

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 2019

**Present:**

Trustees: Gordon Smith, Walter Pomroy, Scott Meyer, Bob Sweetser (by phone), Phil Wilson

Others: Meredith Birkett, Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Barbara Backus, Lois Frey, Lynda Hill, Duncan Hastings, Diane Lehouillier, Kyle Nuse, Kim Dunkley, Jackie Stanton, Jasmine Yuris, Sophia Berard, Kylie Gellatly, Arjay West

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

**1. Call to Order**

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:03.

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

Gordy added discussion of municipal building repairs.

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

Gordy asked for an amendment to the December 10 minutes saying that Kyle Nuse had sent an email asking why American flags were up for so long on Main and Railroad Streets and asking why there were so many flags.

**Walter moved to approve the minutes of December 3, 2018 and the minutes of December 10, 2018 as amended, Phil seconded and the motion was passed.**

**4. Treasurer's Report: Review & Approve Bills & Warrants / Budget Status Report / Action Items**

Rosemary said she is not completely done yet with accounting for 2018. The fire department overspent by \$2890, primary due to labor and heating costs. There was a record number of calls this year.

Walter noted that there won't be much surplus, if any, in the general department.

Rosemary said electric department sales were 3% more than budgeted. (*Duncan Hastings arrived at 6:22.*)

Rosemary said sewer revenue is 99% of budget and water revenue is 92%. Walter noted that spending was under budget too.

Meredith said Utility Partners will be billing us for about \$750 worth of overtime that was needed during the PLC replacement.

Walter said all buildings and grounds insurance costs were over budget, but sewer was more so than the others. Why? Meredith said she will check all of them.

**Walter moved to release the water lien in the amount of \$121.53 for Lori Wilcox at 75 Park Street. (Diane Lehouillier arrived at 6:28.) The motion was seconded and passed.**

**Walter moved to release the lien in the amount of \$281.12 for Dawn Moritz at 115 Park Street and the motion was seconded and passed.**

### 5. **Historical Society Newsletter Request**

Duncan Hastings said the Historical Society had previously asked if the board would consider sending out the Historical Society newsletter as an insert in utility bills. He and Lois Frey are here tonight to answer any questions the board has.

Walter asked, is this the newsletter of the town's Historical Society or of the 501(c)(3) organization? (*Sophia Berard arrived at 6:30.*) Duncan said the town's. The Historical Society is a town entity.

Gordy said when the village first started the newsletter the intent was for it to be about village activities. He believes we have said no to some other groups not associated with the village. On November 12 the board agreed that the newsletter should be for village entities and utilities. How do we say yes to this group and then say no to others? Is there a way the town tax bill could be used?

Duncan said the Historical Society is looking at all possible ways of disseminating the newsletter. They understand if the policy of the board is not to allow for other entities.

Barbara Backus asked how often the Historical Society wants to send its newsletter. Duncan said ideally they would like to have a quarterly newsletter but that probably won't happen immediately. He doesn't think they would ask to have an insert quarterly. (*Kim Dunkley arrived at 6:33.*)

Gordy asked, doesn't it get more expensive if we include more than one sheet? Meredith said we can only add one sheet or we have to do manual stuffing. (*Kyle Nuse arrived at 6:33.*)

Walter asked how many customers have signed up for electronic billing. Meredith said 5 to 8%.

Bob said he thinks we answered the question when we made the decision previously. Phil said he recalls that we talked at the last meeting about maybe allowing town entities to have inserts when we have room. Our newsletter goes out quarterly? Meredith said yes and we also have some information we are required to send out. Phil said he thinks once or twice a year we could allow an insert. Scott said that is how he remembered the conversation. There was a question about the 501(c)(3) vs. the town but that has been cleared up. He thought there was conversation about the village newsletter having a blurb about the Historical Society instead of inserting a separate page.

The board agreed that once in a while if there is room a paragraph or so on the Historical Society could be included in the newsletter. (*Jackie Stanton arrived at 6:37.*) The board also agreed that when there is room the board can include an insert from the Historical Society. Walter said we don't want to promise we can do it consistently.

Gordy asked how we can say yes to one and no to others. Walter said we can just make a list and tell each group what month they can have an insert, or tell two groups they can each have half a page. Meredith said we may reserve the right to say it is causing conflict or difficulty and we are now limiting it to village information only. We will see how it goes.

Kim Dunkley asked if the Historical Society has looked at other options like a flyer in the News & Citizen. Duncan said they are looking at all options. Whatever the board's decision, the Historical Society will understand. (*Duncan left at 6:41.*)

**6. Inclusivity Statement Public Feedback & Discussion**

Gordy invited citizens to speak about the inclusivity statement adopted by the town.

Barbara Backus said she is a village resident. She has lived here all her life. She is proud to call Johnson her hometown. She knows many kind and caring people who have helped her. To her, that is who we are and that is what she wants us to continue to be. There have been unpleasant incidents. But she thinks they are dealt with as it comes along. Since her husband died her sons have begged her to move, but she wants to live here. She loves it here. She doesn't need a town statement to tell her we should respect and be kind to each other. But if there are people who feel we need a statement she feels it can be said in a more positive way than it has been. She thinks that will send a stronger message. It will show those wanting to move here or start a business here that we have strong values and care about each other.

Sophia Berard said she is in support of it as written. She has a small child. She grew up in Vermont and has lived in Johnson about 10 years. She has lived a pretty safe life, but with a young son she looks to the future and she believes inclusivity statements are very important for the safety of individuals. There is a difference between an inclusivity statement and a town statement or mission statement. Those can be positive. An inclusivity statement is different. It is positive in that it contains what we reject – what we can live without to make a positive world.

Barbara said she thinks if there is a statement it should be voted on by the residents.

Kim Dunkley said she is trying to keep an open mind about who might need this and whether people who don't live in Johnson and are looking at our town would feel supported here. Some language sounded negative to her but when put in the context of where some other people are coming from, people who have had negative experiences, the words become safe haven words, saying, "This is a place that cares about me." An inclusivity statement that feels supportive to prospective residents has value. It shows an outsider looking in that Johnson residents cared enough to make this statement and put these words in.

Kyle Nuse said Kathy Black, program director at the Studio Center, wrote Meredith and Kyle an email. In her email she said that the Studio Center has regular contact with many artists and writers who visit Johnson and the Studio Center. Having a statement of inclusion and welcome is helpful to those coming to Vermont from a different environment. It is positive and helpful to their business. The Studio Center is one of the largest institutions in town that bring diversity and business to our town. It makes this a cultural town, which is the reason she and her husband felt they could move back here.

Diane Lehouillier said she doesn't hear or see anything negative in this statement. It's who we should be. As a village and town, we shouldn't be bigots or racist or homophobic. We should be welcoming. She wants people to feel safe and welcome and this statement does it well. It is simple. It gets to the point. It tells what we aren't going to accept. If someone thinks it is negative, she wants to hear what they don't agree with in it.

Walter said he totally understands and agrees with an inclusivity statement and as a village trustee he looks at how we can support the community and its organizations and businesses. He wants to follow their lead and lead them if he has to. The largest organizations in this town have done an excellent job coming up with statements that are better than our proposed inclusivity statement. He read from the statements of NVU, Laraway, and Johnson Elementary School. They have no negative language. Each is aspirational. That's what he thinks an inclusivity statement should be.

Jasmine Yuris said she wants to echo what Sophia and Katie Crown have said. There are many statements organizations and towns can have. There can be a mission statement in the future that should be positive. She feels this is what an inclusivity statement needs to be.

Kyle said the importance of the language is to not make an abstraction of our tolerance. The language is very direct. It is what people want to hear we don't tolerate. It is not abstract. That is the point of an inclusivity statement.

Diane asked Walter what is negative about the statement. She doesn't see anything negative. It is all to make someone who moves here or lives here feel safer.

Walter said the line he really doesn't like is "We reject racism, bigotry, discrimination, violence and hatred in all its forms." Diane asked why. Walter said he believes we should promote good thoughts, good values, and good actions.

Jackie Stanton said she agrees with everything Barbara said about this town. She came here in 1983 and she loves it. The statements from other institutions that Walter read are all vision and mission statements. Those are different from an inclusivity statement. She found 3 inclusivity statements online. Many colleges, universities, towns, cities and churches have them, separate from vision and mission statements. She read parts of inclusivity statements from UVM, the American Veterinary Medical Association, and the City of Alexandria, Virginia. All include the type of language Walter referred to as negative. These are all inclusivity statements, not mission statements. It is unpleasant to think about our town having to come up with something like this, but we would want our kids growing up knowing that the town they live in cares enough to get past the unpleasantness. Let's stretch and support each other. It's not a bad thing or a mean thing to say what we push back against.

Kim said this statement gives clear boundaries of what we won't tolerate. She doesn't know what the next steps are – how we support what we believe. If not knowing where to go forward is part of the resistance to the statement, she understands.

Gordy commended everyone present for getting the discussion started. He agrees that adoption of a statement should be voted on by village voters. He tends to agree with Walter about having positive statements. The middle sentence brings negatives out in the open instead of being positive. We are all going in the same direction on slightly different paths. The trustee board will make a decision next month on a statement. Anyone can circulate a petition for an article on the village warning or we could put both proposed statements out there and let people decide.

Scott said during the town selectboard meeting on this topic representatives from each of the organizations whose statements Walter read spoke with a high level of clarity about their support

for the way the statement was written. That speaks volumes. He has no issue with the way this is written. His intention at the next meeting in February is to make a motion to get this statement as written as an article for voters to discuss at the village meeting. If people are not happy with the way it is written they can voice their opinions at the village meeting. He thinks it is important to leave it as is. It is not pretty but racism isn't either. He doesn't want to live in a community that steps around it. He wants it spelled out with our heels dug in.

Diane said the statement makes us look at ourselves and ask, "Am I racist? Am I homophobic?" She thinks we should move towards educating more people about bigotry and racism and talking about it. Then when something happens people won't be afraid to stand up for the person who got hurt.

Walter said he agrees with her on that. He thinks the best thing about this is the discussion that is happening.

Phil said he supports putting it on the village meeting agenda as written.

Bob said if people know they are bothering you they will do it more. He thinks the less negative the better.

Sophia Berard said she would welcome anyone drafting a more positive statement that could be included with the inclusivity statement, as other organizations include mission and value statements. Kylie Gellatly agreed.

Walter asked if people would like the article to be discussed and possibly amended on the floor, vs. being voted by Australian ballot. Jasmine Yuris asked, it could be changed at the village meeting? Board members said any article can be amended. Jasmine asked, why not vote by Australian ballot? Rosemary said Australian ballot is only for officer elections. Walter said in that case it would be a floor vote and anything on the floor can be amended.

Bob asked if it was a one-time incident that started this. Several people said there have been multiple incidents. Kylie said this is not about the past, it is about the future. It is important to know it can happen again. *(All members of the public left at 7:13.)*

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

Meredith reviewed Dan's report. All wastewater samples met state requirements. E-DMR and WR-43 reports were submitted. There were 2 callouts for the wastewater plant due to programming bugs in the PLC upgrade.

Dan and Meredith meet with Purpose Energy. They are conducting the feasibility study for LCPC on locating a high strength waste digester in Lamoille County. Because Johnson doesn't have a high strength producer Johnson is a less attractive location for it. It is more cost effective to have it near producers. It doesn't seem likely that it will end up here.

Slack Chemical installed a new polymer make down until for the belt press. By switching polymer companies we got a new unit at no cost. It looks like there will be a cost decrease for the polymer. Some metal guarding over the belt press was replaced using existing material that was on hand.

The village public works department dug a trench to run conduit for new alarms at the River Road pump station. The company installing the alarm dialer will also look at what will work best for early notification of rising water at the plant.

On December 20 flood gates were installed at the WWTF in anticipation of rising water and they were left in for the weekend.

The new PLC has been installed and is up and running. As mentioned previously, there will be some associated overtime.

A compressor failed at the River Road pump station. It was found during regular rounds in near overflow condition. It could have been a bad situation. It is good that we are getting a communication system up so we can be notified when something happens.

Water samples were all good. There were no callouts for the water system.

GW Savage finished work at the Nadeau Well. They did not remove the heaters that mice probably lived in. Staff will remove those. Savage is giving us a credit for not doing that part of the job. The flooring was left in place. Dan said staff may rip up the linoleum and paint the floor.

Scott asked if we know the age of the linoleum. Gordy said it would be from about the mid 70's. Scott said mastic from that period can have asbestos. We are better off leaving it in place.

Scott said the health department has been asking schools to check lead levels in drinking water. Has Johnson Elementary been part of that? Meredith said she believes so. She believes we helped them with the testing.

**8. *Foreman Report and Action Items***

Troy said the retired transformers were all tested and marked for recycling. Our crew continued right of way cutting on Clay Hill and Gould Hill during the last month. The contractors finished trimming both main feeder lines out of the substation. The crew completed monthly meter readings, disconnects and Dig Safes. The crew kept up with winter sidewalk sanding, plowing and equipment maintenance. Holiday garland and lights were taken down. NEPPA safety classes for 2019 have been selected and scheduled. 2018 outage records were submitted for the PUC annual report. All 2018 safety records and tailboard forms were filed. The annual permit for routine maintenance and repair along state highways was submitted to the Agency of Transportation. True-ups were completed for 3 customers.

Walter said the crew has been doing a great job on the sidewalks. He asked if Jeff and Chan have gone to training. Troy said they go in February.

**9. *Village Manager Report and Action Items***

Meredith gave the board copies of two written comments from citizens about the inclusivity statement.

Meredith said the town has given the village a new version of the quit claim deed for the East Johnson sewer system. They added back a reference to design drawings. There is also a reference to the highway right of way permit from the state, which is what we have in place of a formal easement. That is put in as evidence that the state knew about the sewer line and permitted it.

Walter asked if our lawyer is happy with this version. Meredith said yes.

**Gordy moved and Scott seconded to accept the quit claim deed for the East Johnson sewer system pending approval of the quit claim deed by the selectboard.** Gordy said he reviewed old minutes and found that the selectboard first discussed the East Johnson sewer system in December 1973 and the trustees first discussed it in 1972. **The motion was passed.**

Meredith said she has been working on an RFP for engineering and design services to come up with construction plans for the Pearl Street sidewalk project. (*Arjay West arrived at 7:29.*) She sent it to the state's bike/pedestrian person and hasn't yet heard back from him.

Walter asked about the alternatives we had discussed that go a little above and beyond what we showed on the map. Meredith said she doesn't think we can get funding for a crosswalk across School Street but she doesn't see a problem with having that designed. It would probably be a bid alternate. Walter asked if the green space Jim MacDowell was talking about will be an alternate. Meredith said she was thinking she would put it in as part of the project. She still has to talk to the town and ask about what would work best for plowing. She thinks whatever they say would work best for their road maintenance is what we would put forth.

Meredith said hopefully we can have designs ready in March. The board agreed that the sidewalk project should be put on the selectboard agenda for next week to make sure they support it. The board agreed it is okay for Meredith to issue the RFP as soon as it has been reviewed by the state.

Arjay reviewed the proposed fire department budget. They made no changes to revenue. They increased labor expenses slightly to a figure that seems more in line with call volume and demands.

Walter said usually the fire department tries to increase pay when minimum wage changes, but no change in wage is proposed. Arjay said because of some unanticipated expenses he was not going to not ask for a wage increase this year. The fire department has traditionally been 50 cents above minimum wage. Minimum wage went up to \$10.78. We are still above it, but not by 50 cents. The average call duration is 115 minutes. Employees get a little benefit because we round up in half hour increments. He is okay with not asking for a payroll increase now because he thinks the money we need to generate needs to go to other projects. A 50 cent increase costs about \$1500. He would love to offer it to employees. But his proposed budget is about a 2.25% increase to contract towns, which is a little larger than his target.

Scott asked which types of calls there have been increases in. Arjay said the two biggest categories that have increased are vehicle accidents and alarms (smoke, carbon dioxide.) The fire burden is pretty level.

Walter asked if there are any frequent false alarms. He has heard other towns discuss a charge for those. Arjay said that has been on their radar. There are a couple of places that have repeated false alarms – the college and Laraway, especially Laraway's residential house. The fire department was able to work with Laraway's management team and they were able to change around some appliances to reduce false alarms. They have had good luck looking at reasons and solutions for false alarms and so far they haven't felt it necessary to ask for an ordinance. They have been afraid

an ordinance might discourage someone from better protecting themselves because they were afraid of a fine. We would probably only be looking at \$500 to \$1000 income from fines and labor and wear and tear from the calls cost a little more than that so working with people to find solutions is better.

Insurance costs stayed down. Arjay increased office supplies by a couple hundred dollars in line with expenses this year. Training expenses stays the same. A slight adjustment was made to electricity based on actuals. Heat was over budget this past year. He made a slight adjustment in that. Building supplies is one of the biggest increases. There was a leak in the sprinkler system. The system has been made operational by patching but two pipes need repairs. He doesn't have an estimate yet but expects that will cost \$1500 to \$2K. Some exterior painting needs to be done and he would like to try to get an exterminator to the building. He made a very small adjustment to vehicle maintenance. Scott had asked about getting service for International vs. Ford. Annual service at Clark's was a little cheaper than service from local garages so he is not scared about having another International. There is a slight increase for tools and accessories. There is an \$800 increase for communications equipment to buy a subscription for a secondary alert system for firefighters. It would allow people to indicate they are responding so it would let us know what staffing level to expect. He thinks that will cost about \$500-600.

The budget calls for putting \$56K into the truck capital reserve and \$20K into the small tools reserve fund. We will be spending about \$96K on trucks this year. We will put \$56K into the savings account and the balance will be covered by the amount already in the account. We have about \$126K.

Meredith said there is a question about how much of the capital program should be run through the operating budget. There are 4 possible format options for presenting the fire department budget. One of them calls for running all capital through the operating budget. She and Rosemary feel we need guidance from the auditors about which to use. Walter said he does not think it matters what the auditors prefer. Our report is for the taxpayers and voters. His feeling is we should provide maximum clarity for the voters. We can make whatever adjustments the auditors need when they are needed. He asked Arjay if he thinks the budget is easier to explain to the town using the simpler format Arjay prefers. Arjay said he believes it is.

Arjay said he is expecting the trustees want a zero increase in fire department costs for the village. The proposed budget would be a 2.25% increase for the 3 contract towns if we want to spread the increase evenly among the towns. The increase for Johnson would be \$1874, the increase for Waterville would be \$453 and the increase for Belvidere would be \$292.

Arjay explained the capital plans to Phil. The fire department has 2 capital plans in addition to their day-to-day operational budget. One is a capital truck plan. They are contributing \$56,200 into the truck plan this year. The annual contribution has 2% inflationary growth. They are planning on payments based on a 3.5% loan rate. There is also a tools and equipment capital plan for purchase of 6 different types of tools. Part of revenue is put into funds for these plans. Gordy said before there was a capital plan there would be huge spikes in the budget. Now we build the fund for a few years before we draw money out of it so there are not huge spikes.

Walter asked what Arjay would cut if he had to cut. Arjay said he thinks there is room to take a little out of a couple of different categories. He could probably take a little from tools and accessories and maintenance and he might be able to increase billable calls income. But he is inclined to keep that low and let any additional amount be a positive situation.

Walter said he is trying to keep everyone's budget increases zero across the board. Arjay said he thinks that would be a really big burden, mostly because of projects needed at the station and because he thinks we need room to absorb some additional payroll.

Walter said there were a few years when we had a surplus and put it in the small equipment fund, so it is overfunded. Do we really need that money or can we take some out and use it to cover expenses like the sprinkler system?

Arjay said we were anticipating that the small tools fund might have problems purchasing what was planned and we took advantage of an opportunity to move the balance up. He thinks we would be wise not to remove money from that savings account. We have done 2 years of no increase to the contract towns. He is seeing that other departments have increases of 3%, 5%, or 8%. He thinks the fire department would survive if the increase is not 2.25% but he thinks it should not be at zero and he feels it is important not to take money out of the capital fund. That is a shock absorber for us.

Meredith said she hasn't gotten confirmation from the college that they will pay \$6K this year. She would hate to chip away too much. We would want something to fall back on if we got news they wouldn't fund it.

Arjay said the fire department has bought 3 trucks from the capital plan that cost more than the amount anticipated in the plan. They have decided to put together a 7-person committee to audit the capital plan. They understand that the plan as we have it is falling a little short, which is not a huge problem now but if we don't make a slight adjustment then there will be bigger problems ten or so years from now. The committee is tasked with thinking about all the criteria that affect the truck fleet and seeing if they can come up with new ideas. Once they come up with ideas there will be a financial evaluation of their feasibility.

Walter asked if the fire department is looking at all operations, such as water rescue. Arjay said water rescue is potentially very expensive. If there needs to be a change to help lessen the burden he has some suggestions about how we might still respond to small town disasters but not necessarily be on call for the state. Many different ideas will come up.

Walter asked Meredith how hard she thinks it will be to get the general fund budget to balance this year. Meredith said she thinks we will be able to do it. She is a little more worried about water and sewer.

Walter suggested increasing the assessment to towns by only 1%. Arjay can pull some money out of his budget and we can figure out how to fund the rest.

Scott said he would suggest that Arjay not reduce the budget for maintenance on vehicles and equipment. That would be a life safety issue and also a safety and health issue for staff.

Scott asked if the rate the fire department charges for water rescue is higher if they go outside the town. Arjay said no. Scott asked why. Arjay said the compensation the firefighters get is the same. He explained that if the fire department responds to an emergency call in a contract town they don't give the town a bill unless they do some duty above and beyond mitigating the emergency. If they send a bill they use a rate schedule for each truck. He thinks it is \$400/hr for engines, maybe \$250 for a tanker and \$100 for a rescue. And they bill an amount for wages slightly higher than what we pay. There is also reimbursement for items like Speedy Dry. We offer water rescue as mutual aid to neighboring towns at no charge. Every department in the county tries to pick one thing they can offer. If we do something for Vermont Emergency Management we can bill them based on their rate sheet. The state determines the rate schedule. We agreed to it in a memorandum of understanding.

Scott asked, the hardship with water rescue is the maintenance and training? Arjay said it takes a lot to get people to do specialized training and a lot of water rescue equipment will need to be replaced and it's not a line item anywhere in the budget. Ten or 15 years ago agreeing to have the amount of equipment needed to be ready for response when requested by the state was beneficial because there were a lot of grant funds available. Now funding has been cut. You could argue that the taxpayers are preparing an asset for the state and we haven't gotten a return in the last couple years. He would like to see us have a rapid response for the county. We could probably pare down the equipment and garments. We wouldn't stop the program but we would consider our response goals. The MOU with the state is renewed annually. Right now he probably would stay in to see if some new grants may be available.

Scott said he feels it is important for Lamoille County to have that resource with the Lamoille and Gihon rivers and increasing recreation on them. Walter asked, but should the village taxpayers pay for it? Scott said New Hampshire charges for rescues due to someone doing something foolish.

Scott asked about the timeline for brainstorming the capital budget plan. Arjay said they will start immediately. He thinks it will take at least 6 months, probably closer to a year. Guidance from that effort won't be available until the next budget season.

Scott said we are trying to get young families here. That means kids and we have two waterways that can be deadly so he would not want to not have that service. Arjay agreed. He said he thinks there is benefit to keeping it as a local service but the burden of being an activation-ready team needs to be looked at.

Scott suggested an increase somewhere between 1% and 2.25%. He said he thinks 1% would be very tight. Arjay said 1% is \$1164. Walter said if we wanted the increase to be 1% that would mean \$1500 would have to be cut from the budget. Scott said we are talking about a small amount of money and public safety. He doesn't want equipment to fail or a kid to drown to save \$1500.

Walter gave comparison figures for how much town residents and village residents pay for fire service on a \$150K house. Village residents pay more. Gordy said because we own the emergency service, he wants to see money dropped each year from what village residents are paying and put onto the town. They are getting a good deal on fire protection. They are paying less than most towns.

Phil asked how Waterville's and Belvidere's charges are calculated. Arjay said 15 or so years ago they were billed per call. But that was hard for the fire department because some years revenue was up and some down. So the fire department talked to the selectboard about a contract for a set amount. Since then the amount has had inflationary growth. Gordy said the charge was based on the average of the 3 previous years compared to the grand list and rates per hour.

Gordy said he doesn't want what we charge village residents to be increased a penny. But he knows that if the fire department could have come in at a zero increase they would have.

Walter suggested a 2% increase to towns, with Arjay finding some cuts. Other board members agreed. Arjay agreed.

**Walter moved to direct Meredith to tell the fire department contract towns that we plan to increase contract costs by 2% for the coming year, seconded by Bob.** Arjay said with a 2% increase Johnson's cost will go up \$1666. Gordy said NEMS is going up quite a few thousand. **The motion was passed.** (Arjay left at 8:38.)

The village received an excess water adjustment application from the owners of Katy Win mobile home park. They had an in ground water leak under a mobile home they own. It was repaired. They feel confident it did not go through the sewer. The leak spanned 3 billing periods. According to our policy their \$407.05 bill could be adjusted to a total of \$212.75 by using the 3-month average for the water charge and the highest amount from the past 12 months for the sewer charge. **Walter moved to adjust Ship Sevin's November 1 bill to a sewer charge of \$105.38 and a water charge of \$107.37, Phil seconded and the motion was passed.**

Meredith shared with the board the estimate she got for powerhouse demolition. She also anticipates getting a second estimate. She has continued to work with the state to determine whether funding through the Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund is possible. We haven't gotten a final determination. We could get a loan for 100% of the cost with 50% forgiveness. If we are eligible she would need to figure out if we get can get Section 108 approval to borrow the money. VPPSA is also trying to get a bill passed that would allow them to do Section 108 approval.

Gordy asked if it would be helpful for legislators to get involved. Meredith said she thinks if we get a determination that we are not eligible without a clear idea why we are not, maybe then we would ask our legislators to take another look.

Walter said it sounds like nothing will happen this winter. Meredith said she tells people we are trying to expedite the process and she thinks they are trying, but these things take time. She has also been working on historical preservation requirements. Walter urged speed.

Meredith said we are also waiting on EPA permits. She is not sure if the shutdown is affecting that. Phil said EPA employees are all furloughed.

Meredith asked if the board would prefer to have the work done as soon as possible and pay 100% of the cost. We have to think of risk vs. cost to taxpayers. Walter said if the building falls in the

river the ratepayers will suffer. He feels we have to move forward fast. If we get approval to tear it down he would like to do that and work to get money back afterward.

Meredith said if we get a grant there will have to be state approval of the contractor and red tape. She will try to figure out how to speed up the process to get approval to remove and dispose of the building and we will see what the next cost proposal is. She will take the advice to focus more on speed vs. funding.

Scott said he wonders if the Brownfields program will look at these proposals and give us guidance. We need clarification on whether 3<sup>rd</sup> party evaluation for asbestos is required. Meredith said the plan will have to be reviewed by the EPA and the state to make sure it meets their requirements.

Scott said he thinks dismantling the concrete pad and foundation would cause more harm to the river. In some cases contamination can be removed from the concrete pad and the concrete can then be left alone. He is not sure who makes the call as to whether that is a possibility. Gordy said if we leave the concrete in the river we will have to be careful about protection to keep people from falling off it. Meredith said the contractor who gave the estimate was encouraging us to leave the concrete in place. Maybe leaving it could satisfy some historic preservation requirements. Walter said the estimate includes some of the foundation. Troy said that is the part that isn't in the river.

Meredith said the estimates she is getting now are just budgetary estimates. When we are ready to do the work we will have to get another round of estimates.

Meredith handed out a budget timeline. At the regular February meeting she will try to have drafts of all the department budgets. There will be one special budget meeting during the week of February 25 and the village meeting warning has to be posted by March 1. The village meeting will be at the school this year. The final budget meeting will be the week of March 4 and the village report will be sent out the week of March 11.

Meredith said we may need to consider a water/sewer rate increase. The last increase was in 2016.

Walter asked if we could do a bond vote for sewer. Meredith said she doesn't think we will have numbers ready.

Meredith said the board should do annual employee evaluations. She can email out the evaluation forms for her and Troy. The board agreed forms should be sent to Rosemary by 2 weeks from today and then Gordy and Walter will schedule time to meet with Troy and with Meredith.

Gordy said Stanley Wescom told him he is starting to get work booked for summer so Gordy wanted to see if the board can approve going out to bid to secure a contractor for the municipal building work.

Meredith said the town was pretty adamant about wanting to go out to bid again next year. We don't have an approved budget yet. Are we comfortable telling Stanley he has the job if he has the winning bid and assuming things will work out budgetwise for both the town and the village? She

doesn't think there is a huge risk in that. We need town approval. The board agreed she should tell Brian we want to go out to bid.

Meredith said the bids for the merger study are due Friday and she and Brian haven't heard from anyone asking questions. They are not sure if we will get bids. She reached out to two people she knows to see if they know anyone who might be interested in bidding. Scott asked, what if we get no bids? Meredith said Eric and Brian had talked about maybe having a citizen group do the study but that doesn't meet the requirement of being an independent third party. We would probably have to go to another vote.

Meredith said she sent Elizabeth Emmons the comments Walter and Scott had on goals for the asset management plan and she made some changes in response. (*Troy left at 9:10.*) If the board wants to see more changes we can talk about it. (*Rosemary left at 9:11.*)

**Walter moved to go into executive session for a personnel matter, the motion was seconded and passed and the board entered executive session at 9:11.** The board came out of executive session at 9:20.

***10. Adjourn***

**Walter moved and Scott seconded to adjourn at 9:20 and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*