pointed out that many possible tree locations had electrical boxes, sewer lines, etc. There are places on private property that could use trees but the Tree Board doesn't always feel justified putting a town tree on private property. She asked if there is a particular place the village wants to see trees. Gordy said no. Sue said one possible place is behind the municipal building but that would not be the first choice because it is not very visible. The island between the municipal building and the fire department is another possible place. Ideally she would like to put trees in big planters in the Sterling Market parking lot but she hasn't talked to them about it yet.

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

Dan said all wastewater samples met state requirements. The E-DMR and WR-43 were submitted for review. Pratt Electrical got the sludge grinder control panel wired correctly and it is performing as it should. All spare parts at the plant were inventoried. We have replacements for most of the critical machinery. We will be making a wish list of spare parts needed. All our unusable paint was taken to Johnson Farm and Garden to be recycled. We are going to shut off our alum feed to the SBR's and see if we can biologically remove enough phosphorus to stay within our permit without using chemical addition. Morrisville is often able to do that in the winter when phosphorus is low. "Caution falling ice" signs at the plant were replaced. Most were gone or unreadable. The belt press sludge pump sprung a leak from one of the rubber plungers. It was dismantled and worn parts were replaced. We will need to order \$1,500 worth of replacement parts to have on hand for the future. The same parts fit the press and both SBR sludge pumps. There was a power outage at the plant for 1 hour and 20 minutes. The emergency rental generator worked as it should and performed flawlessly. During normal power takeover the water bath used for E. coli burned out. It is unknown if it was from the power blinking or if it was something in the water bath that was faulty. Nothing else was damaged. The estimated replacement cost is \$1,100. We are using a loaner from another UP project for the time being. We met with the state Drinking Water Division and the Dufresne engineer to discuss the next steps on the water asset management plan. A roller on the press broke during the press run today. It has been repaired but it will be a temporary fix. Dan will get a quote for a permanent fix, which should be expensive.

There were no callouts for the water plant. All coliform samples taken were negative. The state has put PFA sampling back on our sample schedule. They decided they want more data and we will be sampling once a year for two more years. They will then make a decision on a permanent sample schedule based on that data. The additional cost will be \$900 per year. Water loss was 9%.

Meredith said they came up with a list of priority projects for the water asset management plan and we will need to decide if they make sense. Dan said we have to come up with the 5 most immediate projects and a funding plan and due date for them. Meredith said that is needed to get forgiveness for the loan. Dan said we don't have to do the projects to get loan forgiveness but we have to have the plan.

Scott said he reviewed the transformer noise testing information. It is way below any OSHA concern; it basically comes down to annoyance. It is all low-frequency noise, which is harder to control. There are ways to control it. It couldn't be done by a sound barrier near the transformer because the sound would go around it. It would require completely walling off the transformer. Dan asked, so moving it to other side of the wall would work? Scott said as long as there is not an open doorway. He described the type of wall that would work well. Dan said he will table this for now and revisit it at some point.

Dan said our generator hopefully will be up and running Thursday. The total cost for the rental generator so far is \$7600. *(Dan left at 7:39.)*

**9. Foreman Report and Action Items**

There was a bus-pole accident on Hogback Road on January 4<sup>th</sup>, causing an outage that affected 20 customers. One utility pole was broken, requiring a pole replacement. Service was restored to all customers in 3.5 hours.

On January 9th a system-wide outage occurred due to equipment failure on the B-22. Morrisville Water and light made their repairs and power was restored in an hour and 20 minutes. During the outage Troy was in direct contact with MW&L's foreman as well as contacts to some of our major customers.

The village crew as well as the contract crew continued right-of-way cutting on route 15 from Ben Waterman's to the Hogback Road. The crew assisted Morrisville Water & Light in December with a pole transfer on one of their transmission poles. They also assisted Hyde Park Electric with the replacement of two utility poles using our digger truck. The crew also completed meter reading, high/low readings, dig safe, and disconnects/reconnect.

The crew picked up snow twice in December and once so far in January. They also completed regular winter maintenance of the sidewalks and Route 15 parking areas.

On December 29th one of the green street light poles along Main Street was struck, cracking the base. Troy has been in contact with the sheriff's department as well as Maplefields to try to determine who was responsible for the damage so we can seek reimbursement. As of yet we have not been able to identify the responsible party. The pole has been taken to Custom Metal Fabricators for repair.

The curb stop was turned off at 333 Lower Main West due to high water usage and the curb stop at 24 Clay Hill was turned off to allow for foundation repairs.

Troy completed setting up the 2020 NEPPA safety training schedule for the village crew. He arranged the final year of NEPPA apprentice training for Jeff and Chan, which begins in February. The permit for routine maintenance within the state's right of way has been completed and mailed

in. Troy is in the process of creating an estimate for the repair cost for the bus-pole accident on Hogback Road so it can be submitted to seek reimbursement.

Gordy said the fire department has been flooding the Legion Field ice rink on Mondays and Thursdays. Brian Raulinaitis is willing to use the hydrant to do it himself but in the past we have said no to people who wanted to hook up to a hydrant to fill swimming pools. Scott said Brian should be shown how to open and close the hydrant correctly. Troy said Chan and Jeff showed Brian how to do it. Brian said they went over it a few times with him. They explained how to pump it down every time so it doesn't freeze. He has a pump he can use. He would make sure not to make ice on the sidewalk. Gordy suggested he should not use the hydrant if it is very cold to prevent it freezing up. Brian said he is thinking he would like the option to use the hydrant himself to flood the rink if the fire department can't do it and he has the opportunity. The board agreed Brian has permission to use the hydrant for that purpose. Phil said this is for a public use so it is different from someone using it to fill their pool. *(Troy left at 7:51.)*

Scott asked how much we are paying Efficiency Vermont. Rosemary said between \$12K and \$15K a month. Scott said it is infuriating not to get money from them for projects after paying them that much. Meredith said they have been brainstorming ways for utilities to have more control over how the money is spent.

#### **10. Merger Study Update**

Meredith said Kent Gardner will be here for interviews on January 23 and 24. She wanted to check whether board members all want to be interviewed and when they are available. Scott said he may not be in town. Is there a way he can call in? Meredith said yes; Kent said he could do phone interviews. Meredith said Kent will have a public meeting on January 27. She thinks he is trying to get members of the public to share their thoughts and ideas about a merger, what does or doesn't work well now, and potential pluses and minuses. Phil said maybe we should ask Kent if there is a limit to the number of interviews he wants to do. If there is, he feels he might not be one of the most important people to interview.

Meredith said Kent would like us send as much information as possible before he gets here. She thinks she will include some narrative explaining how things work. Board members should send her any thoughts about things that might be important to send him. She will explain to him how costs are allocated among village departments. Phil mentioned instances of double taxation. Scott said he thinks we have been doing a fairly good job of trying to reduce that. He said we need someone who understands how the electric, wastewater and water utilities work and knows all the regulations. The village budget is large. Not all realize that. It needs to be very clear that it is a substantial undertaking to run the village. Gordy said we should give information on our rates compared to other districts in the state. Scott said there are a lot of certifications that our staff need.

#### **11. 2020 Budget Development**

Meredith reviewed her proposed budget development schedule. She anticipates changes or updates to the budget related to IT costs, a NEMRC cost increase, a PACIF increase of about \$3K spread across 4 departments, wastewater plant items, water asset management plan priorities, VPPSA/power supply changes, the labor relations agreement, and wage adjustments. She will ask our attorney to ask the union if we can push for a wage agreement in time to meet our budget development goal.

**12. Other Business**

Annual reviews need to be done. Meredith will email out forms for her and Troy. Troy evaluates the employees he supervises. It was agreed that board members will fill out the forms and Scott and Gordy will compile the information and review it with Meredith.

**13. Executive Session – Labor Relations Agreement**

**Scott moved to find that premature general public knowledge of the matter discussed would clearly place the public body at a substantial disadvantage, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Scott moved to enter executive session with Meredith for discussion of a labor relations agreement with employees pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(1)(b), Brian seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:20.** The board came out of executive session at 8:36.

**14. Executive Session – Personnel Matter**

**Scott moved to enter executive session with Meredith for discussion of a personnel matter pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(3), Brian seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:20.** The board came out of executive session at 8:52.

**15. Adjourn**

**It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 8:52 and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*