

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2020

**Present:**

Trustees: Steve Hatfield, Will Jennison, Scott Meyer, Athena Parke, Gordon Smith

Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Troy Dolan, Marla Emery, Michael Mainer, Wayne Elliott, Shawn Enterline, Bobbi Rooney, Kyle Nuse, Rick Aupperlee, Sophia Berard, Cal Stanton, Jackie Stanton, Diane Lehouillier, Walter Pomroy, Margo Warden, Lynda Hill. Brynn Nuse, Raven Pfaff, Jasmine Yuris, Jane Nuse, Shayne Spence

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

**1. Call to Order**

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:02.

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

Meredith added a request from Bobbi Rooney regarding a landowner form to go after the treasurer's report.

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

**Will moved to approve the minutes of October 12, October 21 and November 2, 2020, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

Meredith said in 2010 Sally Verville got a \$6425 loan from our revolving loan fund. She believes it was for a furnace. She has now sold the property and paid off that loan. **Will moved to authorize Gordy to sign the loan discharge for Sally Verville, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

Rosemary said we haven't received PILOT money yet from the state. It should be coming any day now. Meredith said we expect it to be right around what we budgeted. We got the full payment from the town for the fire department.

Meredith said we have spent about \$10,500 so far this year on the Pearl Street sidewalk project. We just got some new legal fees related to that project. The lawyer believes signed easements will be coming soon. The state will be sending documents for extension of our grant. She believes they are giving us an extra year. We should be in good shape to get bids for spring/summer construction.

Will noted that we are way over budget on postage. Rosemary said voting for the annual meeting was all done by Australian ballot and we had to mail out ballots to all village voters.

Meredith noted that last year we did a lot of water sales to the state and we expected they would buy water from us for bridge cleaning this year but with the pandemic it didn't happen. We are over budget for distribution system labor, probably in large part due to the water main break in late June. We budgeted \$15,000 for a well pump VFD that we held off on purchasing. Meredith and Dan can go through the budget and decide whether they feel comfortable moving forward with that purchase. The Vermont Bond Bank has allowed communities to choose not to make loan payments that were due after June 1. We decided not to make loan payments. We thought we would see how

things were looking toward the end of the year and decide if we want to make some of them. Will asked if interest is also deferred. Meredith said she believes so. Will said it would be good to know if we are incurring interest on payments not made.

Meredith said the wastewater budget includes \$21,000 under miscellaneous revenue. We weren't sure if the state would require us to do additional asset management work. If they had asked us to we would have sought a \$21K planning loan, but they haven't indicated we should do it. She suspects we will pursue that for 2021.

Dan said he got a quote of \$31,000 for the cupola replacement. That was pushed back due to COVID. He talked to the contractor this week and they agreed will get in touch after the first of the year to plan for work next year.

Will asked if insurance is paid annually, monthly or quarterly. Rosemary said quarterly.

Meredith said electricity expense is down. She asked Dan if a lot of that is from running the belt press less. Dan said yes, that is a big portion of it.

Will asked if trash and recycling is up due to increased expense or increased load. Dan said some of that is an error in coding on his end. He forgot to separate trash and recycling from sludge. Prices in general have gone up.

Capital purchases we budgeted for in the current year include generator repair, a pH meter and a portion of the cost for the furnace at the village garage. A DO sensor was a big part of what was budgeted for capital purchases. Dan said we haven't purchased it yet. It will cost about \$10,000. Meredith said we will need to decide in the next few weeks if we want to move forward with that purchase.

**Will moved to authorize Gordy to sign warrants on behalf of the board after approval by a majority of the trustees for the duration of the state of emergency, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

5. ***Snowmobile Club Request***

Bobbi Rooney said the snowmobile club fixed a bridge by Cattelona's camp. VAST has asked that they get an okay on that. The club is also asking the village to sign a landowner permission slip. VAST gave them a grant for material to fix the bridge. Meredith said she doesn't know exactly where the bridge is. She will confirm whether it is on village property or not. Bobbi said she was able to confirm it is.

**Will moved and Scott seconded to authorize Meredith to sign the paperwork Sterling Snow Riders needs related to the VAST trail bridge.**

Scott asked if the paperwork we are being asked to sign basically just states that the bridge was redone, not that it was engineered safely. Bobbie said it was engineered to VAST standards. It is strong enough to hold a snowmobile or a horse. Scott said he is wondering if the village holds any liability if it fails. Bobbi said no; VAST does.

**The motion was passed.**

**6. *Mudgies – Application for 2021 Food Truck Operation on the Village Green***

Meredith said Mudgies has submitted their application to come back in 2021 from April 15 to November 15 on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Meredith will need to make slight revisions to our guidelines for food trucks to go with this schedule. She believes the end time in the current guidelines is earlier than 7:00 because we didn't want to compete with any restaurants. But Mudgies has a very different menu from restaurants in town and it doesn't seem like they are really in direct competition with the few sit-down restaurants we have. We had previously approved extending their hours this summer. She will revise the guidelines if the board is okay with that. She also believes we had May 1 as our start date. Maybe we would want to allow an earlier start, weather permitting. She made it clear that we will do no special snow removal for them.

Gordy said April 15 is usually in the middle of mud season. Will traffic tear up the lawn? And at the end of the season is there anything Johnson Works needs to be doing on the green in November? Troy said he agrees that the green would probably be muddy in April. Meredith said she can tell them they can't start until May 1. The jubilee is normally the first Friday in December. If Mudgies is out by November 15 she doesn't think that would interfere with the jubilee

Will asked the board's thoughts on having the allowed hours extended until 7:00 if a new business came in that Mudgies would compete with. Meredith said it seems like there is demand and interest in the food truck. We are charging for use of the green, though it is not comparable to what people pay in building rent. Will said he is fine with a 7:00 end time. Gordy said there have been several times that he and his wife would have patronized the food truck but it was closed because of our guidelines. Unless we hear different from existing merchants he thinks it is okay to extend to 7:00. Scott said we took a bit of a beating on the food truck when it first showed up but it seems like it has majority support from the community. Did we have any complaints about loss of business from restaurants? Meredith said no. Scott said he hasn't heard any either. He is okay with a 7:00 end time.

Scott asked if we are requiring any cash retainer for repairing any damage. Whose responsibility is it to repair damage? Meredith said we have not required any upfront deposit. She suspects if we asked for a deposit of a few hundred dollars for reseeded they would go along with it. That is not a bad idea. Scott said he doesn't want to lose taxpayers' money for repair of the green. Will suggested a deposit of \$300. Scott and Gordy agreed that seems reasonable Athena asked how much it costs to rent the green. Meredith said we charge them \$10 for each day they operate. Athena said she thinks \$300 is reasonable.

Walter Pomroy said he wants to make it clear that he is supportive of food trucks but also of our village green. At the last meeting Mudgies talked about moving the trailer sideways, but the village is talking about putting up a flagpole and sculptures and the food truck blocks the village green from the road and from the public. When you are on the green you are just looking at the food truck. Having a trailer sitting in the middle of the park diminishes the quality and attraction. He hopes before next spring the village will think about a plan for where to put trucks. He thinks they should be off to the side. It may mean moving some bushes that were recently planted. He thinks we should try to incorporate all uses and having food trucks on the side is better than having them in the middle. Will said he would love to meet with Walter and look at the property and get his thoughts. Walter said he would be happy to do that anytime.

Walter said when approving food trucks the trustees should keep in mind trucks that may come with generators. If carbon monoxide coming from a generator comes into his building he has an issue with that. Meredith said she thinks she could update the guidelines to include language saying that we reserve the right to deny a permit if the owner plans to use a generator. Walter said Mudgies was fantastic as a neighbor but that could change with the next truck. Meredith said we talked about turning the truck 90 degrees. That way they could use the electrical conduit they paid for but it would also open up the green. They seemed open to that. Gordy said he likes Walter's point about generators. Carbon monoxide is an important concern.

Kyle Nuse said she agrees that it would be a good idea to move the truck 90 degrees. For those who work and live there its current position is not desirable. She would like the Beautification Committee to be looped in as much as possible around conversations about the village green. They do have master plans in place and it is important that they are part of the conversation when there are decisions about how to spend taxpayer dollars on beautifying our public spaces. She feels she speaks for all of the business community when she says that all competition is good competition. Right now we need as many eateries and possibilities as possible. Members of the business community that she speaks to are not worried about competition.

Rick Aupperlee said he recently spoke with two property owners. He understands that there is a right of way or easement to a property near the village green. He believes the village put up an inappropriate retaining wall into the right of way and there has been discussion about access to the neighboring property. He asked for information about the current state of the easement and which side of the village green it is on. Meredith said she has had multiple discussions with Chan and Alex and with George Pearlman because the current driveway is an easement through his property. The current easement is on the east side of the green. It is correct that the retaining wall makes it difficult to use it. We have had a request to shift it to the west side. She met at the site in October with Chan, George and Alex and they came to an understanding. She sent questions to our attorney about how best to rewrite the documents. All four parties are in agreement on resolving the issue. We are just working through the details.

Rick asked, you don't have anything legal yet to work with, right? Meredith said no. The village doesn't need a legal document. Chan Parker is requesting a change so he can sell his property. Rick said he would be careful because the village put up a retaining wall that restricts access to a landowner's property and the board is talking about entering into contracts with people for concessions while there is unfinished business in process. He thinks the village needs to take care of things and make them legal first, then act accordingly.

**Will moved to accept the food truck application from Mudgies with the requirement of a \$300 deposit to be returned if there is no damage to village property, accepting the days and times requested and permitting use from May 1 through November 1, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

Dan said the River Road pump station is from about 1969 and it is getting beyond its useful life. It has been having a lot of call-ins and repairs. Sourcing parts is an issue. Problems there could lead to overflow to the river and possible environmental issues. It is time for an upgrade. We decided to have an engineer design a new facility. Meredith said we applied for a planning loan from the state

Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund and it was awarded. We had to go through a procurement process and Aldrich + Elliot was the top scorer of the firms interviewed.

Mike Mainer from Aldrich + Elliot described the new pump station design. The old injector station would be replaced with one that has redundant pumps. The existing force main can be reused. The estimated construction cost is \$235,000. The total estimated project cost is \$345,000. That includes a 10% construction contingency, engineering, permit fees, administrative fees, etc. For funding they recommend the state Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund. They have a 50% subsidy on engineering and a 40% subsidy on construction costs. Loans with terms of 20 to 30 years and 2% interest are available. They recommend a term of 30 years. The village share of the loan would be about \$205,000, which means about \$9,000 a year in debt service. For a typical residential user that would mean a rate increase of \$1.20 to a little under \$1.50 per month. The target is to advertise for bids in March. A bond vote should be on the trustees' radar. There needs to be a village-wide bond vote for the full \$345,000 amount even though the state has a subsidy to reduce the cost. January is a favorable time to have the bond vote. There is a 30-day warning period before the vote and bond documents need to be ready to sign by mid-December. Now is the time to think about getting those prepared.

Will asked if funding is guaranteed Mike said it is first come, first served. There are some restrictions on who can use the funding. Based on discussions with the state and information on who else is looking to acquire the funding, a January bond vote should put the village in a good position to get funding. Wayne Elliott noted that the subsidy is only available to municipalities of under 10,000 people, so the state expects there will still be money available even in March of next year.

Steve asked what format is proposed for the informational meeting. Meredith said we would have to have a Zoom informational meeting. In terms of the bond vote she would like us to start the discussion on that tonight. We do have to offer in-person voting. We can't take that option away, but she thinks it is wise to go through the expense of sending a ballot to every voter to cut down on people voting in person. We could do mailings with information about the project and the likely impact on rates. Will asked, is this every village resident or only those on the system? Meredith said she believes it would be all village residents. Rosemary said any active voter.

Gordy asked if our neighbors have been contacted to let them know our intentions. Meredith said Ellis O'Hear knows and she has emailed Chan Parker.

Gordy said the area floods every so often. Are controls going to be waterproof or elevated? Mike said they have to be located two or three feet above the base flood elevation. Gordy suggested they might want to check the 500 year flood level. He asked, submersible pumps will keep working as long as they have electricity, right? Mike said that is right.

Gordy said he wants Dan to review this and give his green light. He respects and trusts Dan's judgment. Dan said he met last week with the engineers and he likes the design.

Gordy said this is a lot of money. We need input from the voters. We need to get the word out. Many of our residents are at the poverty level. He assumes that helps us get low interest loans. Is that still in effect? Wayne said for this particular funding there is no income sensitivity. He agreed

that public outreach will be very important. They recently did three Zoom information hearings and he thinks they went well. His firm can help create an information flyer or information for the website.

Meredith said most communities have their annual meetings in March but ours is in April. Waiting until April would put us at a disadvantage. She thought January would be a good time for a vote. At that point we are just getting into the budget process and it is far enough in advance of the village and town annual meetings that it won't get confused for them. Hopefully we will be ready to go before some other communities. By the December meeting we need to pick a date for the special vote and decide how to conduct it. *(Mike and Wayne left at 7:10.)*

Meredith reminded the board that a sanitary survey was done of the water system and major deficiencies were identified at Katy Win pump station. We are going to add the pump station to our asset management list. It will probably be our top priority to address. We told the state we would seek a planning loan for a design for the pump station. In order to get grant funds for building we have to have an approved preliminary report from an engineer. She spoke with Elizabeth Emmons, the consultant from Dufresne. We used Dufresne to do our asset management plan. They are willing to help us put together an application for USDA loan and grant funds for an engineering report. The application to USDA is due December 15. At the December meeting the board will need to formally vote to apply for the funds but before that Meredith needs to start working with Dufresne on putting an application together. USDA offers a 75% grant up to \$25,000 due to our demographic. The pump station currently has a gravel and dirt floor, the pipes coming out of the ground are corroding, and the building is falling down.

Dan said he thinks it will cost less than the River Road project because there is very little or no excavation involved. The idea is to build a new building next to the existing one. This is the main one of the three Katy Win pump stations. One of the other two has been rehabbed and the third is newer and in better shape. There had been questions about their ownership so they weren't included in the asset management plan originally. But we found the village does own them and this will become the top priority on our priority list.

It was agreed that Meredith should let the Dufresne Group know that we are interested in applying for a USDA grant and loan.

Dan said the E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted for review. We had a partially plugged siphon after we jetted the sewer lines. We had Morrisville W&L jet the siphon. They could jet the main siphon but they could not get through the bypass with their jetter. We had Manosh come in with a smaller jetter that has hot water and jet the bypass. This should set us up well for the winter. We had many callouts for the wastewater plant. The float in the siphon is bad and it kept calling us out for a plugged siphon when there was no alarm. We ordered a new float and battery for the Mission Communication. Luke assisted the Village and Hartigan for 2 days jetting sewer lines. We performed bi-annual blower and compressor oil changes and maintenance and tested all floats in the lift stations. An air valve actuator in the sludge room has failed. We were able to source a new in box one off eBay for \$70. The most inexpensive one from a distributor was \$590. The one we purchased is an exact replica. The other newer and more expensive ones are a newer version of the same actuator.

Coliform results were negative. We purchased Microsoft Access for the plant computer. Elizabeth from Dufresne Engineering installed and trained us on how to navigate the Asset Management Plan on the new software. We will be entering Katy Win data into it and will be able to move forward on the state's requirements. PFA sample results were non detect for both Osgood and Nadeau wells. We should not have to sample again for 3 years as we have had non detect on both sets of samples over the last 2 years. We installed the new pressure tank in Katy Win pump house #2. This completes all building and plumbing maintenance for this pump house. We replaced the chlorine injection nozzle at the water plant as it was partially plugged and not dosing correctly. Luke assisted the village for 3 days flushing hydrants. Water loss for September was 3%. Water loss for October was 12%. We also had hydrant flushing during the month.

Scott asked about the yellow paint that was applied a week or so ago. A lot of yellow water was running into the sewer manholes. Did it make it into the plant or cause any issues? Dan said they noticed no changes at the plant. The amount was probably minimal and was diluted.

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

Troy said the crew completed the installation of a new 1,000 ft. primary underground line extension on Foote Brook Road. We met with VTEL regarding their project at Laraway School and determined that no make-ready work is needed for their pole attachments. We repaired three street lights on Main Street. All scrapped transformers were tested for PCB contamination and are ready to be shipped out for disposal. We have been continuing our pole transfer work on Route 100C. The contract tree trimming crew started last week removing danger trees and cutting ROW on Railroad Street, Upper French Hill, and River Road West. The crew also completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

Sewer main cleaning by Hartigan/Wind River was completed and was done in less time than anticipated. The crew assisted the property owner at 689 Route 100C with making connections to the water system and are in the process of assisting with the sewer connection. This is to serve a new small home being built on the parcel.

Storm drain/catch basin cleaning was completed and done in less time than anticipated. Hydrant flushing was completed. The crew repaired a hydrant near 399 Lower Main West. The sidewalk repair near 59 Railroad Street was completed. The sidewalk was dug up as part of repairing the water main break in late June. The crew installed the base for a flag pole at the village green. This was done to take advantage of the concrete truck that was already in the village for the sidewalk repair and saved a separate delivery fee. Fall maintenance was completed on both Bobcats in anticipation of winter plowing. A radio was installed in the new Bobcat.

All fire extinguishers on village property passed the 6-month inspection. Vehicle back-up cameras were repaired on the dump truck and pick-up.

Troy has been working with the property owner at 689 Route 100C on his water/sewer connections as well as a new 100 amp electric service. He scheduled annual testing for the main and back-up transformers at the substation. He met with an electrician at Jenna's Promise to discuss the installation of an additional 200 amp service. Meredith and Troy met with Johnson Works to discuss options for sculpture placement and the electrical connection. Troy has reached out to an electrician to schedule him for later in November. We received a large shipment of material to restock inventory after many items were used on the Route 100C pole replacement project. Troy I

worked with a representative from Lion Electric to obtain specifications and cost for an all-electric bucket truck as part of our grant application. He worked with Meredith on completing the application, which was submitted on November 3.

Scott asked if there were any yellow paint issues to be aware of. Troy said a little paint got on our vehicles but it all washed off pretty easily.

Meredith said employees have been noticing that they get headaches and don't feel well when they spend time in the village garage so we had VOSHA do an assessment. They issued a report that confirmed our suspicions. They believe there is a problem with mold in the building. They suggest moving to a different facility or renovating the facility. They did not recommend solutions like a dehumidifier or a HEPA filter. Those might not permanently affect the dampness. We have staff members who can't work in the garage without having to go out and sit in their vehicles for a while because they are not feeling well. She doesn't have a recommendation tonight. Employees spend a lot of time in garage in the winter fixing things. It is hard to do that work somewhere else. There is no easy fix. We will have to come up with a plan.

Will asked about the current use of the other building in that area. Troy said it is a garage for dry storage. Will asked if the tools could be moved there so employees could work on trucks there this winter. Troy said it is full of equipment and vehicles and there is water infiltration in that building as well. He doesn't see that that would improve things greatly.

Meredith said she and Troy will talk about it and try to come up with some recommendation. She is guessing we will probably need to take the building down to the studs and insulate it and put up a proper moisture barrier. Figuring out how to do that while continuing operations and how to finance it is the next step.

Athena asked how many employees are affected. Meredith said the five field employees.

Steve asked if there is something we can do temporarily even though it may cost more such as providing extra heat and fans for this winter. Scott said the EPA has a good site on buildings damaged due to moisture. At this point the building has been damp for so long that it would be hard to do mitigation because we haven't stopped the water. Getting rid of the water source is the first thing we have to do. Any building material needs to be torn out. For bandaid mitigation we could provide a building envelope within the building. That is not perfect but it helps. We could use that approach for the office, the area where people eat and the bathroom. The only thing you can do with the larger area where they work on equipment is move air and that will be hard in winter months. Solutions are to move, to fix the building, to keep people out of the building or last of all to provide PPE to people working in the building. But the equipment is expensive and hard to get hold of. He will dig out the EPA document that gives guidance on what to do.

Will asked, since a roof leak is contributing, is there any insurance money available? Meredith said she can ask VLCT. It may be hard to say how much damage is attributable to a roof leak versus building problems.

Scott said there is if there is no vapor barrier under the concrete floor moisture wicks up through the concrete. If we do a tear-out we will still have a damp floor that will be wicking moisture. Will



asked if epoxy sealant would help. Scott said yes. Meredith said Troy's impression is that the building was not ever designed to be heated. It was designed for different use. Gordy said he knows the village employees take very good care of their vehicles and wash them a lot. That water could be contributing.

**9. Village Green Flagpole and Inclusivity Statement**

Meredith said there is \$3,900 in the general department budget for parades, events and celebrations. Village staff time for dealing with snowflake decorations and the Christmas tree is \$1,000. Installation of the flag pole, flags, and inclusivity statement plaque will cost \$1,304. The amount allocated to the village green sculptures is \$1,270. The cost for the flags and pole includes a solar light for the flagpole because the American flag needs to be lighted. It also includes staff labor and use of the digger truck. The electric department bills the general department for use of the electric department truck. Great Big Graphics has a vinyl product that looks like a metal plaque. She got a price on a 19x15-in. plaque.

Will asked about the price for the Black Lives Matter flag. Meredith said someone offered to give us one. If that offer doesn't still stand it looks like a 2x3 foot flag is available and is not a major expense.

Board members agreed that the proposed plaque looks good. Meredith said there is about \$326 remaining in this budget line item.

**Will moved to authorized spending up to \$1,500 for a flagpole, Black Lives Matter flag and inclusivity statement for the village green, seconded by Athena.**

Rick said he understands that the village doesn't have the Black Lives Matter flag. He thinks that was the whole point. Will said Meredith had said the village has been offered a flag and if that offer does not still stand buying a flag is not that expensive. And his motion included an extra amount above what Meredith had calculated would be needed.

Rick said the board has been very conscious about spending taxpayer money. The parades, events and celebrations line item is where the board is asking money to be taken from the Jubilee to pay for the flagpole. Are there any conflicts with the easement? Meredith said the flagpole will not be in the easement. She also noted that we are not taking any money from the Jubilee. Johnson Works is getting \$500, the same amount received from us last year. Insurance for the Jubilee was something the village determined was necessary and budgeted for. Johnson Works didn't believe it was necessary but the village moved forward with it on their own.

Rick said we have three existing flag poles that don't cost anything and donation of a Black Lives Matter flag but the trustees want to spend \$1,300. We have an inclusivity statement Kate Westcott painted which could be at the town hall for free. This whole thing could be done for free. At a time when all are being conscious about spending taxpayer money the board should take that into account.

Kyle said as a village taxpayer it is very concerning to her that we are spending this money when infrastructure already exists at the municipal building. It doesn't feel like the trustees are good stewards of taxpayer money when at every meeting there are people asking for the Black Lives Matter flag to be put up at the municipal building. Those making that request are not feeling heard

on that point. It makes her lose faith in this democratic process. She believes the flagpole will be under or close to a lamppost. She is curious as to why another light needs to be put up and how bright it is.

Meredith said she knows the light is intended for a flagpole. She doesn't have the lumens. We haven't picked an exact model. The intent is to light the flag. The light will be at the top of the pole shining onto the flag. She doesn't think it has broad dispersion. She asked about the existing light pole and was told it couldn't really light the flag. She thinks the flag is going to be higher than the pole. We could put the flag up first without a light and see if it is lit well enough. She is open to doing that. Kyle said she thinks that would be a good thing to do.

Kyle said in September Johnson Works was told they would have \$1,900 to work with. She wants to make that point again. Money was taken away from them for this flagpole. She wants to make that clear.

Will said as far as tax dollars for the flagpole, he thinks it will be a permanent structure used for more than a Black Lives Matter flag in the future, whereas the lighted sculptures Johnson Works got funds for are a temporary attraction. This will be permanent, long-term and multiple-purposed. He thinks the expense is justified. Kyle asked him to clarify what he sees as other uses. Will said in the future if there is interest in putting up other flags he thinks it would be a great location. Kyle asked if he is thinking of the Blue Lives Matter flag he previously suggested before he was on the trustee board. Will said he has not given it thought. He thought people might bring things up. The sculpture that taxpayer money is being used for is a temporary structure and this will be here for a long time.

Kyle said it would be great to hear from other trustees how they feel about that. Gordy said the trustees have listened to many suggestions. The selectboard voted not to have a Black Lives Matter flag. The trustees voted to do it and they are trying to come up with a workable solution that will meet the needs and concerns of everyone in the community. He thinks this is a good compromise. We all get something. He thinks at this time it is best for all parties involved.

Scott said he has been vocal about getting the flag up. He has had a lot of people have conversations with him. There is excitement about having this at the village green and potentially doing a dedication ceremony. It is a place to reflect about how we act and what our morals are. He feels like there is frustration from some of the people who come to trustee board meetings. He hears the frustration but as a trustee he is trying to balance the needs of everyone in the community while still using good moral guidance. He has not had say anything negative to him about the village green. The concrete has been poured and we are ready to move. He would love for the trustees to invite NVU, the Studio Center, Jenna's Promise, Laraway and the Racial Justice Committee and have a groundbreaking. People he has spoken to all love the idea. He is disheartened with the constant monthly negativity and everything that is thrown at the trustees. He thinks it is sad that we are still talking about this. Let's move forward and have a good celebration and find time to reflect and have a place to do it. He thanked Meredith for her work on this.

Diane Lehouiller said she is disappointed that the Black Lives Matter flag is being flown at the back of the village green and we are spending quite a bit of money on it when we really should be flying it at the municipal building. That says the trustees and selectboard stand behind it. Those

who want the flag at the municipal building have been good about discussing it publicly. The people that voted it down were the firefighters and none of them came forward publicly to talk about it. That is wrong. We should hear from them. She wants to ask Scott and Athena if they are saying they would fly a Thin Blue Line flag with the Black Lives Matter flag. Athena said she would not be in support of a Thin Blue Line flag being flown on village property. Scott said no, absolutely not.

Gordy noted that Kyle and Rick had their hands raised and asked if the board wanted to hear from them or vote. **Will moved to call the question.** Steve said he thinks this is a good compromise and we should move on. He likes the idea of having the flag on the green. There is room to gather there. We should try to focus on being able to talk about it. Hopefully the fire department will show up and we can talk to them. **Gordy seconded and the motion was passed.**

**The motion to spend \$1500 was passed.**

***10. Discussion of Approach for 2021 Pay Adjustments and Health Insurance Contributions***

Meredith said usually at this time of year she and Brian Story start talking about scheduling a joint meeting to discuss pay adjustments and health, but the town and village voted to no longer have joint employees. We do still have joint officials. They are each paid by the town and the village but they are not technically joint employees. A change since last year is that all line crew are now under a union contract and all their benefits and pay are dictated by the contract so that is not really a point of discussion for this year. In past years when we met with the selectboard we generally have applied a cost of living increase to all village staff as well as joint employees. Now only Meredith and Marla are not covered by the union contract. If the trustees do have a joint meeting with the selectboard to talk about pay for Susan and Rosemary, does the board want to apply whatever increases are given to them to her and Marla as well or does the board just want to focus on the town clerk and assistant clerk? Brian thinks the selectboard will want to be consistent among all employees with pay increases.

Gordy noted that we also have a new holiday we are offering – Martin Luther King Day. Meredith said that was added for unionized employees. It hasn't been changed for all. Unless the trustees vote to do something different, the five line workers will get Martin Luther King Day off and the rest of the staff will still be there working.

The board agreed that any pay or health coverage adjustments made for the clerk and assistant clerk should also apply to Meredith and Marla. Steve said he thinks we need numbers to look at for all employees so we know how any changes will affect the budget, knowing that we will treat all employees the same. Gordy said he would like to see the chairs and vice chairs of the selectboard and trustees meet with Rosemary, Brian and Meredith before the joint meeting to come up with options. Other board members agreed that is a good idea. The board decided to see if the selectboard is available for a joint meeting on November 23.

***11. Municipal Website Maintenance & Update***

Meredith said the town and village hired someone to do website maintenance and updates. He is also going to be switching website hosting to his firm. In conversation with Brian he indicated this might be a good time to do updates and modernization of the website. He estimated that would cost around \$1,200. She had emailed out the example he developed. It sounds like the selectboard had a desire to get examples of other websites he has done to see if he is the person we want to undertake this work. If we think what he can offer is sufficient, is the board comfortable spending \$600

shared among all four departments to have an improved website? To her the amount seems reasonable.

Will asked if money is budgeted for this type of work. Meredith said not specifically this year. We budgeted for some IT work but did not specifically budget for a website update. What is driving this is the suggestion that it would be convenient to do this work at the same time as the migration of the website but she thinks we could say we want to budget for it in 2021. Will said he thinks it is worth waiting. Athena said she would definitely like to see examples of his work. She feels having a good website is important and she would be in favor of it Steve said he would have to see examples. Will said he is not saying it is not important but if no money is budgeted for it this year and it is not a necessity, where do we want to pull the money from? Either we have to go over budget or pull it from somewhere else. Athena said she can't think of where we would pull it from but she thinks it is worthy when we think of the issues of younger people engaging with the town. Will asked, is it so critical we can't wait 5 months for it to be budgeted in? Athena said she doesn't know.

Meredith said any cost for this work would be split among the four departments. An important thing she would like to see would be individual pages about the electric department, the water department and the wastewater department. That is important information people need when they move to the community and she feels very strongly that we need to incorporate standalone pages for each of those departments.

Meredith said it sounds like the trustees feel similar to the selectboard about wanting to see examples and there is at least one strong voice for waiting. Gordy said he also would like to see examples. Maybe it will be more expensive next year. He agrees we do need pages for each of the utilities. With a younger generation the website is the first thing they go for. We need information that is findable on the internet. He thinks the majority are saying we should see examples and decide at a future date. Meredith said she, Gordy, Brian and Eric can talk about whether it is wise to put this on the joint meeting agenda since a decision needs to be made by both boards.

#### **12. COVID-19 Response Check-In and Utility Update**

Meredith said current electric bills that are 60 days past due are up about 4% over last year. We have received about \$11,800 to date from the Arrearages Assistance Program. Those are funds sent to us to pay off past balances. We have about \$8,500 in new applications and second looks at past applications. Last week we heard from the state that they are opening up these grant funds to water and sewer. We have about \$9,800 of water and sewer bills that are 30 or 60 days past due. Customers who have a financial hardship due to COVID can access those funds.

The state of emergency is still in effect so we cannot disconnect water and sewer. On October 15 the disconnection moratorium expired for electric. If weather permits we are now able to disconnect customers for non-payment. If they have applied for Arrearages Assistance funds and are awaiting a decision they cannot be disconnected.

#### **13. VPPSA Budget Update**

VPPSA presented a draft of their 2021 budget. There is about an 8% increase in administrative costs. A lot of that is due to staff at VPPSA having to put time into the GIS mapping project. Funds are also going to the advanced metering project. The increase for us is several thousand dollars. On the power supply side of the budget we are going to assume similar loads to this year. We're not going to assume 2021 will be any better than 2020 was. The requirements of the renewable energy

standard are driving costs. Every year the amount of power that has to come from renewable sources increases. It is becoming more expensive to meet the requirements. She is confident that VPPSA is working as hard as they can to control those costs. The VPPSA budget will be voted on at the December VPPSA meeting. She thinks what they are proposing for Johnson is something we can handle. The increases are understandable. Will ask what dollar figure 8% represents. Meredith said she thinks five or six thousand dollars.

**14. Discussion of the 2020 Electric Department Budget Status**

Meredith said retail sales for the electric department were down about 3% in the latest budget status report. That is probably where we will end up for the year as a whole. From March to June the decreases were more severe and they have leveled off recently. She thinks we will be about \$62,000 under budget for electric department revenue. She went through the expense budget with Troy to see if there are line items expected to come in under budget. They identified about \$61,000 from line items that they think will be under budget but they expect the transformers line to be over budget by about \$10-15,000. So she thinks expenses will be about \$45,000 under budget and revenues will be about \$62,000 under budget which means there will be a deficit. She thinks she and Troy were conservative in the expense projections and hopefully we will do somewhat better than that. While our revenues have been under budget and our load has been down, largely due to less activity at NVU, our power supply costs have not gone down the same way. She will let Shawn Enterline from VPPSA explain that

Shawn Enterline, a power analyst at VPPSA, said power supply costs are within a fraction of a percent of budget. Why didn't they go down when we are selling less power? The reason is that we commit to the full amount of power supply in the year before the operating year in order to buffer against changes in market price. Market price is very volatile. That is why VPPSA buys electricity in advance. They always commit to within 5% plus or minus of the expected load before the year starts. When there is less load than anticipated the excess gets sold to the market for the price at that time. The price we got is lower than we would have liked. When there is an excess the price drops. So the power supply is not tracking declining retail sales.

Meredith said there will be a deficit but she thinks it will be manageable. Next year will be a difficult year to budget. We will assume a similar lost load. We will have to see where we can shave things or delay projects. But we just talked about work to be done at the garage.

Gordy asked Shawn about the percentage of our power that we need to buy on the spot market. Are the VPPSA contracts fairly good long-term so we do not need to buy much power on the spot market? Shawn said yes, he makes sure we are at least 95% covered before we get to the spot market each month.

**15. Executive Session to Discuss a Contract**

Shawn said VPPSA has a contract signed in 2013 that will end about 2 years from now. The price of that power is about 50% higher than what we can buy now. VPPSA is proposing to replace that contract with something different. The power we have presently comes from Seabrook Nuclear. We have a contract with NextEra. VPPSA wants to replace that with hydroelectricity, which is competitively priced and includes renewable energy credits because it is a green source of power so it can fulfill Tier One requirements. He knows of Johnson's concerns about NVU. They are proposing a little lower volume. They are proposing the same volume during peak hours but are recommending a little less power for nights and weekends. For renewable energy credits there is a

requirement of about 6,000 megawatt hours a year. They are proposing to buy not quite 2/3 of that amount. We don't want to fill up in advance when we are not sure retail sales will be there.

Will said the rate for hydropower is a little higher but it is offset by not having to buy credits, right? Shawn said yes.

Shawn said VPPSA got four proposals – one from NextEra to continue the existing contract and three from different hydroelectric suppliers. If the board thinks the proposed volumes are appropriate they will go back and ask two hydro operators to provide their best and final pricing.

Will asked if the industrial park the town invested in uses village or Electric Coop power. Gordy said village. Will asked if there have been any rumblings of anyone willing to move in. Meredith said no; she believes they have quite a bit of infrastructure work to do. She doesn't believe there is any estimate of when tenants will come in or anyone in mind yet that we can bank on as future customers. She believes the town is seeking funds now to do infrastructure work. Manchester Lumber in Parker and Stearns are other areas that are empty but we have no sense of when they might be reused.

**Will moved to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the contract to be discussed would place the village at a substantial disadvantage, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Will moved to go into executive session with Meredith and Shawn to discuss a contract pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(1)(A), Athena seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 9:07.** The board came out of executive session at 9:25.

***16. Vote to Commit to 5-Year Purchased Power Agreement***

**Will moved to authorize Meredith to sign the 2023-2027 Planned Purchase Agreement Commitment Letter, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

***17. Adjourn***

**Will moved to adjourn at 9:28, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.**