

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2019

Present:

Trustees: Scott Meyer, Brian Raulinaitis, Gordon Smith, Bob Sweetser (by phone), Phil Wilson

Others: Troy Dolan, Rene Audet

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:00.

2. Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda

Phil added discussion about the Efficiency Vermont meeting he will attend next month on behalf of the utility. Gordy added discussion on broadband. Scott added an information item about the inclusivity training the selectboard is putting together.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Scott moved to approve the minutes of October 14, 2019 and the motion was seconded and passed.

4. Treasurer's Report / Approve Bills and Warrants / Budget Status Report / Action Items

Rosemary said electric department sales through October are at 85% of budget. Power purchases through September are at 73% of budget. Electric department expenditures are at 84% of budget. Water sales through October are at 88% of budget. Sewer sales are at 86%. The town has paid for the fire contract and the 10 cents on the grand list. Jan sent a reminder notice to Waterville. They have only paid the first 2 installments for their fire contract. Gordy asked if anything stands out for the general budget. Rosemary said no, but if it keeps snowing like this we may be a little over on sidewalks, etc. We are already at 89%. Rosemary handed out copies of the 2017 audit and a list of delinquent taxes.

5. Application for Revolving Loan

Rene Audet said he got the water line to his house repaired. He doesn't understand why if one pipe goes across the river to 2 houses and 2 shutoffs it is his responsibility. Gordy said our policy is that we maintain the line to the first curb stop.

Troy said he can turn the water back on once Rene signs the document stating that the village didn't make the repairs. Rene said he is a little leery of signing. Is it just so he becomes totally liable for everything there? Gordy said the village is responsible to the first curb stop. But that will be a moot point if Rene gets a well drilled as planned.

Rene said he thinks he will have the well drilled in the spring. It will be harder and more expensive to get it drilled now. He wants to get the water turned back on now and drill a well in the spring. If he is willing to sign the paper, when can the village turn the water on? Troy said he can do it first thing tomorrow morning. The paper just says that the village didn't make their repairs and is not responsible for the repairs that were made. In the past there have been problems where a customer said a problem was caused by work the village did long ago. This is to avoid that.

Gordy said part of Rene's property is in the village, so he can qualify for a loan of up to \$10K from the village revolving loan fund for a well. The payback period is 5 years.

Bob brought up the interest rate. Gordy said he and Bob had discussed making the interest rate as low as possible because of the emergency situation. Rosemary said she thinks we can't go any lower than half a percent.

Bob moved to accept Rene Audet's application for a 5-year loan of \$10,000 from the revolving loan fund at an interest rate of 0.5%, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.

Phil asked, the water line is buried under the river? Troy said it's not buried; it lies along the bottom of the river

6. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

The board reviewed Dan's written report. He said they were able to get the press up and running November 11 by bypassing the control unit. It is not ideal but it will work until we can get a new control unit here. The control unit was under water during the flood. Troy thinks he found where the water was coming in and can fix it. Utility Partners worked 18 hours of overtime during the flood. They will pick up that cost with no additional billing to the village.

7. *Foreman Report and Action Items*

Troy said on October 15 the electric department participated in the fall ISO New England voltage reduction test. We had no issues. All equipment functioned properly.

The crew replaced two failed line insulators on Wescom Road and cut one span of right of way in the same area. The contract right of way work began in mid October and so far they have cut about 35 danger trees.

There was a planned outage on October 30 on Foote Brook to retie in a phase wire. It affected 20 customers. Power was out for about an hour and a half. On November 1 there were 6 line outages related to high winds. Throughout the day about 150 customers were affected. All power was restored by 6:00 pm.

The crew completed meter reading, high/low readings, Dig Safes and disconnect/reconnects.

Toward the end of October all catch basins were cleaned by Hartigan and our crews. Cleaning was finished about 3 days before the flood and Troy thinks it helped during the flood. In the early morning hours of November 1 the on-call employees were called in to deal with high water issues and assess whether electric service needed to be shut off in affected homes.

The crew assisted the contractor in making water and sewer connections to our lines at the Duffy property on Route 15. In response to the house fire on Lower Main Street the crew shut off the water service at the request of the property owner.

All fire hydrants in the village were flushed and pumped down. All fire extinguishers passed their 6 month inspection. Troy ordered 6 new line transformers to restock our inventory and one padmount to replace the one at Nadeau Sand and Gravel. Troy worked with the right of way contractor to identify danger trees. He made arrangements for some truck maintenance.

Scott thanked the crew for all the hard work during the Halloween event. He was happy that danger trees had been mostly removed before that.

8. Request to Tap Trees on Water Plant Property

Laraway School is asking to tap trees on the water plant property. Scott said he thinks that is a great idea but their letter doesn't say how many trees and doesn't say if they want to use buckets or lines. Bob said he wants to know if they got approval from the Osgoods. Gordy said we agreed with the Osgoods when they sold the property that they have the right to review what we do on the property. It was agreed that Troy should meet with Laraway and get more information about their plans and also check with the Osgoods.

9. Efficiency Vermont Targeted Community

Gordy said Efficiency Vermont targets communities that have an excess burden on their electric. We are in the upper tier on this but only because about 25% of our village residents are below the federal poverty level. Gordy asked Meredith to find out where our electric rates are compared to other utilities and we are right in the middle, lower than VEC, GMP or Washington Electric. Gordy said Meredith wanted to make sure it was relayed to VPPSA that we weren't picked because our rates were the highest. It looks like money might be available for the municipal building. Gordy feels if we can get money from Efficiency Vermont we should go after it. Phil agreed. Gordy said no action is needed; we have already been picked.

10. B-22 Upgrade Update

Gordy said when we were initially approached by GMP about the proposed B-22 upgrade we were told there would be no cost to us. Now they want us to pay \$31K. But the upgrade will provide some benefits to us. The board agreed to work with Morrisville's attorney to try to negotiate a 50% reduction in what they are asking us to pay.

11. Trail Development Update

Gordy said Meredith sent Walter's correspondence to our attorney. Our attorney said we should get a jurisdictional opinion from Act 250 directly. Gordy wants to help Walter move forward with trails but if we do anything with the property in the future we probably will have to address Act 250 so this could help in the future. Scott said if we have to go through the Act 250 process the project could get bogged down but if we want to do something with that property we might as well get the opinion. Phil said getting a jurisdictional opinion is just asking if we need an Act 250 permit. Hopefully it would just take one meeting of the Act 250 board. Brian asked what would happen if we just went ahead and built trails. Phil said if we do future development they might say that we should have gotten an Act 250 permit for the trails. Scott suggested asking the Long Trail people if they go through Act 250 when they relocate trails. Phil asked what Meredith's opinion is. Gordy said she feels we should protect the village and get a jurisdictional opinion. Scott said our plan to develop trails will be in the minutes and on our webpage. Gordy said it may be in the News & Citizen. Scott said he would rather get the opinion done. It was agreed that Gordy will reach out to Meredith to find out how we proceed to get a jurisdictional opinion.

12. Halloween Flood Update

Gordy said the new motor control needed at the WWTF will cost about \$5K. Meredith will send a claim to our insurance but also wants to work with the selectboard and town administrator to see if we can get reimbursement from FEMA. The board agreed with that approach.

Brian asked if the library is the responsibility of the village or the town. Others said the town. Brian said he was in the basement of the library with his own personal sump pump. He thinks the library could have a better plan than having people in the building sweeping water all day.

Scott said he has brought up this concern before and never gotten a good answer. Under the ICS structure the village is often left out. Until Gordy called him he had no idea what was going on

during the flood. Trustees are not on the call list. Troy said Eric notified him of the situation Friday night.

Scott said he has had ICS training. He has offered in the past to be involved with incidents like this and has not been taken up on the offer. When Kim brought up at the selectboard meeting that there are people in town with the credentials to run an Incident Command System, Nat said the town could use those people as flaggers. That is unsettling. The village trustees should be at the table during emergencies.

Gordy said about halfway through the event he asked Eric to meet with Arjay at the fire station. Arjay gave a rundown of all the fire department had done. Later that evening Gordy and Eric met with Arjay again for a final wrap up.

Scott said Meredith would hopefully be at the table typically. When she is out it would probably default to Gordy, but he was very involved with the fire department. Nothing was coming to the rest of the trustees.

Brian said Jeanne Engel didn't get a phone call from anyone until Nat called her at 8:30. She went to the library at 6:30 am because she thought she should. He thinks she should have been contacted earlier.

Gordy said maybe we can work on having some kind of operational plan for the next emergency. Scott said he thinks it should be the same as what the selectboard is using because we are using the same assets. Gordy said the village has a lot of infrastructure and responsibility. Gordy suggested maybe trustees could be liaisons for electric, water and sewer.

Phil asked if this is worth speaking to the selectboard about the next time we have a joint meeting. Gordy said yes. He said Eric did ask him if he could contact Troy directly and he said yes.

13. Broadband Discussion

Gordy said he went to part of the last selectboard meeting and read their minutes. The town has broadband committee and we have a utility. He thinks we should be working together. Phil said it seems like the committee is working with a private company to tie into existing broadband that goes from Cambridge to Stowe. That is a different track than the utility working with VPPSA to study feasibility of providing broadband through the utility. Gordy said he thinks the village should be communicating with the town about this.

Scott said it was mentioned at the selectboard meeting that by statute there is a right to hang cables on poles for broadband. But there has to be clearance on the pole. Troy said labor and material costs to hang cable on poles adds up fast. Scott said he thinks it would be good for the selectboard and others to understand that a company can't necessarily hang wire on a pole if there is not room. In that case the pole would have to be replaced. Troy agreed that is true. Scott said that message is not clear. Phil said someone could go to the broadband committee meetings. Scott said he goes now but he wants to make sure he has the correct facts.

14. Broadband Discussion

Phil said we were invited to an Efficiency Vermont weatherization meeting in Hyde Park on December 5. VPPSA will be there talking about programs we participate in. He will be there

representing our utility. He thought he could talk about how our revolving loan fund can be used for energy efficiency upgrades. Is there anything else people want him to say regarding the utility?

Bob said about 25 years ago there were similar programs that resulted in new windows and insulation being put in to help landlords fix up their buildings at the public's expense. He is not in favor of making landlords rich.

Scott asked what happened to our EV charger. Rosemary said it is broken. Troy said he believes Brian has contacted someone about getting it fixed.

Phil said he will take information about our revolving loan fund to the meeting. Gordy suggested maybe Phil could give information about the Efficiency Vermont incentives to Meredith for the quarterly newsletter.

15. Inclusivity Training

Scott said the selectboard hired someone from the state to do a 4-hour training on the second or third Saturday in January. It will be open to the public, employees, trustees – anyone who would like to go. He thinks they would like to have it at the elementary school gym and are considering Sunday as an alternative day because the gym may be busy on Saturdays. This is supposed to be a really good training. He has had similar training before in his old jobs and has always walked away with more understanding. He would encourage everyone to go.

Gordy asked what the goal of the training is. Scott said to bring awareness and to teach people to say something if they see something that should not be happening. Gordy said the problem is that the people who need to go won't. Brian said the people who go will interact with those people on a daily basis. Scott said training will help people de-escalate things.

Brian asked, there are no capacity limits? Scott said not yet. Brian Story is trying to get a feel for it. He thinks they are trying to have it at the elementary school or possibly the college.

16. Adjourn

Scott moved and Bob seconded to adjourn at 7:34 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths