

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019

**Present:**

Trustees: Scott Meyer, Brian Raulinaitis, Gordon Smith, Bob Sweetser, Phil Wilson

Others: Meredith Birkett, Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Dan Copp, Krystal Woodward

**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**

Meredith said under appointment of Water & Light Commissioner the board might also want to consider appointing an alternate to the VPPSA board. Walter was previously the alternate. Gordy added discussion of a social hour/training.

**3. Administer Oath to Newly Elected Trustees**

Rosemary swore in the newly elected board members.

**4. Election of Village Trustee Chair and Vice Chair**

Gordy called for nominations for board chair. Scott nominated Gordy for chair, seconded by Phil.

**Gordy was elected chair.**

Brian nominated Scott for vice-chair, seconded by Phil. **Scott was elected vice chair.**

**Scott moved to appoint Meredith as Water and Light Commissioner, Gordy seconded and the motion was passed.**

Meredith said Walter enjoys attending VPPSA meetings but may no longer be aware of board opinions once he is not on the board. She asked if anyone else would like to serve as alternate for times she is unable to attend meetings. Phil agreed that he could serve as alternate. **Scott moved to appoint Phil as alternate VPPSA board representative, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.** (Bob arrived at 6:10.)

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

**Bob moved to approve the minutes of March 11 and April 2, 2019, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

Phil asked about the auto body work that we received bills for. Troy said a wind gust took a 75 foot telescoping stick out of his hands and it hit a truck. The truck had some plowing damage as well.

Rosemary said Belvidere paid its first installment for fire service.

Meredith said if wastewater department revenue from this quarter held for every quarter this year we would be slightly above budget. (Krystal Woodward arrived at 6:22.) Meredith said the same is true for water sales; if they hold through the rest of the year we should be slightly above budget.

Rosemary said today we got about \$3,500 from FEMA for last year's wind storm. Scott asked where that money will go. Meredith said probably it will be unbudgeted revenue for this year because it was originally expected last year.

Rosemary showed the board the tax sale notice that will go in the newspaper.

**7. Final Approval for Water and Sewer Permits at 224 Railroad Street**

Meredith said Krystal Woodward bought Dr. Rogers's building and in the fall she went through the process to request a change of use. The board gave preliminary approval at that time and made final approval contingent on her receiving a state permit. But the state told Krystal that she does not need a state permit. **Phil moved to give final approval for water and wastewater permits for 224 Railroad Street, Bob seconded and the motion was passed.** (Krystal left at 6:30.)

**8. Village Water Line Easements on French Hill Rd.**

Meredith said the village has easements on French Hill road related to the piping from the reservoir. Duane French wants to build parking spaces that would encroach on the easements and he is wondering if we would give them up. Meredith told him the board would probably not be inclined to as someday we might want to use the reservoir. She told him he could come in and speak to the board but that the board probably would not be inclined to give up the easement. Scott said he would like to maintain our easement because we are being pushed to develop renewable energy.

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

Dan said all wastewater samples met state requirements. The E-DMR and WR-43 were submitted for review. There was one call out at the River Road pump station for a high wet well. The two new belts were installed on the press. Flood gates were installed on March 15th when there was a flood watch. The Dufresne engineer was brought to the reservoir so he could get correct elevations for the water asset management plan. Tim serviced and replaced belts on the exhaust fan blowers in the sludge room and head works. We will still probably get an HVAC person to give an estimate for further work. Leaking gaskets were replaced on the Penn Valley sludge pump #1. A leaking alum line in the day tank storage room was repaired.

The Mission Control floats for early warning of the rising river were installed and tested. There are two floats at different levels. The first float will give an early warning. If the one above it goes off within half an hour there should be a 911 call. The second is a foot-and-a-half higher than the first and about four feet lower than the level of Sterling Market.

All coliform samples taken at the water plant were negative. There were no callouts for the water system. All required quarterly sampling for Gross Alpha and nitrates at the Nadeau well were finished. The Nadeau well valve is sticking and is extremely hard to open. After spring thaw we will shut off the reservoir flow to the well and take it apart and repair or replace it. Dan plans to buy a dehumidifier for the Nadeau well building. We will need to decide what to do for rodent control at that building.

Green Mountain Water Environment Association contacted us to see if we were interested in holding an open house for Water Quality Day on May 30th. They would pay for advertising and snacks. Dan thinks we would choose either the water or wastewater plant for the open house. He feels the wastewater plant would be preferable. Meredith said she is leaning toward the wastewater plant. Scott asked if we are covered for liability. Meredith said she will check. The board agreed to offer to hold an open house at the wastewater plant for Water Quality Day. Dan said he will follow

through on this. Gordy asked Dan to let Meredith know once it is set so she can pass information on to the board.

Gordy said he feels we need standard operating procedures for the new float system. Meredith suggested that perhaps the procedure could be to notify her when the water gets to the 1st alarm level and then she can give Eric and Arjay a heads up at that time and when the water reaches the second level we could call 911. She suggested that she and Dan draft an SOP and bring it to the next meeting. Then when this board approves it it can be shared with Eric and Arjay.

**10. Foreman Report and Action Items**

There was an outage near Sinclair Road on March 17th which affected six customers related to high winds. A tree blew down and hit the line pulling the phase wire off the insulator. Power was restored within an hour. The replacement voltage regulator that was ordered by Just Send It Solar was put into service on March 26th. We have begun pulling in the new three phase line near the twin bridges. At this point the overhead portion has been completed. When weather permits we will install the primary underground. Troy hopes to complete the job by the beginning of May and return the direction of feed back to normal. The crew repaired three street lights and also completed monthly meter reading, disconnects and Dig Safes. The crew was busy during the snowstorm on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, which was the last major snowstorm. Since then most of the sidewalk maintenance has just been spot sanding the icy areas in the morning. The crew worked on preparing the International truck for resale. Spring banners were hung up.

We recently have seen a large increase in our monthly NEPPA safety meeting cost. As mentioned previously Troy feels the quality of presentation and subject matter has been poor and outdated. However the last meeting with a new instructor was better, with a new focus that was more relevant. Meredith has been working with the NEPPA executive director to negotiate better pricing. Meredith said the price doubled. Other utilities were also displeased. It looks like NEPPA is willing to give us a break on this year's cost. The cost would still be over what was budgeted but it would not be a major budget hit.

Troy said in the past couple of months the crew has spent at least two hours per week training in the pole yard and shop. This has allowed Jeff and Chan to improve their climbing abilities, line refusing skills and other tasks related to line work.

Troy worked with Just Send It Solar and T&R electric to complete the installation of the replacement voltage regulator. At this time Alan Lehouillier is happy with his production and our customers are not experiencing any high voltage issues.

Troy has ordered replacement stock for both the electric and water departments.

Troy has located a new truck that will make a good replacement for the International dump truck. The cost of the new truck once it is outfitted should come in close to \$12,000 under budget. He showed pictures of the proposed new truck. MSRP for this truck is about \$51,000. With a municipal discount we will be able to get it for about \$38,500. We will put lights and a top on it.

Gordy asked if we need three quotes. Troy said he doesn't think we will get a better deal than this. Ram has always had the lowest bids in the past.

Gordy asked if we have to borrow for the purchase of the truck. Meredith said we won't have cash to buy it. We only budgeted for loan payments. Gordy suggested that if we buy it now the electric department could pay its share of the cost up front so we would need to borrow less. Meredith said that would be doable. Meredith said we budgeted less than what the cost would be. So for 2019 the electric department would need to pay more than its share of the cost and have the general department pay it back next year. Bob suggested that the general department could borrow from the electric department. Meredith said she likes the idea of the electric department paying its share up front so we can borrow less and just borrowing the amount for the general department's share, rather than what Bob suggested.

Scott asked if the truck will be big enough for our needs. Troy said yes, Scott asked if we will get undercoating for it. Troy said yes.

Meredith added \$6000 to the cost of the truck for lights and a logo and a box. Sixty-five percent of that amount is \$29,000. **Phil moved to approve borrowing up to \$29,000 from Community National Bank at an interest rate of 2.75% for 5 years for purchase of a truck, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

Troy said in the past the village has done spring sweeping at no cost to the town but we were getting salt from the town for free. For the last two years we have paid for salt. He is not in favor of doing spring sweeping for free.

Phil asked how much sweeping costs. Troy said it takes about 40 hours for one man and it uses our equipment. Meredith said the cost would be at least a few thousand dollars. Troy said his estimate would be \$2,025. Phil asked how much our salt costs. Troy said it cost \$3,700 this year and \$3,200 the previous year. He and Brian Krause had an agreement that we would trade labor etc. towards salt but that hasn't happened in the last 2 years.

Scott suggested that Meredith talk to Brian about reinstating the working agreement where we would trade for salt. Phil suggested it would be nice not to spring a change on the town now but to talk about making a change for next year. It was agreed that Meredith will talk to the town about the idea that next year they might be asked to pay for spring street sweeping.

Gordy asked if the pothole by the crosswalk between Pearl and Main Streets is an AOT responsibility. Troy said yes; it is within the Route 15 right of way. Gordy asked if the St. Albans office can be notified about it. Meredith said yes.

Scott asked if this summer the village crew could work on raising the manhole by the college on Clay Hill road. A resident has talked about it with him it. It is very low. Storm drains on Railroad Street are another issue. Troy said the storm drains are very old and they need to be replaced rather than fixed and it has to be done all at once. Scott asked who is responsible for them. Troy said we are responsible for storm drain maintenance. He does not see replacement as being included in maintenance. Troy said the town told us that they would change culverts and we could change storm drains but storm drains are more expensive than culverts.

#### ***11. Village Manager's Report and Action Items***

Meredith said Dunham Rentals at 76 VT Route 100C got preliminary approval in September 2015 for water and wastewater permits and it appears that the required state permits were turned in to the

previous village manager in January 2016 and the applicant sought final approval. She believes it was an administrative oversight not to issue formal final approval and she recommends that we issue it now to correct the error. **Phil moved to issue a final wastewater permit for 840 gallons per day and a final water permit for 810 gallons per day for 76 VT Route 100C, Bob seconded and the motion was passed.** Rosemary noted that Richard Whittmore more owns the property now.

Lamoille Economic Development Corporation has requested that the village make its annual membership contribution. We have historically contributed \$250. **Scott moved to make an annual membership contribution of \$250 to Lamoille Economic Development Corporation and Brian seconded.** Splitting the payment between all departments was discussed. **The motion was passed.**

Meredith said with the proposal to redevelop the former St. John's Church into a health center Phil suggested expanding the village center boundary to include that building, which could allow the property owner/developer to access tax credits. CHSLV has indicated that turning the building into a health center is not a done deal. Currently they are working to understand the limitations and covenants on the property. So we might want to wait to see what happens with that. Phil said he was told by someone from LCPC that they thought the Downtown Development Board would approve a request to expand the village center designation. Board consensus was that it would be okay for Meredith to spend time on this if redevelopment of the church into a health center moves forward.

Meredith read a list of the services CHSLV proposes to offer at a health center in Johnson. Scott asked if the state Agency of Commerce and Community Development has been notified of plans for this project. Meredith said she is not sure the project has gotten far enough along for them to be notified. She will bring up with them that they might want to notify the state.

Meredith said she shared the feedback she received from the trustees last month about the proposed talc mill Phase 2 assessment with LCPC and the environmental consultant has suggested a more limited scope of work for Phase 2 as a result. She told them that our priority was the old mill building and that in addition we were interested in sites where employees are working. They have proposed doing shallow soil testing on a scaled-back area. She said we know the potential issues at the site but we don't know if it is developable without more work. Do we want to dig deeper or halt consideration of redevelopment? The proposed work probably could be covered from Brownfields funds but that may take away from the funds available for powerhouse work.

Scott said he looked at the full report. There are contaminants that do pose risk of occupational exposure but only if they get into the body somehow. He is most concerned with solvent vapor coming through the pad. Employees should be told there should be no digging on the property without checking first and there should be procedures for them to follow if they dig and find something.

Meredith said she and Scott had talked about asking the cost of just checking for vapor intrusion into the buildings. She can go back and ask for the cost of that testing. Gordy asked Meredith to pass this information to Brian to pass on to the selectboard. Phil said he thinks it would be good to come back to this after the powerhouse work is done. Scott said he thinks our full attention has to

be on the powerhouse. Meredith said she will check on costs but we'll make the powerhouse the priority.

**Phil moved in accordance with the approved 2019 village budgets to set the 2019 board chair annual compensation at \$1,200 and the four trustees' annual compensation at \$1,000, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Phil moved to set employee compensation levels in accordance with the approved 2019 village budgets as of the pay period ending April 10, 2019 with retroactive pay back to January 1, 2019, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Scott move to adopt the inclusivity statement approved at the annual village meeting:**

*The people of Johnson embrace inclusiveness and together we will build bridges to understanding, ensuring that all who live, work and visit our town feel welcome and safe. We reject racism, bigotry, discrimination, violence and hatred in all its forms. The things we embrace are kindness, gentleness, understanding, neighborliness, peace, tolerance and respect for and toward all. Together we can have a cooperative, sustainable and thriving community where everyone is honored and valued.*

**Brian seconded and the motion was passed.**

Meredith said the select board proposed a joint meeting next Monday at 6. Scott said he cannot attend that day. Bob said he doesn't think he can. Meredith said the meeting is to talk about merger study proposals and she thinks there may also be discussion about goals for gardening.

Gordy said the selectboard minutes indicate that some selectboard members liked the most expensive proposal but wanted to renegotiate the price. Phil said he thinks the most expensive one looks like the best proposal. Gordy said the selectboard directed Brian to renegotiate and to let Meredith know. Meredith said some selectboard members also suggested that perhaps the consultant could work with UVM students. She said she let Brian know that at least some trustees are leaning toward a different proposal. Phil asked, we wouldn't be opposed if the selectboard chose the most expensive proposal and we were only going to pay \$4,000, right? Other board members agreed they wouldn't be opposed. Bob said Mike Dunham believes the board should go with the cheapest proposal. Scott said in the middle-priced proposal he didn't like the suggestions about who the consultant would talk to. There was a focus on talking to upper management.

It was agreed that Meredith will see if the select board could have a joint meeting on either April 22nd or April 29th.

Meredith said KAS, which is been the go-between between us and the contractors who would do the powerhouse removal work, are not prepared yet to give us updated cost estimates. Next the EPA will need demolition plans. They are targeting midsummer for the work to be done. Meredith said she got clarification that no DEC, Army Corps or Historical Preservation permits are needed if we are funding the project ourselves. After the building is gone we will need to stabilize the bank and test the soil under the building, then consider how the property can be used.

Meredith said Phil and Scott went to a recent meeting about FEMA flood map updates. Phil said they are planning to update flood insurance maps. For this part of the state they have a sophisticated new model of ground elevations that they can use. They will revise all flood insurance maps to show more detail. It may change which properties are in the floodplain. There was a 30-day period to review the new maps and provide feedback. About 15 of those days are gone now. Brian Story got a feedback form and was going to fill it out. Scott said this new mapping did not take into account streambed movement. Phil said it only models inundation flooding. Phil will send out copies of the map to everyone.

Meredith said many bigger utilities in Vermont have implemented Automated Meter Infrastructure (AMI.) Most smaller utilities haven't. There is increasing pressure at the state level to adopt AMI. VPPSA started an AMI feasibility study for all its members. We got the first draft of the report for Johnson. There are no significant issues that would prevent us from adopting AMI other than cost and time. We don't have a huge amount of money invested in our current meters but the new meters would be a lot more expensive. The state wants us to be able to bill people based on what is going on in real time, which requires AMI. We will need a good reason not to go to AMI. Our existing water meters probably could be retrofitted to work with AMI but they probably only have seven or eight years of life left. Troy said AMI water meters are quite a bit more expensive.

Meredith said the next part of the study will be quantitative analysis. She thinks the business case for moving to AMI will be tenuous. Troy said there is long-term financing available for purchasing AMI meters. Meredith said there is a question of whether our billing system can handle the intense amount of data we would receive from AMI meters. We might have to update our billing system. There also probably would need to be a new web portal for customers to use.

Troy said Vermont Electric Co-op gets valuable information from their AMI meters, for instance about outages.

Phil asked if other municipal electric departments have implemented AMI. Meredith said the only one is Morrisville, which has implemented a small pilot project.

Scott asked if an AMI system is hackable. Meredith said there is a whole level of back end protections. Scott said some people have privacy concerns about AMI and concerns about EMF. Troy and Meredith said customers can opt out.

Meredith said some corrections need to be made to the report and once those are made she will send it out.

Meredith said we heard from Dufresne's right of way consultant. Most of the town roads are three rods. Based on that it appears that half the sidewalk on one side is out of our right of way. She has asked the town if there is any evidence that the road right of way is anything other than three rods. If the sidewalk is outside of the right of way that means we will have to get easements from property owners on the west side. Meredith will call our attorney to ask about the process. Elizabeth Emmons sent 6 design concepts. Meredith wants to review them with Troy and Brian Krause.

Gordy said he would like Troy to update our existing capital equipment replacement plan. He feels only the largest equipment needs to be on the plan. Some things that are on the current plan shouldn't be included. Meredith suggested that Troy come back with an updated plan at the June meeting. Troy said he thinks he can do that. Gordy offered to work with Troy on it. He suggested that employees should be part of the process.

Meredith said we asked Sharon Duffy to investigate the septic system she wants to hook up to. She got a letter from the state saying that in the past the state drinking water department has allowed continued use of an existing septic system in similar situations without a permit. The state says she can use that septic system without a permit until it surfaces or backs up. Meredith said the trustees need an inspection indicating that the system can function and a cost estimate for hooking up to the septic system compared to the cost of hooking up to the village sewer.

Gordy asked Troy to see if the allocations between electric, water, sewer and general are still accurate.

**12. Social Hour/Training Session**

Gordy said there were some questions at the annual meeting about funding of different departments. He is suggesting a social hour/training session to give out information about the funding of different departments. Scott said he thinks that is a good idea. Meredith said she can put some information on that in the next newsletter. Scott suggested that maybe in the newsletter we can say that if people are interested in more detail we can have a community meeting.

**13. Adjourn**

**Bob moved and Scott seconded to adjourn at 8:49 and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*