

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 2021

**Present:**

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

Others: Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Troy Dolan, Meredith Dolan, Sophia Berard, Casey Romero

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

**1. Call to Order**

Will called the meeting to order at 6:04.

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

**Steve moved and Ken seconded to approve the minutes of August 9, 2021.**

Diane said the \$5800 sidewalk work proposal was brought up at a selectboard meeting. She believes they wanted it to go out to bid or wanted more details. Will said the selectboard approved the expenditure at their last meeting. Troy is working on it.

**The motion was passed.**

**3. Review of Agenda and Any Adjustments, Changes, Additions**

Sophia asked to add a request from the Racial Justice Committee to the agenda and the board agreed.

**4. Request from Racial Justice Committee**

Sophia said the RJC is asking for permission to hang the flag of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation for Indigenous People's Day. Sheriff Marcoux had this flag made. She asked the chief of the Nulhegan Abenaki band for his okay and he said he would be honored. The committee would like to hang the flag on the village green for the week of October 10 through October 16, which includes Indigenous People's Day. It is a standard three by five foot flag.

BJ asked how big the American flag on the village green is. Will said it previously was 3x5 feet but we got a bigger one so that it would be bigger than the Progress Pride flag.

**Ken moved and BJ seconded to raise the flag of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation on the village green from October 10 through October 16.**

Steve said he is strongly in favor of this. Diane said she is too. Ken asked, we would take down the Black Lives Matter flag to put up this flag and replace the Black Lives Matter flag afterwards? Sophia said yes.

**The motion was passed.**

**5. Fire Department Report**

Will reviewed information provided by fire chief Arjay West on the last month's fire calls. The Johnson Fire Department responded to 11 calls: 4 during the day and 7 at night (6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.) The average duration was 61 minutes. Will listed the different types of calls. An average of 12 firefighters responded for a total of 138 hours. In addition Engine 2 had its annual service completed.

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

Rosemary said the town has paid the total amount for the year's fire contract and they soon will be paying the ten cents on the grand list. NVU has paid their contribution to the fire department. We have received about \$225K for the state and county portions of ARPA. We have received 50% of our allocation. It will be in a totally separate fund with a separate checking account. We have several years to spend that money.

Steve asked if we have anything now that we are going to write checks for from that account. Rosemary said the village needs to decide on priorities.

Meredith said \$175K was the municipal share and the rest was the village's portion of the county share, which was allocated out to local governments because we don't have county government in Vermont.

Rosemary said this year's taxes are about 3% uncollected, much better than the past couple of years. She noted that the attorney we currently use for tax sales will no longer be doing them.

**7. Reschedule October Trustee Meeting**

Because October 11 is a village holiday the board decided to meet at 6:00 on October 12 instead.

**8. Members of the Public – Casey Romero**

Casey said the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative will award 25 grants. The minimum amount is \$50K and there is no match. We submitted a letter of interest and will hear by the end of the month if we are invited to submit an application. The full application is due in November and grants will be awarded in January. The work must be done by December 31, 2023. They will cover eligible expenses back as far as mid April of this year. She, Brian Story and Lisa Crews are working on the application. The proposal is to use the grant funds for recreation-related planning and some shovel-ready projects around the rail trail, parks and various conserved areas around town. The key thing they want to plan for is a recreation bridge across the Lamoille River, ideally between the skate park area (part of which is village property) and the Johnson Town Forest on the former Tatro property. They also propose to do some studies and then build 3 miles of trails and to finish up work on the rail trail welcome center if necessary. The 3 miles of trails would be on the Tatro property, not connected to the rail trail. They would be biking and hiking trails.

Will said when we bought the Tatro property we said we would carve out what was needed for town and village operations and then sell the rest. Rosemary said several years ago the townspeople voted against selling it. Will said it is a point of contention for him that we still have the property. The previous vote doesn't mean there can't be another vote to sell it.

Casey showed on a map the parcel of village land near the skatepark. That location doesn't look good now for the bridge. It had a seasonal right of way for snowmobile use and there used to be a bridge to it. This grant money will be used to identify a site for a bridge and do site studies, engineering, etc.

Will asked the acreage of the Tatro property. Rosemary said she thinks it is about 180 acres.

Casey said we will hear by the end of the month if we are invited to submit an application. If we are invited, the application will be complicated. They have talked to the Historical Society and the

Conservation Commission. There will probably be public meetings related to the proposed projects.

Will asked if changing the use of the Tatro property will take a public vote or a vote of the board. Rosemary said we may have to have an Act 250 permit for it. The Tatro property is jointly owned by the village and town. Will said we can look into whether a change of use is a board decision or requires a village vote.

Ken asked about the uses of the proposed trails. Casey said they would be for biking and hiking, not motorized use. Ken asked, why not allow motorized use? Casey said the discussion to date about trails in that area has all been about bike and pedestrian trails. There hasn't been discussion of anything motorized. Initially there will only be 3 miles of trails. Trails in this area can connect to Stowe and probably Morrisville trail networks that are used for biking and hiking.

Will said it sounds like the board needs to schedule more time to talk about the proposed projects. He thinks the village needs to be more involved since it is a joint property. Casey said we will know by the next trustee meeting if we are invited to apply for a grant.

Ken said we can probably get access to larger grants for multi-use trails that can be used by ATVs and snowmobiles. He thinks including ATVs and snowmobiles should be a definite consideration. Johnson is full of biking and hiking trails now.

Casey said the skate park needs to have a publicly visible security camera. The skatepark committee consulted with the sheriff's department who agreed with them that there is no place at the skatepark to hide a camera and see what they need to see, so they need to put the camera on a pole. It would be off the parking area behind the dumpster. Does the village have a spare pole that could be used and can the village put up a pole?

Will asked what they will be using for a camera. Casey said at the moment they have two game cameras but the sheriff's department has talked to them about getting true security cameras that run all the time and can be monitored remotely by a computer. The sheriff's department would possibly provide the equipment but not the monitoring. Will said a telephone pole is not needed to put up a game camera. If it is too high you won't be able to see anything. Casey said Sgt, Watson is familiar with game cameras and thought it could be done. One thing they are interested in is seeing license plates as people drive in at night. Will said he will talk to Roger Marcoux about this and bring it back to the board. Steve said he thinks the camera needs to be just high enough that someone can't reach it. Will said he thinks 10 ft. is high enough. A 14 ft. 4x4 should be sufficient for mounting the camera.

Casey said she was told that the village had retired some poles. Troy said right now we don't have anything longer than 6 ft. that is any good. Will said a \$50 expenditure and a shovel should be sufficient to mount the camera. He noted that the recording unit may not be able to handle cold weather. Casey asked if the electric department could put up the pole. Will said he thinks a shovel is all that is needed. If bigger equipment turns out to be needed, is the board okay with Troy providing it? The other board members said yes.

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

Dan said the he E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted for review. Two trees that fell on the fence around the plant were removed. Trees and brush were trimmed. Rust was removed from the entryway doors and they were primed and repainted. Trim was painted. Trip hazards were painted with safety paint.

Coliform results were negative. Brush along the driveway to the water plant was trimmed. Staff walked around the Nadeau well to see if any changes to the source protection plan were needed. Meredith submitted an updated source protection plan. Communication with the reservoir was lost overnight. The issue was resolved by moving the antenna to a different location. Dan is looking into the cost of having a backup pump on site. He thinks that would be wise in case the well pump fails. An analyzer was calibrated. Water loss was 12%

**10. Foreman Report and Action Items**

Troy said the crew worked with contractors to cut trees in rights of way. They installed line guards, repaired and straightened a pole, removed a secondary service, retired an overhead service, assisted Hyde Park Water & Light, repaired street lights, energized new services, continued right of way cutting and completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

The crew repaired a manhole cover and a catch basin grate. They filled state water trucks. We have billed the state about \$875 for water so far. The crew inspected a sewer backup which turned out to be a customer issue. They retired water services, repaired a shut off and worked on providing water at the trailhead building. They arranged for a plumber to contact Don Blais to remove the faucet in his basement. They installed a flag at the village green. They worked with the town to remove trees. They did monthly training and had lifting chains and slings inspected. Dale Tatro is scheduled to start work on the municipal building sidewalk at the end of this week. The sidewalk work done on School Street was inspected and looks good.

Troy worked with RSM Construction on trying to find transformers. Some repairs were done at the substation on a panel. If we had had to replace the panel it would have cost \$20K. Three breakers at the substation really need to be replaced because most of the parts are obsolete. Troy updated employee safety records and arranged to have furnaces cleaned.

Diane asked if Hyde Park Water & Light assists us as we assisted them. Troy said yes, we do mutual aid with all the municipalities.

Diane asked what updating employee safety records means. Troy said he has a spreadsheet with employees' status on required courses – CPR, first aid, pole top rescue, etc – to make sure everyone is compliant.

**11. Parking Signs**

Will said a Main Street business owner complained that someone was parking in front of their business all day long. When the sheriff talked to the person they apologized and said they didn't think that the sign applied to all of Main Street. Will thinks we need to look into having Troy get signs that make it clearer that all of Main Street has two hour parking during business hours. The board agreed that money could be shifted from the sidewalk line item to pay for signs. **Steve moved to approve transferring funds from the sidewalk line item to pay for up to six signs to clarify that parking on Main Street during daylight hours is limited to two hours, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

**12. Members of the Public – Casey Romero**

Casey said the town got a \$25K Recreational Facilities Grant from the state to completely renovate the playground at Old Mill Park, as well as a \$30K gift from Lea Kilvadyova's family. That money will allow the playground to be completely redone. Diane asked who wrote the grant. Casey said Eddie Gale, Lisa Crews and Casey.

**13. River Road Pump Station Funding and Contract**

Meredith said in January we had our bond vote for pump station project. We wanted to be in a position to apply for construction funds for the project as early in the year as possible. We got our application in in April and we have been waiting for the state to process the loan application. There were delays on the state side but we finally got final approval and she got notice that the state is in the final stages of processing our loan. But the state also told us that the 40% subsidy we had hoped to get had been fully expended already. That subsidy was going to reduce the amount we had to borrow. The process of getting approvals was delayed due to internal issues with the state, not any village issue, so some other projects were able to get in line ahead of us. The state believes some of the projects that have been awarded that subsidy are eligible for other funding and they are hoping to switch them to the other funding and free up subsidy money for us. It looks likely that we will be able to get the 40% subsidy but the state can't guarantee it yet.

The bid price from the low bidder on the project is good for 60 days and the 60 days ends September 17. JA McDonald bid about \$40K less than we had budgeted and about \$40K less than other bids. We are hoping to keep the favorable bid price. She recommends that we go ahead and award the contract to JA McDonald knowing that we do not yet have the state sign-off on the loan or the subsidy. There is every indication that we will get the loan and it is very likely that we will get the 40% subsidy. There is risk but she thinks it is small. In conversations with Aldrich and Elliot and the state they reassured her that it is okay to move forward with the project. She thinks it is worth doing that in the interest of preserving the very favorable pricing.

Will asked how much the shortfall would be if we did not get the 40% subsidy. Meredith said it would probably be around \$120K. When we provided information to the public about the bond vote we estimated that the project could raise rates by about \$1.40 per month for an average customer. That was with the 40% subsidy but a higher estimated project cost. Without the 40% subsidy but with JA McDonald's project cost it would probably be around \$2 per month for the average customer.

Will asked the term of the loan. Meredith said it is for 30 years at 2%.

Will said the work has to be done. With a bid that was \$40K less than we estimated he feels the risk is worth it. Steve agreed.

**Ken moved to sign the contract with JA McDonald for the River Road pump station project, Steve seconded and the motion was passed with BJ opposed.**

Meredith said JA McDonald has alerted us that many parts they need will not be available until November at the earliest. We have discussed whether it is best to have them start working in November or wait until spring. Dan and Meredith both feel it makes more sense not to start work and then stop for the winter but just to start in spring when everything is available.

Dan said we are limping along at that station with one pump. We will need a duplicate if we are going to have to wait until spring. Will asked, it doesn't help if the work starts in November? Dan said no, since it will still not be completed until spring. He feels that the work can start whenever it is most advantageous to JA McDonald. Will agreed that we should let them start whenever is better for them.

BJ asked, if they know they can't get the parts until later will they extend the period for which the bid price is good? Meredith said we are not asking them to do that. We are signing a contract with them before the end date they gave us. Dan said Aldrich & Elliot will extend the date to complete the project by a reasonable amount.

#### **14. *Water Asset Management Plan Priorities***

Meredith said in order to get forgiveness for some project costs we are required to submit to the state a list of water asset priorities that include projects and how we plan to fund them. After the state raised concerns about the Katy Win pump house and wanted us to take action we made that our number one priority. We currently have a USDA loan in progress and have Dufresne Group working on a pump house design. We are hoping to get a funding source for construction next year.

Meredith reviewed the current priorities in the water asset management plan. Number one is the Katy Win pump house. We are looking at a loan to pay for that or it would be eligible for ARPA funding. Dan noted that we are not held to doing the projects that are listed as priorities. The other priorities are the well pump variable frequency drive, a backwash flow control valve, the Clay Hill booster pump control panel and a chlorine pump. Dan said any of these could be moved to the number one priority tomorrow.

**BJ moved to accept the priority list for the water asset management plan as presented, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

#### **15. *Village Garage Assessment Proposal***

Meredith said she and Troy feel they need an outside professional to offer thoughts on the best path for rehabilitating the village garage. We need to get the damp contaminated material out of the building but they are not sure about the best approach after that. They want to make sure the building is sound enough to put money into to make sure the problem does not recur. She reached out to someone she worked with at a previous job and asked if he would provide a proposal to assess whether the building is a good candidate for rehab or whether there are so many flaws with the building and site that he thinks it would be a bad idea to use the existing structure or location. We budgeted \$10K for this professional assistance. His proposal is \$3,375. That leaves some remaining budget if we want to have someone develop cost estimates for further work.

Will asked if this is the consultant's area of expertise. Meredith said they have worked as the owner's representative to make sure projects are done appropriately and have done cost estimating for major projects. They have a good understanding of building codes and environmental regulations. They worked on design of a paint booth for large vehicles, on utilities projects and as the owner's representative for sewer projects and other large projects.

Will said he is worried about someone knowing where the water is coming from. Are these areas they will be competent in? Meredith said she believes so. Another project they worked on was coming up with a preventive maintenance plan for a large garage building to keep it in good shape over 30 years. She believes they have enough knowledge. They don't do testing. But we have

learned from the state that no one will test for mold because there aren't standards for it. She thinks they could identify the sources of the problem.

BJ asked, if they tell us how much it will cost to rehabilitate the building, will they give us cost figures for a new building or prefab metal building for comparison? Meredith said no, the scope does not include doing any cost estimating. If the report says the condition of the building is so bad that the structure is not worth investing in and they recommend rebuilding, at that point they could do a cost estimate for us. That would be a second step. She can go back and ask them if they can expand on their ability to get at the root causes of the problem.

Will asked if she could draft up a scope of work that includes finding the cause of the problem. He thinks we need to have that in writing. Does the board want a second bid?

Diane asked about our procurement policy. Meredith said it does not require two bids. It recommends a bid process for projects over \$5K. Diane said she thinks it is a good idea to get another bid.

Diane asked, the land where the garage sits belongs to the town and the village? Rosemary said yes. Diane asked if the selectboard should be in on this. Will said if we were to try to build in a different location on the property we would need permission from the town but this building is completely the responsibility of the village and the town garage is completely the town's responsibility. Each can do what they like with their own building.

Diane asked if the town garage was built the same way as the village garage. The town garage doesn't have a problem, right? Troy said he can't say. Diane said she thinks it would be advantageous to have whoever looks at the village garage look at the cold storage building to see if it would be feasible to use it. Troy said it wouldn't suit his needs currently and he thinks it is not in much better condition than the garage. The main issue he has with it is that he has been told that in the past the river has come up as far as the door of the building. He is concerned about the risk of putting expensive equipment where there could be flooding. And the driveway could be washed out in a storm so drainage work would need to be done to ensure that the crew could get it out in an emergency.

BJ said the garage is on the old talc mill site. How is that to build on? Is there any hazardous material? Will said the ball fields are located where the settling ponds used to be. That is where there were more significant issues that were mitigated. BJ asked if it would be worth it to rebuild where the building sits now with all the chemicals that could be there. Troy said there are monitoring wells in the area. In his experience any time we dig in the ground we find something.

Steve asked, if the contractors aren't going to dig or drill any holes, what do we expect they will tell us? How can they figure out the likely causes of the problem without doing anything we can't do?

**Ken moved and BJ seconded to direct Meredith to draft a scope of work detailing what the village wants the consultant to do for the village garage assessment and to accept the bid for \$3,375. Diane said she wants a second bid. The motion was passed with Diane opposed.**

Meredith said she will modify the scope of work to include identifying the source of the problem.

**16. Railroad Street Repairs**

Troy said the town had someone lined up to pave in the area where pavement needs to be replaced on Railroad Street but then they wanted to get more bids. In the interim we can keep covering it up but whatever we put in won't stay there. Will suggested maybe some cold mix. *(Dan and Troy left at 7:39.)*

**17. Recess**

Will recessed the meeting from 7:39 to 7:49.

**18. Review Manager Applications**

The board reviewed all the applications received for the village manager position and selected six for further consideration. It was agreed to schedule a special meeting at 6:00 p.m. on September 29 to review the applicants. Will said it will be executive session only.

**19. Other Business**

Diane said Dan told her he could give a talk at the annual meeting. She also contacted the Lamoille Solid Waste Management District and they are excited to give a talk at the same time.

Steve asked if anyone would object to him lowering the bottom flag on the village green flagpole so there is more of a space between the two flags. He thinks he can do it without changing the hardware. Then the American flag would not cover the lower flag. He is thinking of a space of about 3 ft. between them. Will said he doesn't want the second flag to be low enough for people to grab it. The board agreed that Steve can use his judgment to lower the flag.

Ken said the fire chief is talking about getting a new repeater to provide better radio service in Belvidere and Waterville. It would take the signal and send it to a receiver to boost it. Currently coverage in Waterville and Belvidere is not good. Will said the cost would be over \$100K. Will suggested maybe Steve could take this to LCPC and tell them this is something needed for emergency services in the county. Steve said there may be more than one repeater needed in the county. Ken and BJ said they will talk to Arjay to get more information about where the dead zones are. Ken said Arjay thought there would need to be antennas in both Waterville and Belvidere. He estimated a cost of \$125K plus \$25K for the license.

**20. Adjourn**

**BJ moved to adjourn at 8:18, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**