

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2018

Present:

Trustees: Gordon Smith, Walter Pomroy, Scott Meyer, David Goddette

Others: Meredith Birkett, Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Tom Elwood, Virginia Bogni-LeMay, Brian Raulinaitis

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:05.

2. Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda

Meredith added revising and reapproving the sewer budget, an action item under the WWTF chief operator's report, and approving the minutes of January 8 and January 19. Walter added discussions of legal bills and graffiti.

Gordy noted that Bob was unable to participate in this meeting because he had an appointment.

3. Treasurer's Report & Review and Approve Bills and Warrants

Scott asked about a bill for almost \$5K. Tom said that was for replacing the grinder pump we had on the shelf that he used after the flood. Meredith said it should be covered by insurance. Tom said he thinks he will put the new one in place and put the other one back on the shelf.

Scott said it is a little annoying to see a bill from Vermont Energy Efficiency when they didn't want to help pay for energy efficient windows or insulation we were putting in. Can we get Matt Hill involved? He is tired of paying them and getting nothing.

4. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Scott moved to approve the minutes of January 8, January 19, February 12, February 26, and March 5, 2018 and the motion was seconded and passed.

5. Treasurer's Report & Review and Approve Bills and Warrants (continued)

Rosemary said she is probably 95% done with this fiscal year. She hasn't yet moved money into the reserve funds for water and sewer in accordance with the board's decisions at the last meeting.

Walter noted that for the electric department both income and expense are at 97% of budget.

Meredith said Susan noticed that some of the actuals for the water department had changed from what Meredith had in her spreadsheet. That changes the amount to go into the reserve fund by a few hundred dollars. The general department budget has the \$6K from the college in it. We received the check on Friday.

Rosemary handed out a list of delinquent taxes. The date for the tax sale has not been set yet.

Scott asked if it would it take legislative change to change how we deal with mobile homes whose owners are delinquent on taxes. For instance, going after the person who owns the

land. We keep losing money on mobile homes. It could be helpful to put a lien on the land, but it would take legislative action. Maybe legislators could discuss this or have a study report done. It is costing taxpayers money. Maybe we should contact our legislators.

Rosemary handed out a report showing each employee's accrued time.

6. Virginia Bogni-LeMay – High Water Usage

Jinny Bogni-LeMay showed the board a graph illustrating how much higher her January 2018 water bill was than her other water bills. She did a lot of things to try to figure out what the problem was. She checked for leaks under her sinks. She looked underneath her trailer. Tom gave her the idea of putting food coloring in the backs of her toilets and she couldn't get any colors to trickle through. She had left a faucet dripping when it was very cold so she left a faucet dripping overnight and measured the amount of water that came out, which was small. She went to where the meters are at Katy Win. They are hard to read because of the way they face. She wonders if it is possible the meter was read wrong by mistake. She can find no reason for this to have happened. Her bill was back to normal in February and the March amount so far seems similar to past readings.

Scott asked if she had had any company during the time her water usage was higher. She said no.

Dave asked Tom what he thinks. Tom said he doesn't know what to think. He is not allowed to do any plumbing to investigate issues so he showed Jinny the food coloring trick. Meters are read using a touch pad, not by looking at them. Troy and Tom said an analog reading was also done after Jinny called and it was consistent with the touch pad reading.

Gordy asked, if the meter was read wrong then wouldn't the next month's bill be a lot less than usual? Tom, Troy and Meredith agreed that would be the case.

Tom said the January bill seems way out of line compared to Jinny's usual water usage. It was 6000 gallons more than she usually uses. He asked if there is a remedy when we can't explain what happened.

Meredith said according to village policy we would not adjust Jinny's water bill because her charge is less than 3 times the last month's bill. If there is proof the water did not go down the sewer we could adjust her sewer bill by \$66.98.

Jinny said it is difficult to get such a high bill when she is on a fixed income. She doesn't feel she should have to eat this regardless of what the policy says. It is not fair.

She had left a bathroom faucet dripping when it was really cold but when she left a measuring cup underneath overnight it was not even a cup of water. Scott looked up information online and found that if a faucet has 10 drips per minute that wastes 43 gallons a year. So we can rule out the dripping faucet. The information he found said a leaking toilet wastes \$6K gallons a month. Jinny said she tried looking for a leak 3 times with 3 different colors of dye. Scott asked her if she has ever noticed the toilet staying on or if she has to jiggle the handle. She said no.

Walter said we have to be consistent in how we apply our policies. He will assume the water didn't go down the sewer. **Walter moved to adjust Virginia Bogni-LeMay's January sewer bill to the amount of the highest bill in the last 12 months (\$49.39) and Dave seconded.**

Jinny said she is still not happy. She feels the policy needs to be changed. The policy should take into account that a large bill can have a big effect on people.

Scott asked where the meter is compared to the trailer. Tom said in the heated meter house. The line from the meter to the trailer is the customer's. It is probably 500 feet at the most. Dave asked if there could be a leak in that line. Tom said there could be but it should show up the next month too. Walter said based on that it seems that any leak must have happened in Jinny's house. Scott asked if Jinny had noticed any construction equipment in the park in January. Jinny said no. Scott asked if there is any chance of someone being coupled on that system. Tom said no. Scott asked if Jinny has outside faucets. She said she has one but she shut it off in October.

Gordy asked about the effect of Walter's motion. He said it reduces Jinny's sewer bill by \$66.98, bringing it down to around \$110 vs. her average bill of around \$70. Gordy asked if there is any way we can let her pay the bill over time. Board members said that has been done for other customers. Walter asked Jinny if 3 months would be enough time for her to pay the bill. She said yes.

Walter and Dave agreed to a friendly amendment to the motion, allowing the bill to be paid over 3 months.

Gordy said we probably have at least 10 or 12 complaints a year similar to this. That is why we had to develop a policy so we could be consistent.

Gordy asked that Susan be instructed to check for variation in Jinny's bill for the next couple of months.

The motion was passed.

Scott said if 3 months turns out to be a challenge for Jinny she get back to us and let us know.

David asked if the meter house should be locked. Tom said it had been unlocked to give access to someone who does work at the trailer park. It should be locked.

7. *WWTF Chief Operator Report and Action Items*

Tom said all wastewater plant samples continue to meet high standards. There were no callouts for the wastewater plant. The #2 sludge pump is leaking and needs to be rebuilt. It is 23 years old and has a 25 year life expectancy. It has never been rebuilt. Tom ordered a rebuild kit and Wayne Graham from Rural Wastewater will provide free help and training on rebuilding. Tom ordered the new sampler. The new grinder motor and control panel that replaces the spare used after the flood has been received and we are waiting to install it. The

motors for the plant water pumps that got wet during the flood have been baked and rebuilt and are now on the shelf. The backflow preventers at the WWTF were tested and passed to satisfy state inspection requirements. All but one of the flood gates have been taken down. Tom and Steve attended an annual refresher flagger class. There were no callouts for the collection system. Lift station/siphon operational status is normal.

All water plant samples taken were good. Nitrate samples were taken on both wells and are available for review. A gross alpha sample was taken from the Nadeau well and we are awaiting results. There was one callout during the last storm for a tower communication error. Tom thinks it was due to the snow load on the trees. Water loss is between 15 and 20 percent.

The Cabin Cove master meter is malfunctioning. Tom suspects the meter head is bad. The meter manhole is a confined space entry so Tom will have to schedule a rescue team. It probably would be good to do other confined space entries on the same day.

Walter asked, there is no pressing need to get in and investigate the Cabin Cove meter? Tom said he thinks the first step is to open the manhole and pump it out and see if that cures the problem. The head is supposed to be an underwater head. The manufacturer thinks it is malfunctioning. We don't need to fix it immediately. It may be under warranty.

Meredith had previously shared with the trustees that Tom will be leaving to take another position. Gordy thanked Tom for his years of service and for providing 3 weeks of notice. He said he appreciates his work on the floods. **Dave moved to accept Tom Elwood's resignation effective April 9, 2018, Walter seconded and the motion was passed.**

Walter said at some point he would like to hear Tom's comments about filling the position. Part of that discussion might have to be in executive session. Scott said he would recommend an exit interview with the trustees under executive session at a later date. Meredith said she will schedule that.

8. *Foreman Report and Action Items*

Troy said during the last month the crew has been relocating the secondary service that feeds the customers near the twin bridges. All customers have been transferred to the new line. There will be a scheduled outage on March 15 to retire all the wire from the old poles and loop feed the primary line around Sinclair Road. While working on the twin bridges project the crew used traffic control and repaired some street lights that had failed on Route 15 and Route 100C.

Monthly meter reading, high/low reads and disconnect notices were completed. The digger and bucket truck passed the annual di-electric testing with no issues. The crews attended the required 2-year flagger training course and were recertified.

In the last few weeks we have made repairs to both Bobcats. The main hydraulic pump on the smaller unit loosened up and a bolt broke off in the engine housing. The crew has made a practice of checking things over after each time they pick up snow. They were lucky to find this issue quickly because if it had gone unnoticed it would have ruined the pump. The larger

unit needed both main bucket pins replaced because of its age. All equipment was serviced and cleaned.

Troy met with a customer to discuss installing two poles and two spans of overhead primary conductor to service his property. Troy will be meeting with the developer working on the Dollar General project to discuss what size service will be needed to serve the new store.

Troy has been working with Alan Lehouillier related to the production of his solar array. At this point the output of his array is comparable to the other 150 kW array on Gould Hill. Alan has been working with an electrical engineer who says the array should be capable of higher production if the supplier voltage were lowered. At this point the village has met all its requirements to serve the array and lowering the incoming voltage could affect the other customers on that circuit. Meredith said our position has been that it isn't up to us to make the array do what Alan wants. She feels making changes to our system to financially benefit him is not a reasonable request.

Troy said if there had been a 3-phase connection to the solar array it would have been better. There are issues with single phase solar. Any array that is 90 kW or bigger now has to be 3-phase. Meredith said we will make that our policy.

Meredith said she will reach out to Eli Emerson about what other utilities have been required to do in similar circumstances.

Walter asked where Jeff is as far as training on water and wastewater operations. Troy said he got has basic learner permit and has had zero training at the plant.

Scott asked how it will work if we need a water shutoff after Tom is gone. Troy said anything outside the plant will be done by him or his men.

9. Village Manager Report and Action Items

Meredith said Arjay saw in the minutes of the last meeting the statement that there was no official reserve fund for the fire department and he wanted to correct that. He provided past meeting minutes showing when fire department reserve funds were formally established.

Meredith said Susan proofed the electric department budget and asked a helpful question which turned out to be important. In the past, office expense has included fuel oil, postage, etc. Meredith had only included building repairs and not those other expenses. She has prepared a revised version of the budget that has \$24K added for office expenses.

Walter moved to approve the updated electric department budget and the motion was seconded and passed.

Meredith said after collecting all flood related expenses she updated the flood reimbursement amount in the wastewater budget. She didn't feel comfortable that we had enough in outside parts and repairs or in contracted services so she increased both of those. We have to pull in \$7030 more from the reserve fund to balance the budget. She also made adjustments to 2017

actuals which affected the amount available for the capital reserve fund in 2017. The budget does not include any payout of accrued benefit time.

Walter said paying out Tom's accrued time will cost \$13,565.20. How is that allocated between water and sewer? Meredith said his time is 76% sewer and 24% water. Walter said we will need some part time transition help, which will be expensive. The board agreed to increase the reserve fund contribution to cover the additional expenses.

Dave moved to make the changes to the wastewater budget that had been discussed and to add in \$10,310.59 to expenses to pay Tom for his accrued time, Walter seconded and the motion was passed.

Dave moved to add \$3,255.97 to the water budget to pay for Tom's accrued time and to offset the expense with a contribution from capital reserve, Walter seconded and the motion was passed.

Meredith said we have received Lamoille Economic Development Corporation's annual membership and dues request. In 2017 we were a member with dues of \$250.

Walter moved to pay annual membership dues of \$250 to Lamoille Economic Development Corporation out of the electric department budget, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.

Gordy said he thought the board should discuss whether to take a position on the merger study article at the annual village meeting. Walter said he thinks we should just say we will follow the will of the voters. If someone wants to talk to him personally he will tell his opinion.

Scott asked, if the will of the voters says no, what happens to the outside study? Dave said he would think the town would have to pay for it. Walter said it's the town's problem. But if the study goes ahead we are not at the table.

Dave said it would be good to have a handout for the annual meeting about what a merger is and what rights the village taxpayers have.

Walter said both bodies have to vote yes for a merger to happen. If our voters say no it doesn't stop the town from having the study. Then the issue is what level of participation we will have. The town could say they don't want our help. That is the worst case scenario for him.

Dave said when it comes down to it, it is up to the village voters what happens to the village. They should be properly educated and informed on what a merger is and on their rights.

Scott asked, what is the deliverable date on the study? Meredith said she doesn't know.

Meredith said as far as a handout that talks about what a merger is, a merger could take many different forms. We don't know what it would look like. The handout could talk about what it means if the town votes yes and we vote no. Walter said this article is just asking for a study. We should make that clear.

The board agreed to take a neutral position on the merger study article.

Meredith said she was asked whether the village could set up a "meet and greet" event for the four candidates running for the two trustee seats prior to the annual village meeting. She consulted with the village attorney and his recommendation was that the event not be held or organized by the village but rather be set up cooperatively by the four candidates.

Scott asked if it can be done in the municipal building. Meredith and Rosemary said yes. Walter asked if we can post on the village Facebook page that it is happening. Meredith said the attorney was cautious about us being involved at all. Walter said the candidates could organize the event or it could be organized by an independent organization like the News & Citizen. Scott asked if it could be put on by Johnson Works. Meredith said yes. Gordy and Brian Raulinaitis agreed to discuss this outside the meeting with the other candidates. Scott suggested maybe the college could be involved.

Meredith said VLCT is holding listening sessions around the state this spring to hear about what municipalities will need in the next two, five or ten years and how VLCT can help municipalities succeed. What messages do we want to communicate to VLCT? She already has noted that we could talk about Efficiency Vermont and taxes owed on mobile homes.

Walter said the big message he wants delivered to VLCT is: "Make it simple, stupid." The latest thing the legislature wants to put in place is a homeowner rehabilitation tax credit, adding more layers of bureaucracy. We already have a loan fund and the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit program. Just give us a small pot of money so we can give out loans to our people. There are so many homeowners who just need a little help. The proposed new program would take a year or two to apply and get money and the only ones who can put in the time and effort are those who don't really need the money. He knows his village better than a bureaucrat in Montpelier. He knows what needs to be done, he just needs access to funds.

Meredith said she will make sure our messages are delivered to VLCT whether or not she is there in person. She will try to go to the session on March 22 in Stowe.

Cliff Hill recently reminded Meredith of his concerns about potential flooding from the Collins Hill reservoir. Tom says the engineer has indicated that the spillway was designed to handle a reasonable amount of water. Cliff requests that a pipe be attached to the valve to redirect the water to a natural gully to guide it away from his neighborhood. That is not anything she has ever asked an engineer about. She doesn't know if it would make sense.

Walter asked why we would open this valve. Troy said the valve is at the bottom of the tank. Unless we wanted to drop the water level quickly he doesn't know why we would open it. It was opened in the past and caused flooding.

Walter asked, if we had to open it, could we attach a fire hose? Troy said he thinks it is at least 4 inches. It could be 6 inches.

Meredith said Tom has talked about attaching something to limit the flow if the valve were opened. Cliff said he thinks any amount of water that comes out will run down to his neighborhood eventually. He wants to move the water over. Troy said if we do that it will flood somewhere else eventually. Meredith said she doesn't know if Cliff's idea is good or bad. It would cost money and investigating it would take time. According to Tom the valve has been opened only once and the person who opened it left it open too long.

Gordy suggested talking to Peter DeGraff.

Walter said putting on something to restrict the flow could be a problem because we might want to open the valve full bore at some point in an emergency. Gordy asked why it would be opened up except to empty the tank. Troy said he doesn't know why it was opened. An employee opened it and then couldn't get it shut fast enough. Walter said it could be frozen now. We should test it regularly.

Troy proposed having a hydraulic engineer look at it. Scott said we would be liable if we made any modification to the valve unless we have an engineer sign off on it. Meredith said she will reach out to Peter DeGraff.

Meredith suggested discussion about priority projects for each department. Gordy suggested having department heads ask their employees about priorities. Walter said he thinks that is a good suggestion.

Walter said his main priority is getting us more protected for flooding. He feels the priority is to get the studies done that we have planned and then start making our system as reliable as we can.

Meredith said the electric department needs to do ongoing maintenance on old poles. Troy said that is his priority this year – getting time to do required maintenance.

Walter brought up the substation and being able to connect to GMP. Gordy said that is his priority. Meredith said that is something for her to work on.

Scott asked if GMP provides an engineer to look at the connection. Meredith said she thinks we will have to have our own engineer and theirs will review what ours proposes. They have made it clear that they won't put a lot of effort into making this happen because it is only to our benefit. Walter said he thinks we will need VPPSA to help. Scott said safety of their staff and ours is paramount.

Meredith said other things we need to do include a system study and spending time on net metering software. She and Susan are going to a workshop to talk about what we need the net metering software to do for us. It takes days now to get the solar bills done.

Meredith said priorities under general include work on a charter, municipal building work, a study of the old mill house, and Pearl Street sidewalk work. Scott brought up the powerhouse.

Meredith said priorities for the sewer department include the new permit that needs to be done this year and the compost facility permit that allows us to keep the option of composting sludge open. We plan on PLC and SCADA replacement, having Dufresne do a preliminary engineering report, cupola removal, and figuring out how we will operate the plant after Tom has left. All agreed that filling Tom's position is the number one priority for wastewater.

Gordy said he would like to see the Pearl Street sidewalks done this summer.

For the water department, priorities Meredith thought of include painting of the building, curb stop fixes, and leak fixes. We are seeking funding for an asset management plan.

Walter said the list is too big to get accomplished in one year. Scott asked if we are going to put target dates on any of the priorities. Meredith said the municipal building work needs to get done this summer. The permits have due dates. We need to get going on the system study.

Scott asked if we will put out an RFP for the municipal building work or use the same contractor. Meredith said she would be inclined to continue with the same contractor but she hasn't talked to Brian about it.

Performance evaluation forms were given to trustees to fill out for Meredith. Gordy suggested that each person fill out a form and then he and Walter, as chair and vice chair, can pool the results and review them with Meredith. The board agreed to that. Gordy asked board members to give the forms to Rosemary by next Monday.

Meredith said she will email the power bill summary.

Meredith, Troy and Tom met with Mike Stevens, the new Director of Facilities at the college. Last year the college agreed to let us conduct a smoke test to find any improper connections to the sewer system and we want to get that done.

Meredith gave the board flyers about the EV rebate program being administered by VPPSA on behalf of its members as a Renewable Energy Standard Tier III measure. Hopefully some of our customers will be able to take advantage of that.

10. Legal Bills

Walter said Meredith has informed the board that the recent open meeting law complaint and the Australian ballot issue cost us almost \$3200 in legal bills. That expense could have been

avoided if the citizens concerned had just come to the trustees with their requests. Other board members agreed.

11. Graffiti

Walter said Sterling Market and Johnson Woolen Mills were recently hit with graffiti. It sounds like it was done by the same person who put a lot of graffiti around the village last fall. Should we offer a reward or ask the sheriff's department to do something about this?

Scott said Burlington has dealt with this by providing space for people to put graffiti. He doesn't know if we have space, but it would be interesting to offer it. Maybe it could be done in conjunction with the Studio Center. It is art in many people's view. Meredith said she can bring it up with Johnson Works.

Scott suggested asking the sheriff's department to investigate whether any hardware store has sold a lot of spray paint to someone. He also suggested the skate park could be a place for people to put graffiti.

Dave asked if it is working in places where space is offered for graffiti. Scott said in Burlington he doesn't see as much as he used to.

Meredith suggested maybe we could put out a request for people who know the graffiti artist to ask them to stop. Walter said he thinks a phone call to the sheriff's department is the best way to approach it. Dave said he thinks it will come down to a reward of some sort. Scott said game cameras could be set up. Meredith said there were some car break ins and someone asked if we had security cameras. We don't, but there are many instances where it would be helpful to have cameras. Dave said those who are interested could put cameras on their houses.

12. Other Business

It was agreed to schedule a meeting for Monday, March 19 at 6:00 for the exit interview with Tom and discussion about filling his position.

13. Adjourn

Walter moved and Dave seconded to adjourn at 8:10 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths