

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN
MONDAY, JUNE 14, 2021

Present:

Trustees: Steve Hatfield, Diane Lehouiller, Will Jennison, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau

Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Susan Tinker, Bobbi Rooney, Elizabeth Perry, Mike Dunham, Raven Pfaff, Jasmine Yuris, Sophia Berard, Jackie Stanton, Scott Meyer, Eric Hutchins, Lydia Putvain, Nat Kinney, Dave, Kim Dunkley, Lynda Hill, Darrell Wescom, Beth Foy, Joie Lehouillier, Kyle Nuse, Margo Warden

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Will called the meeting to order at 6:00.

2. Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda

Meredith added discussion about how future trustee board meetings will be conducted.

3. Elect Village Board of Trustees Vice Chair

Ken nominated BJ for vice chair, seconded by Diane. Diane asked if BJ wants to be vice chair. He said he has no problem with it. Diane asked if he has time. He said yes; he comes to meetings anyway.

Diane asked what the vice chair needs to do. Will said if he is unable to be at a meeting he will give the vice chair a heads up that he needs to run the meeting, unless he gets a fire call at the last minute. He will share anything relevant to the meeting with the vice chair and then the vice chair just needs to follow decorum.

Diane asked if BJ could get a copy of Robert's Rules. Will said this board never adopted Robert's Rules so knowing it is not absolutely necessary. Meredith said one thing this board has talked about is establishing written rules of procedure. Our attorney suggested that would be wise.

Steve asked, when the board decides to start meeting in person, will be BJ able to take time off from work to attend? BJ said yes. He has taken time off work for regular meetings. It is special meetings that are hard for him to attend in person.

BJ was elected vice chair.

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

Rosemary said the fire department received a credit of about \$2,400 from last year's workers' comp audit, which was unexpected. Call volume was lower last year. Rosemary has the signed fire contract from the town, which Will needs to sign. There have not been many changes since last month on the revenue side. The grand list is almost complete and the board should be able to set the tax rate at its July meeting.

Diane asked how much the last election cost. Rosemary said about \$1000.

Diane asked about the \$6000 we get from NVU. That is for the fire department? Meredith said yes. It started before she joined the village. Her understanding is that it was in recognition of the extra

work and call volume because of the presence of the university in the community. NVU has been willing to continue paying it. Diane asked why it is under the general department. Meredith said the fire department is under the general department. Diane asked when they make the payment. Meredith said it usually doesn't come until the second half of the calendar year. She talked to NVU in the spring when she was developing the budget and she got email confirmation that they would pay it again this year.

Ken asked if we are getting back on par for electrical usage. Meredith said yes. We would expect to be at 42% of budget at this point in the year and we are at 44%.

Diane asked if Meredith has heard about the number of students expected at NVU in the coming year. Meredith said she has not heard a projection for fall. We assumed 2021 would be equally as bad as 2020 but hopefully it will be better. If the college is able to return to normal operations in the fall that will help our sales.

Steve asked what Project 10 is. Meredith said it is a generator VPPSA owns. We have a share in it. It is located in Swanton. It comes on at times when the system is at peak energy load. There are expenses for operating it but also revenues from providing power to the grid. The net is even or positive

Meredith noted that the contracted tree trimmers we use are all booked up. We are hoping to get them later this summer or fall. So the expenditure for the tree trimming line item is still at zero.

Will asked about sick, vacation and holiday leave being over budget already. Meredith said when crew members were standing by at home during the pandemic their time was coded to that line item. Other labor categories are correspondingly lower than usual.

Meredith said the state has been buying water from us to fill their water truck so we will be able to bill them for bulk sales of water. That is not revenue we budgeted for.

Will noted that heat for the water department is over budget. Meredith said she will have to look at that. It may be due to miscoding.

Rosemary asked when the board wants to stop not charging interest for water and sewer past due bills. Meredith said she thinks we previously talked about maintaining that during the state of emergency. Rosemary said we usually get \$200 to \$400 per month in interest charges.

Kim Dunkley said her understanding is that the state of emergency ends tomorrow night. Meredith agreed that is correct.

Will asked if anyone is opposed to resuming interest charges once the state of emergency expires. Steve asked if interest charged would just be on bills accrued in the future and not on bills already owed. Meredith asked Rosemary if that is feasible. Rosemary said she is not sure. She thinks the program takes the total past due and multiplies by the interest rate. Meredith asked, it would not be compounding? We would just apply the interest rate to the balance due as of today but it would be applied to the total past due balance? Rosemary said yes.

Steve asked if people can still apply for assistance. Meredith said there is currently a program for renters and money was put into the state budget for broader utility support. That program is not set up yet but should be coming.

Diane asked if we can give people a heads up that we will start charging interest. She feels some people are still having a lot of problems and she would hate to add to that. She is opposed to making the change right now. Rosemary suggested we could put a notice in with bills this billing cycle saying that interest will be charged starting with the next cycle. The board agreed to that. BJ asked that we include information about the help available.

Susan asked if the board wants to continue to waive credit card fees. Meredith said she thinks we were doing that as long as the office was closed. Office reopening is imminent. The board agreed that when the office opens, credit card fees will be reinstated.

5. *Request to Utilize Village Owned Property for Snowmobile Trail*

Meredith showed a map of the route the Sterling Snow Riders snowmobile club is asking to use. Bobbi Rooney said the snowmobile club is asking permission to use a new route that will get snowmobiles off a portion of Upper French Hill. They have found an old logging road and are looking for permission to fix it and clean it up for snowmobile use. It is on town/village property and the town has already given permission as long as the village does. Will asked if the property is part of the talc mill parcel. Meredith said she believes it is. Rosemary agreed.

Ken moved to allow Sterling Snow Riders to use town/village land as requested, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

6. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

Meredith read Dan's report. The E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted for review. We had 3 callouts – two for influent wet well issues and one for the siphon being plugged and flowing through the bypass. The influent wet well was due to grease accumulation giving a false level reading. We were able to vacuum it out when the pump truck was here to do the monthly grit removal. The siphon plugged on a Saturday and started flowing through the bypass. We had the fire department use their truck to pressurize the line and flush the line. The following Monday we had Manosh jet both the siphon and the bypass to clear any other obstructions.

Dan met with Will regarding the cupola removal. It was decided that we should hold off until early winter and put it out to bid for spring/summer 2022 removal. It is very doubtful we can line up another contractor this summer to complete the job.

Luke passed his Grade 1 wastewater exam. As soon as he has his 2 years of experience in the system (September 2021) he will have his full license. Tim passed his Grade 2 exam and is now a certified Grade 2 operator. We passed our proficiency tests for all permit required laboratory testing that we perform in house (pH, Settleable Solids and eColi). All other tests are performed by Endyne Laboratory.

Diane asked if it would be smart to get bids now for cupola removal next year since contractors are so busy. Will said because contractors are busy, if we ask for bids now they will probably not be in our favor. We might get better bids if we wait until things slow down. Ken agreed. He said materials are up 300%. Will said hopefully materials prices will stabilize and go back down. If we get bids now, materials prices will not be in our favor. He feels it can wait until spring. Meredith

said our insurance company, PACIF, has noted that the cupola should be dealt with but as long as we have a plan she thinks that will satisfy them.

Coliform results were negative. Dan met with Will at the old reservoir to discuss options for demolition. Will is working on a possible solution. Luke passed his grade 3 water exam. With his 1.5 years experience he is now a certified grade 3 operator. Water loss for April was 9%. Water loss for May was 8%

7. Foreman Report and Action Items

Troy gave his report. The crew installed a new 2 gang meter socket to serve the food trucks on the village green. We also installed a new 200 amp overhead service that serves the Jenna's Promise coffee roasting building at the former Parker & Stearns site. We completed the service on Creamery Road for Lamoille Valley Bike Tours. We energized a new service on Foote Brook Road. The crew replaced three utility poles and installed conductor that will serve a new property at the end of our service territory on Clay Hill. We had an outage at 86 Route 100C due to a bad secondary service connection. This affected one customer and power was restored within an hour. The crew made several repairs to street lights throughout the village. The crew also completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

The crew has been filling the state's water truck regularly. We will invoice the state for the bulk water sales. New water and sewer connections were made at the Jenna's Promise coffee roasting building. Miscellaneous water meters throughout the village system were repaired. The village crew along with the fire department assisted H2O Innovations with clearing the Main Street sewer siphon.

All sidewalk sweeping was completed within the village. All the utility pole American flags were hung in time for Memorial Day. The bench and a picnic table at the village green were repaired and repairs were made to the driveway and parking area. All crosswalk painting on village streets has been completed. The village crew installed a plexi-glass barrier at the customer window at the municipal building in preparation for the office re-opening. The crew dug four holes and installed fencing for the Tree Board at the new arboretum.

Rubber gloves and sleeves were sent out for three-month testing. The new pickup truck has been fully outfitted, including village logo, and has been put into service. Troy created an estimate for the new 200 amp overhead service that serves the Jenna's Promise coffee roasting building. Troy placed orders for electric meters, utility poles, and other line materials in order to maintain adequate stock. We completed a pole attachment license for Comcast. Troy has continued to work with the project manager for the two level-2 EV charging stations that are going to be installed at the Jolley parking lot. He anticipates those will be installed in the fall. Fire hydrant flushing has been scheduled for June 23-25.

Diane asked what the rubber gloves and sleeves are. Troy said they are protective equipment worn when working on lines to protect against electric shock.

Diane asked how many people have to be involved when the electric crew does a job. Troy said it depends on the size of the job. It could be a couple of people or it could be the whole crew. Diane asked if the water and sewer crew is different. Troy said no. There is a crew of five people who do water, sewer, electric and general department work. Meredith said H2O Operations is contracted to

operate the water and wastewater plants. They also do a little field work. The pump stations and reservoir are their responsibility. The village crew is responsible for the pipes in the ground and the lines in the air.

8. *Johnson Works Request for Portable Toilet at the Village Green*

Meredith said she got a report that Johnson Works had requested a portable toilet at the village green. It sounded like there was a concern with one business having people want to use their restroom. Her initial reaction was that it would not be a good fit because it is such a small area and we have already heard complaints about not having enough open space and it would be in close proximity to food trucks and where people are eating, but she thought she would bring it to the board. The concern about people searching for a place to use a restroom was discussed at a Johnson Works meeting but not forwarded to Meredith as an official request.

Joie Lehouillier said it is just something one member brought up because Brian Story was there. Johnson Works is not interested in paying for a portable toilet there and if they had money they probably wouldn't consider it either.

Diane said it would be nice to know the cost for a portable toilet. Ken said his ATV club is splitting the cost of one and it is around \$1,000 for about four months. They are very expensive.

Kim Dunkley suggested that if there are still a couple of portable toilets on School Street because of Tuesday Night Live and other activities there, that might be a place to direct people. That is only a block from the food trucks. Will noted that the Mobil station is just down the road.

Bobbi Rooney said she doesn't think it is fair to any business for another business to be directing people there to use the bathroom facilities. She thinks this needs to be thought through a little better.

9. *Johnson Recreation Request for Use of Fire Hydrant*

Meredith said the village got a request from the Johnson recreation department to use a fire hydrant. They would like to put a pressure reducing mechanism on it and use it for a spray down on a hot day to cool people off. The recreation department was interested in doing it up to three times during the summer and Chief Arjay West indicated he could commit to having volunteers do it once. It would probably just last an hour or two. It would use a relatively small amount of water. The hydrant that would be used is on School Street. Will said Arjay estimates it would use 2000-3000 gallons.

BJ asked if the village will be liable if someone gets hurt. Meredith said she thinks if it is happening as a Johnson recreation sponsored event on town property the town would be more susceptible to liability. If fire department members are involved there is potentially some liability but she would think there would be more on the town. Will said there is some risk with anything we do. It will be a one-time event. It is a town recreation event so there will be permission from the town. The fire chief and volunteers have okayed running the spray. It will not use much water. Meredith said 3000 gallons of water has a value of about \$30.

Diane moved to authorize the fire department to use the hydrant on Legion Field for a Johnson Recreation Committee event, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

10. Request for Route 15 Crosswalk Near Former Subway

Meredith said she got a request from a resident about putting a crosswalk across Route 15 near the former Subway building so people can cross the street and continue on the sidewalk toward the municipal building. It is a state highway so any crosswalk must be approved by VTrans. All we can do is advocate for it. When this request came in previously the board supported having LCPC do a pedestrian count in an attempt to quantify the need for a crosswalk. When they did it, usage was very low and it did not seem like it would be very persuasive to VTrans. The resident reached out again wondering how that stood. Meredith let her know that the board was supportive of looking into a crosswalk but it didn't look like it would be successful based on usage. We could ask LCPC to do another count. There might be another time when usage would better support the request.

BJ asked how much it would cost. Meredith said LCPC is willing to do another traffic count for free. The only cost is the time for Meredith's replacement to correspond with LCPC and VTrans and advocate for the crosswalk.

BJ moved and Steve seconded to ask LCPC to do another traffic study at the location of a potential crosswalk on Route 15 near the former Subway building. Ken asked if we can make a request about when they do the study. There will probably not be as much use in summer as after the college starts up. Meredith said she tends to agree that summer would not be the best time. We can ask if LCPC can hold off until fall.

Jasmine Yuris asked, that study holds all the weight? Meredith said she thinks a study can help convince VTrans, but they have been resistant to the idea of more crosswalks on Main Street.

The motion was passed.

11. Accept Resignations from the Racial Justice Committee & Discuss Future Village Participation in the Committee

Meredith said Diane had mentioned that she didn't think the board had formerly accepted Rick Aupperlee's resignation from the Racial Justice Committee and that she plans on resigning from the committee effective June 10. **Steve moved to accept Rick Aupperlee's resignation from the Racial Justice Committee and the motion was seconded and passed. Steve moved to accept Diane's resignation from the Racial Justice Committee effective June 10, 2021, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

Will said Eric Hutchins had suggested at a meeting that the Racial Justice Committee could be could just be run under the town instead of having to come to two separate boards. Is that correct? Eric Hutchins said everyone in the town is represented by the selectboard so having additional appointees by the village seemed redundant to him. If the committee wants to request use of village property they could bring that to the trustees but his personal opinion is that it seems unnecessarily burdensome to have the committee reporting to two boards.

Will said he spoke with Eric Osgood about this and he has agreed to bring it up to his board. Depending on what the trustees decide he is willing to have the town take on the committee in its entirety so it only has to report to one board.

BJ moved and Ken seconded to allow the Racial Justice Committee to become a town committee rather than a joint town-village committee, pending the town's acceptance.

Diane said she thinks it may be important to have some village people on the committee. She doesn't know how to have that happen if we are not a part of it. She thinks it might be advantageous for the Racial Justice Committee to be able to make decisions itself about who should be on the committee instead of having to go through the board. Will said when he spoke with Eric Osgood Eric was very clear that the percentage of town and village representation wouldn't change. The committee would just report to the selectboard.

Steve said he thinks the Racial Justice Committee is very important. He wants to strengthen what they can do so if this does that, he is for it. Will said it would be his intention for this to be a positive thing. He thought it would make things cleaner and easier. Ken said it would save the committee the hassle of having to get on two agendas.

Margo Warden said on one hand it may seem easier not going to two boards but her opinion is that the committee should keep reporting to each of the boards, not for ease but for strength and accountability.

Eric Hutchins said if this motion is passed it won't be the last the trustees hear from the Racial Justice Committee. But the committee has already lost four members, three of them from the village. It would be nice to pull from the pool of the entire town. Having to appoint three from the town and three from the village even though the town and village are unequal sizes holds the committee down. Just because someone is not a committee member doesn't mean they don't have a full voice. Some people who are not on the committee come to meetings with lots of ideas and participation. Reporting only to the selectboard gives the committee more flexibility to act. They will only need to report to this board when something concerns this board. They will report monthly to the selectboard, which every member of the village is represented on.

The motion was passed.

12. Racial Justice Committee Request to Hang REAL Banner Across Pearl Street

Meredith said the Racial Justice Committee had previously requested hanging the REAL banner across Main Street. We discussed that it would require quite a bit of work to put up infrastructure to hang the banner. The committee is now requesting hanging the banner across Pearl Street, where there is existing infrastructure.

Raven Pfaff said the idea was to use the existing infrastructure that is regularly used by NVU and the Red Cross. The committee thought that would be better than paying the cost, putting in the new infrastructure and getting the permits to put the banner on Main Street. Hanging it over Pearl Street seems easier. They are proposing to hang it from June 28 to July 31.

Will said he thinks it would be negligent of the trustees to authorize this without having a policy in place regarding banners. He would like to have a policy for banners on village infrastructure on the agenda for the next meeting. After that the board can vote on putting up this banner. Steve said he doesn't see why we have to have a policy. We could take one instance at a time and vote each request up or down. Will said if we make a decision without a policy then the board can't say no to something else that falls within the parameters of what has already been authorized.

Diane said she thinks we have been discussing this long enough. She thinks we should hang the REAL banner. It will benefit the town. The trustees have done things without a policy before. You deal with the next problem when it comes. If it becomes a problem then we can develop a policy. She thinks we have a policy regarding sewer but don't always follow it. People at NVU and the Studio Center will appreciate us hanging the banner. Ken said he doesn't understand what Diane is saying about water and sewer. We follow policy for that all the time. Diane said she is not sure we always follow the policy with regard to where it gets cut off and what we allow and don't allow. Hanging the banner is an important first step for Johnson to let everyone see visually that we care about racial and social justice. That is what it is telling people, so let's do it.

BJ said since the committee wants to hang the banner starting June 28, instead of waiting until the next meeting to discuss a banner policy we could have a meeting before that to come up with a policy. He likes the idea of a policy. Ken said a policy is a good idea. Government runs on policy. Without a policy, things can go in any direction.

Diane asked what Will sees the policy being. Will said he hasn't given it any thought since it is not on the agenda yet. He feels it would not allow anything offensive or political.

BJ moved and Ken seconded to develop a policy on hanging banners before making a decision on the request to hang a REAL banner on Pearl Street and to try to schedule a meeting to work on the policy before June 28.

Sophia Berard said she is surprised because about a month ago the trustees approved hanging the banner across Main Street without a policy. She questioned Will expressing his opinion before hearing what board members had to say. She said it seems unrealistic and more work to try to squeeze in another meeting. She feels it could be an easy decision to support the Racial Justice Committee and show support for this.

Will said he apologizes that a policy was not brought up before, but after hanging the banner was approved he heard from people in the village and town and it became clear to him that a policy should be there. Yes, it should have been done before the other vote, but that does not mean it is not better to do it now. He apologizes it wasn't done before but he is trying to correct the wrong from before.

Lynda Hill asked how long it takes for a policy to take effect. Doesn't it have to be warned? Meredith said a policy is a step below an ordinance. The board can just decide to implement a policy. Lynda asked, it can be proposed and implemented at one meeting? Meredith said she believes so. Will said the meeting will be warned.

Lynda said Will had commented that the banner could be hung once the policy was implemented, as long as the banner fits the criteria in the policy. But the policy could be not to hang any controversial banner or any banner the trustees do not support. In that case the banner would not be hung. Will said his goal is to have a policy that is pretty black and white. That will make it easier for other banners to go up as well.

Lynda said many things happen in the village and town that there could be a policy for but there isn't. She is not sure the banner is an issue needing a policy. She agrees with Sophia that she has a

problem with Will stating his opinion before the other trustees have a chance to speak. She feels he should ask how the board feels and at the end say what he thinks rather than setting the tone for how he wants the conversation to go. That is not how Johnson, Hyde Park, or Morrisville selectboard meetings are run. Will said he has great confidence that people on the trustee board are not influenced by one person. Lynda said the chair is a powerful person. Will said to him the chair is equal to everyone else. All he does is keep the meeting moving forward.

Eric Hutchins said he is sympathetic to Will's desire to seem non-partisan and not want to set a precedent but by putting up banners for years the board has already set a precedent. Trying to implement a policy now, before considering the request to put up this banner, is the most partisan thing the board could do. This is a democratically elected board. This is the kind of decision constituents voted for the trustees to make. There is no way to write a policy that people won't find loopholes in. People have trusted board members to make these decisions. REAL is an organization for the public good just like the Red Cross and NVU. It feels like a roadblock to call for special treatment for this banner that a handful of people may find challenging. One of the charges of the Racial Justice Committee is to do public messaging in support of racial justice. The REAL organization is doing good things throughout Lamoille County. If the board feels any banner request is inappropriate they can vote it down. He doesn't think there will be a lot of other requests to hang banners. Will said he thinks the willingness to have a special meeting indicates the board is not trying to throw up roadblocks.

Jackie Stanton said she agrees with previous speakers. We have had banners managed for decades without a policy and now this banner triggers the need for a policy. The board voted to allow the banner in the initial location requested. Will said he had heard from some people since the meeting where the board gave approval. These are public meetings. Where are these people? Have they put anything in writing? Why won't they come to a meeting and give their opinion? This is a great banner. The board should authorize hanging it. There is no need to wait for a policy. We haven't needed one for 35 years and she doesn't think we need one now.

Meredith said she thinks it is important for the trustees to set guidelines regarding the cost of putting banners up and down. If requests for banners become more frequent there should be a clear understanding as to whether the labor to put them up and take them down is always donated or if there will be a charge.

Ken said we just had an election and 111 people spoke. A lot of people are for a policy. Whether the policy will include the REAL banner he doesn't know. The special election showed that a policy was needed. He thinks we should discuss this another time because this agenda is pretty full.

Sophia asked the trustees who do support the banner going up to make a motion and see if it flies. The trustees adopted the inclusivity and anti-racism statements. A Black Lives Matter banner is a very small first step in the direction of achieving those goals. The committee is not talking about policy changes to town government or a hiring policy. They are talking about flying one banner across Pearl Street that already was approved to fly over Main Street. She agrees with Eric that the fact that the board decided a policy was needed before considering this request speaks volumes. She hopes the board can support this just as they did when the proposal was to fly it across Main Street.

Eric congratulated Ken on his election. He said he followed that contest quite closely and he doesn't remember a policy on banners being an item that Ken campaigned on.

Lynda asked, why don't the trustees approve the banner this time, since it was approved at one point and put a policy in place starting at the end of July or the beginning of August? Will said if this motion passes the board would consider that at the next meeting.

Margo Warden asked for an example of criteria that might be applied to this banner or any other banner that might make a banner not acceptable. Will said he can't give examples. It has to be decided by the entire board. Margo asked, does that mean there is a 100% chance this banner will be flown? The sense she is getting is that some criteria may be chosen that negate the chances of this banner being flown. Is that a real possibility? Will said he can't answer that. There are five members of the board and it is up for discussion at a future meeting.

Kim Dunkley said it seems reasonable to her to put up the banner that was already okayed and then develop a policy.

Jackie said she thinks a few minutes ago Will referred to things that are political or controversial when discussing the policy. Will said that is his opinion. Jackie asked if he thinks the REAL banner is political or controversial. Will said he doesn't recall seeing it so he can't say.

Kyle Nuse asked if Will, Ken or BJ – the board member she is hearing want to discuss a policy – feel Black Lives Matter is political or controversial. Black Lives Matter is federally protected. It is the world's largest humanitarian movement because of historical oppression, murdering and discrimination against people of color that our town is not immune to. There was just an article in Seven Days and Vermont Digger about a person of color who did not feel safe in Johnson. That is an experience that many have. What is Will's fear as a white male about putting up a banner that affirms the lives of people who have been killed for centuries because of the color of their skin? What is he afraid of in his dominant position? Will said none of Kyle's questions are germane to the question before the board. Kyle said the village keeps roadblocking anything that affirms people of color. Will said he doesn't find her questions germane to the question of moving forward with a policy.

Scott Meyer said the Town of Stowe has a policy on banners. He suggested that board members look at that and adopt the same wording. A Black Lives Matter banner would not violate Stowe's policy and he would hope it wouldn't violate Johnson's policy.

The motion was passed in a roll call vote with BJ, Ken and Will in favor and Diane and Steve opposed.

The board agreed to schedule a meeting to discuss a banner policy on June 25 at 6:00.

Sophia said a large majority of the people who spoke at this meeting were in favor of hanging the banner or getting a vote on hanging the banner at this meeting. The board's decision was not made in a democratic manner. The trustees did not listen to the public. That sets a precedent. She feels the board is not listening to the people who come and spend time speaking to them. Three white

men made this decision. A lot of voices were just dismissed. Ken said he was just elected by 111 people in this village, a record vote. That set a precedent.

13. Update on AMI Project and Cost-Benefit Analysis

Meredith said VPPSA has undertaken a project to get a preferred vendor for Advanced Metering Infrastructure for its members. The next step is cost-benefit analysis for its members. AMI is smart meters. They would include both electric and water meters. The village's electric and water meters are now very manual. With AMI they would be automated and it would remove a lot of in-person time to deal with them. A lot of things could be done remotely, even turning power on and off.

Meredith reviewed the cost-benefit analysis draft shared with the village by the consultant who is working for VPPSA. The estimated cost for AMI for the electric and water departments over the next 15 years is about \$1.578 million. Operational benefits for the electric department are estimated at \$1,098,000 and operational benefits for the water department are estimated at about \$337,000. Those total to \$1.434 million. So operational benefits alone don't outweigh the cost. VPPSA is also asking us to consider smart grid customer rate PUC requirements. The PUC is pushing utilities to be able to offer programs and rate flexibility that are nearly impossible to implement without smart meters. The consultant tried to put a value on complying with PUC requirements and came up with \$970,000. If we include those benefits, which are not actual budget savings, the benefits are estimated at \$2,068,000, outweighing the costs. The \$970,000 is less tangible and less defined but we know the pressures are there and are not going away. We are going to be asked to do things that smart meters are necessary to implement.

Meredith is dubious about one of the consultant's estimates: \$600,000 over 15 years for the value of reducing the number of trips to read meters, pull meters or turn service off or on. They estimated that cost at about \$40,000 a year. But we don't anticipate losing any staff if AMI is implemented. Staff only do meter reading 3 days out of the month. There would be less work but it would not equate to eliminating a position, so that is a labor cost we would not actually be saving. They have said it is a reduction in cost associated with this part of our business but if we are not spending \$40,000 less a year we can't say that is a savings. We would be driving less so there would be less wear and tear on vehicles and less fuel use but she is not comfortable we would see as much in savings as they estimate. The rest of the figures she is more comfortable with.

The consultant is having individual meetings with each VPPSA member and refining the model. At some point we will get a revised version of this cost-benefit analysis. Hopefully the consultant will come and talk to the board. Then the board will have to decide if we want to implement smart meters and consider the finances.

Will said when they come to do a presentation they should be ready with the rate increase needed to comply. He won't move forward without knowing the amount of rate increase required.

There was a question about how long we have until the state forces us to implement smart metering. Meredith said she is hearing 2024 as a time frame for things they want us to do that our current metering infrastructure with hamper us from doing.

In answer to Diane's question, Meredith said we tried to get federal funding for this and we're not successful. There is no pot of money available for this.

Diane asked, we have to hire someone to monitor the information coming in, right? Meredith said a data management system is built into the cost. The idea is that existing staff can have access to the data. It will probably interface with the billing system. There will be internal work to maintain the system. There will be economies of scale with VPPSA members all using the same data warehouse. VPPSA did an RFP to select the best vendor. They have a preferred vendor selected and they are using costs from that vendor for the cost-benefit analysis. The idea is that there would be some benefit to working collaboratively with other VPPSA members.

Diane asked if something else is coming along that is going to replace smart meters. Meredith said she hasn't heard of anything.

14. Update on Electric Sales and Power Supply Costs

Meredith showed some charts VPPSA provided comparing sales in 2019, 2020 and 2021. At this time in 2020, month-to-date sales for June were 90.4% of 2019 sales. Currently month-to-date sales are at 115.2% of 2019 sales, so sales have rebounded and then some. At this time in 2020 year-to-date sales were 91.5% of 2019. Currently year-to-date sales are 101% above of 2019.

Meredith said we pay for all the power we buy through VPPSA and they bill us monthly. She showed actual and budgeted power supply charges for January, February, March and April 2021. Budget was higher than actuals in January and lower than actuals in the other months. We have had more sales so we have had to buy more power. We are over budget for costs because of more demand. But the power supply cost per kilowatt hour has been pretty significantly under budget. So the higher retail sales should have net positive impact.

15. Update on Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act

Meredith said the American Rescue Plan Act includes a lot of money for states, counties and local communities. We are learning more about its limitations. VLCT did a webinar in May before actual allocations were made. The village is getting about \$158K dollars – about \$80K this year and about the same next year. There are very specific requirements for using the money. Eligible uses include COVID-19 pandemic response, pay for essential workers (which Meredith does not think includes any village employees), water and sewer and broadband projects, and compensating for lost revenue. Meredith was hopeful that we could use ARPA funds to make up for significant revenue we lost but utilities are excluded from that use. There is some push to get that changed but she is not optimistic it will be successful.

Diane asked, the selectboard is going to get an amount also? Meredith said yes; the town will get its own distinct amount which she thinks is in the \$220K range. Diane asked if it is possible for the village and town to work together on broadband. Meredith said she thinks so, but she thinks the village should consider that most of the village has access to broadband from Comcast. The trustees should consider what is equitable as far as shared village and town dollars since the town has more unserved people and most village residents have access to broadband.

Meredith said LCPC has offered assistance on weeding through ideas for ARPA funds.

16. Discussion of USDA Grant Requirements

Meredith reminded the board that we got a USDA grant that will cover 100% of the cost of a preliminary engineering report for the Katy Win pump house. To comply with the grant requirements, two board members need to complete compliance review questions. Meredith reviewed what the questions are. Ken and Will agreed to answer the questions. Meredith said two

employees need to do something similar. She will probably ask Troy and one of the office staff. There is a self-assessment she can complete.

Another grant requirement is for the village to have a drug and alcohol policy. We have one for CDL drivers. We need to compare that policy to what the USDA requires and see if anything is missing and then make it apply to all village employees before we request reimbursement of USDA funds. If something needs to be added to the policy we will update it.

17. Review Village Manager Job Description & Next Steps

Meredith said she found a village manager job description that was approved June 24, 2015. She was hired in July 2016 but she thinks it took about a year of advertising so she thinks this description was developed as part of the process.

Will asked if it is a fair assessment of what her job is now. Meredith said she thinks it is missing some emphasis on the amount of hands-on utility work she does. It also doesn't really get at the interaction with the members of the public. Will asked Meredith to add what she thinks is needed to the job description. Meredith asked how quickly the board needs it. Early July is probably the soonest she would be able to provide it. Board members agreed that would be fine.

Meredith said she found one of the ads that was used during the previous job search and she could send that out to the board. Will said he thinks the next step then will be to advertise the position. Meredith suggested some places the board could advertise. She said she is not sure how much success we have had with print ads. That may not be the best use of money. Rosemary noted that the Burlington Free Press is very expensive. Will said he thinks online advertising would be more productive. Diane asked if there are online organizations other than Indeed that we could use. Meredith said she doesn't know off the top of her head. She can ask other VPPSA members what sites they have used.

Kyle asked, tomorrow is Meredith's last official day? Meredith said yes. Kyle asked, the plan between tomorrow and hiring someone new is for VPPSA to help and for some delegation to happen? Meredith said the board has an executive session to talk about it. She may potentially be able to provide some part-time assistance for specific tasks but the board has not decided if that is something they want. Kyle said whatever is decided, the public needs to know who to go to with village related questions and what the protocol will be.

18. Review Project Status List

Meredith reviewed the status of existing projects and what she sees as next steps.

We got three quotes for village garage remediation. We do not have quotes for putting the building back together and modifying it. Her thought is that the next step is to consult with an engineer or construction expert and get a cost estimate for rebuilding the garage in a way that won't recreate the existing problems. We put money in the budget to hire a consultant or engineer.

The River Road West pump station project is going out to bid shortly and should happen this summer or early fall.

The construction contract for the Pearl Street/Clay Hill sidewalk project has been signed and the contractor intends to be on site starting next week.

We have signed an agreement with RCAP Solutions for a water and sewer rate study. Meredith thinks the study is supposed to start later this summer. They will primarily look at sewer rates to begin with and hopefully water after that.

The grant agreement for the electric bucket truck has been signed. The manufacturer will send over updated quotes for the chassis and charging infrastructure and then we will send a deposit, which we budgeted for. Then they will schedule a design review.

Cupola removal for the wastewater treatment facility is on hold. We will try to get bids in fall 2021 for construction in 2022.

Municipal building repairs are not completed. We have the clock tower still to do. Meredith has not had time to think about this or talk about it with Brian Story. She is not sure the person who did the other work is still available.

We got a grant to pay for contracting with Dufresne to do a preliminary engineering report for Katy Win pump house rehabilitation. Dufresne will work with Dan on that.

Powerhouse site cleanup and redevelopment is currently on hold. KAS, the company that coordinated the demolition, is ready to do more when we are. We need to identify whether any additional Brownfields funds are available. Meredith has the impression there is more remediation to do and we may be able to get funds to plan for that. We need to decide what we want that site to become – a scenic pull-off or something more? The immediate risk has been removed but the site is a bit of an eyesore right now. Big chunks of concrete were left intentionally because disposal is very expensive and we thought they could possibly be reused if we are going to need any fill there.

Diane asked, the concrete is not contaminated, right? Meredith said there may be a small level of contamination. She would need to check her notes. It is safe to leave the concrete there. If we dispose of it she doesn't know if it would have to go to the hazardous waste disposal site where the other materials went.

We got a draft AMI cost-benefit analysis. We need to get a finalized analysis and determine whether we want to participate.

Online certification is completed for ARPA funds. Our allocation is \$157,746. We need to determine what projects we want to use it on.

We have to do a source protection plan for the water system every three years. It is due later this summer. Neighboring landowners need to be given notice. Dan will take the lead on that.

Regarding merger discussions, Eric and Will have talked about the next step being a joint selectboard-trustee meeting to talk about what direction the boards want to go in.

Kyle said there are several things on that list that she thinks could be funded with COVID relief money. Maybe the board can get assistance from LCPC or hire a grant writer to go after recovery dollars. She is especially thinking about outdoor public spaces like the powerhouse space. She wants to keep putting a plug in for economic development and trying to go after all the grant

money possible. She feels it would be a good idea to hire someone or talk to the planning commissions to see if they can do some of that work for the village.

19. Possible Executive Session for a Personnel Matter

Meredith said she thinks the second possible executive session on the agenda will not be needed unless the board wants to discuss it. There is no update on that matter.

20. Possible Executive Session for a Personnel Matter and for Discussion of a Contract

Diane moved to find that an executive session is necessary to discuss a contract, premature disclosure of which would put the village at a substantial disadvantage, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

Diane moved to go into executive session for discussion of a personnel matter pursuant to 1 VSA §313 (3) and for discussion of a contract pursuant to 1 VSA § 313 (1)(A), Steve seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 9:10.

The board came out of executive session at 9:39.

21. Discussion on How to Conduct Future Meetings

The board discussed resuming in person meetings on June 25. Regarding Zoom access, BJ said he would personally like all participation to be in person. Diane said she thinks it is nice to have everyone in person but we get a lot of people participating through Zoom. She suggested hybrid meetings where people can participate in person or by Zoom. Steve said that would mean someone would have to manage the Zoom participants at the meeting. Will agreed. We would have to have a way to communicate with them. He said Eric Osgood is planning to provide Zoom only for watching meetings and if people want to speak they will have to be at the meeting, unless they make a special request. We could authorize participation by Zoom or phone call by special request. He would be okay with following the selectboard's lead on this. The board agreed to handle meetings the way the selectboard is going to – meeting upstairs in the municipal building where there is more space, continuing to let people watch on Zoom and only allowing people to speak via Zoom or phone call if it is pre-approved.

Meredith said she will ask Rosemary if she feels comfortable getting a laptop set up to allow Zoom participation. She asked if the board is open to having the next meeting remote and moving to in-person meetings in July if Rosemary would prefer that. Will said if the selectboard is meeting on June 21 everything should be all set up but Rosemary can reach out to him or the board if she has concerns.

22. Adjourn

Board members thanked Meredith for all her hard work.

Ken moved to adjourn at 9:46, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths