

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2021

**Present:**

Trustees: Steve Hatfield (via Zoom), Diane Lehouiller, Will Jennison, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau (via Zoom)

Others: Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Meredith Dolan (via Zoom), Sophia Berard (via Zoom), Kyle Nuse, Alex Nadeau (via Zoom)

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

**1. Call to Order**

Will called the meeting to order at 6:05.

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

It was agreed to add to the agenda an excessive water usage request and a request that the village power wash the municipal building.

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

**Steve moved and Diane seconded to approve the minutes of September 13 and September 29, 2021. The motion was passed.**

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

Rosemary said yesterday we received the state payment for the Pearl Street sidewalk project. The rest of the cost for the project will come out of the sidewalk reserve fund. The state payment will go into the sidewalk reserve fund.

Electric department sales are 77% of budget. Total power purchased through August is 63% of budget.

Will asked how collections are going. Rosemary said a lot of people's bills are being paid through the state program – water and sewer bills as well as electric bills. Information on the program has been in bills for the last few months and it has been on TV and on the radio.

Water sales for 9 months are at 70% of budget and sewer sales are at 72%.

**5. Excess Water Usage Request**

Will said Richard Jewett had a water leak. The water did go into the sewer so the board can only reduce his water bill, not his sewer bill. Policy calls for reducing the bill to the average of the last 3 months' bills. **BJ moved to reduce Richard Jewett's water bill from \$278.23 to \$250.38, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.**

**6. Request to Power Wash Municipal Building**

Will said Brian Story requested that the village power wash the municipal building. Troy said he and his crew thought of doing that earlier in the year but decided not to because of the condition of the building. Last time the building was power washed, water came into the tower. Maybe they could go up in the bucket truck and try to sweep it. The board agreed that Troy and his crew should brush or pressure wash the building in a way Troy feels will not damage it.

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

A written report from Dan was included in the board packet.

**8. Foreman Report and Action Items**

Troy said on October 2 there was an outage on West Settlement road due to a tree on the line. It affected one customer and power was restored in an hour. On October 4 a tree on the line on Upper French Hill was moved with no outage. The crew repaired a secondary service on Cabin Lane. A large amount of time this month was spent on in-house right of way cutting. The crew completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

The crew continued filling state water trucks and disconnected a water service. The crew did a temporary fix around the catch basin on Railroad Street where there were hazardous conditions. Fall banners were installed. The crew did prep work for the work on the walkway at the municipal building and re-landscaped the area afterward. They worked with state employees related to changing culverts on Route 15. They took the monthly NEPPA safety class. Troy placed an order for new cold weather clothing, worked with Dale Tatro to oversee installation of new concrete at the municipal building, and prepared an estimate for a new EV charger at Jolley's. All village generators were serviced. Troy witnessed cutting and capping of a line at the old fire station. The bucket truck is now expected to be ready June 2023. Troy determined that the catch basins near the former Manchester Mill were not installed by the village and have never been maintained by the village. He arranged for all vehicles to have undercoating. He met with Ken Harvey to discuss three new lots that require water, sewer and electric connections. Fall hydrant flushing started yesterday.

Will asked if there was barrier underneath the old sidewalk at the municipal building. Troy said no. He made sure the contractor put styrofoam down under the new concrete.

BJ asked how it turned out when Troy and someone from the town went to look at the situation on River Road. Troy said what is in place is nothing the village ever installed or maintained or had any ownership over. Will asked if the town foreman agreed with that. Troy said yes.

**9. Fire Department Report**

Will gave a report from the fire chief. There were 10 calls in the past month – 6 during the day and 4 at night. (*Troy left at 6:28.*) The average duration was 107 minutes. Will broke the calls down by category. An average of 11 firefighters responded for a total of 120 hours. Engine 2 got a new battery tender installed. Two trucks had their annual service and inspections. A fire safety video was created for Johnson Elementary School. A new multi-gas meter was put into service.

**10. Merger Advance Team to Meet with Selectboard**

Will said at the joint meeting with the selectboard it was discussed that a couple of volunteers from the village could meet with a couple of people from the selectboard to look at the merger report and the options we have and where it looks like we should go. BJ and Steve volunteered to meet with selectboard representatives.

**11. Brownfield Funding**

Diane said at the last meeting Doug Molde came and said it is up to the trustees to pick a project in the area of the brownfields. Ken said Doug wanted permission from the board to go to brownfields meetings to start looking into projects for funding. Diane said she made a

copy of the brownfields study for everyone. She suggested board members could read it and at the next meeting decide which project would benefit us the most. The area that was studied goes from the Hoag property at the end of Railroad Street to Lendway Lane. (*Kyle Nuse arrived at 6:33.*)

### **12. Foyer Displays**

Sophia Berard said at the last selectboard meeting she brought up that there is a photo on the 2000 Millennial Parade collage in the municipal building foyer that shows a political sign and a Take Back Vermont sign, which is a pretty offensive and homophobic statement. The selectboard unanimously voted that that picture be taken down. Citizens are not asking the town to take the whole collage down, just that one photo, because it is offensive to community members. Will asked what the political sign is. Sophie said it is in the same photo as the Take Back Vermont sign. It says "Ruth Dwyer."

**Steve moved to agree with the selectboard to take down the photo with the political sign and the Take Back Vermont sign from the collage in the municipal building foyer, Diane seconded and the motion was passed in a roll call vote with Ken, Diane, Steve and Will voting in favor and BJ opposed.**

Rosemary said she can remove the photo. BJ asked if we have a place where we can keep photos even if they are taken down. Rosemary said yes. We could also give the photo to the Historical Society.

### **13. Sign Vermont Municipal Bond Bank Loan Agreement**

The board signed the Vermont Municipal Bond Bank loan agreement for a loan in the amount of \$34,400 for River Road Ejector Station engineering.

Meredith said the Bond Bank is also moving forward with paperwork for the construction loan. This loan is to pay Aldrich and Elliot for the engineering they have done. Steve asked, didn't we get a grant for engineering? Meredith said she believes this loan comes with 40% forgiveness. We got a grant for all the engineering for the Katy Win pump house.

Diane asked if this is the same project where the state money might not be there. Meredith said that issue is still not fully resolved. She is very confident we will get funding for the project. Whether we get 40% forgiveness of the whole project is still unknown. The state is still trying to work it out. Ken asked, we also talked about the possibility of using some rescue money, right? Meredith said water and sewer are eligible uses for ARPA money but she doesn't think if we had already started the project we could use ARPA money after the fact. Maybe at some point if it hasn't gone to construction yet we will decide to put it on the list of projects we want to do with ARPA funds.

Diane asked if Meredith knows which of the projects we need to do would qualify for ARPA funding. Meredith said any water, sewer or stormwater project would qualify. She asked Seth at LCPC if he could investigate whether any of the village garage project could be covered by ARPA funding. He is trying to get clarity on that. There is also a separate pot of money that may be able to fund the village garage work. Meredith will be getting more information on that potential funding source.

Diane said she thinks some of the suggested brownfield projects count on the village and town garages moving to another place. When we talk about the brownfield report we need to start making a decision about whether the garages should stay where they are or move. Meredith said the consultants who did the report didn't think the town and village garages are the best use of the parcel they are on, given the parcel's proximity to the river and the rail trail. But the big question is where they would go if they were not there. It is a good point that before we spend hundreds of thousands of dollars rehabilitating the village garage we want to make sure that it is where we want it to be. Diane asked if placing the garages on the Jewett property is something to think about. Will suggested talking about that next month when we talk about brownfields.

**14. Nadeau Request to End Lease for Backup Well**

Meredith said the village's main well is the Osgood well behind the Vermont Electric Coop property. That is our primary water source. We also have the backup Nadeau well across from Nadeau's gravel pit on Route 15. We don't regularly use that well. Starting in the early 2000's the state implemented a requirement for source protection plans for water systems. The source protection requirements were not there when the lease for the property was signed in 1973. The Nadeaus feel their ability to use their property is limited by the source protection requirements. Meredith doesn't know if it would be feasible to go to the state and describe the property owners' desired use of the property and ask if we can figure out a way to allow that use and protect the well. That might be an intermediate step before ending the lease. She doesn't know if any of those conversations have ever happened. It is important for the village to have a backup well. If something happened to the primary water source and we didn't have a backup, that would be a major issue. This is a very serious topic. If the lease is canceled we have to have another plan to supplement our well.

Alex Nadeau said the Nadeaus understand that ending the lease isn't going to happen overnight. They want to mine on the side of the road where the well is in another year. That would give enough time for the village to look for another backup well. They feel the well is interfering with what they want to do on their property.

Will said Meredith had mentioned an option of seeing whether the state would allow the Nadeaus to do what they want to do while the village keeps the well. He asked Alex if the Nadeaus are interested in exploring that. Alex said the Nadeaus might want the well back so they could use it for their operations.

The board agreed that Meredith should look into the state's requirements for a backup water source. Meredith said she will talk to the state and report back next month, keeping Alex in the loop.

Alex said his parents never would have signed the lease if the current restrictions had been in place back in 1973.

Diane said the information that was sent out shows that there are two abandoned public water sources in Highland Heights. Maybe we could look into whether or not they can be reused. Will said the first step is for Meredith to find out what the state's requirements are.

### ***15. AMI Update***

Meredith said next month there will be a presentation and conversation with people from VPPSA. She will forward an executive summary of the business case for AMI's that the consultant came up with. The consultant looked at the 15-year business case for smart meters. They estimated a \$600K present value cost for installing smart meters and a \$940K net present value benefit over 15 years. The total payback time for the initial investment in hardware, infrastructure and software is about 6.83 years and the project would be cash flow positive after 2.9 years. They also put a dollar figure on some non-tangible benefits. We will need smart meters to implement programs state regulators want us to have. The consultant has included the ability to implement those programs as one of the benefits. They have removed some of the benefits they initially included – some savings Meredith thinks we will not actually see. She thinks the current figures are relatively realistic. VPPSA is working on a contract with the vendor. We will have to tell VPPSA if we want to participate. People from VPPSA will come to next month's meeting to talk about it. There will be a large initial capital outlay. VPPSA is working on how best to provide financing. Maybe VPPSA can get a loan and towns can pay it back over time. We may be able to use ARPA funds for some of the financing.

Will said it is a matter of making sure that the things they say are positives really apply to our situation. Meredith said they include over \$100K of non-tangible benefits. She thinks in reality probably the project is closer to breaking even. It is true that the state wants us to do things that requires smart meters. But it will be a major project with a major cost.

Will asked if the consultant provides an estimate of the rate increase that would be needed if we did the project. Meredith said nothing she has seen touches on how it would impact our rates. When VPPSA comes they can talk about financing. She thinks their hope is to come up with financing that makes it as feasible and affordable as possible for members.

Diane asked, wasn't some of it supposed to be paid for by the state? Meredith said VPPSA tried to get federal funding for this through a legislator's office. But the AMI project was not selected. They are trying to be creative and think about what funding might be available. Diane asked if the price tag for the project went up since the last time we talked about it. Meredith said she thinks initially water meters were not included in the analysis and they updated it to include our water meters. She can look up the number we talked about last time.

Meredith said every year VPPSA tries to organize a discussion with local legislators on topics that are important to utilities. They are trying to schedule a joint meeting for Morrisville and Johnson for November 22 at 12:30. She can participate on behalf of Johnson. All trustees are invited but not required to go. It will be a Zoom meeting.

### ***16. Renew Dolan Municipal & Utility Consulting Contract***

Meredith said her consulting contract just ended. Will asked her how long she is looking to extend it for. Meredith said 3 or 6 months would be fine for her. She would assume that whoever the trustees hire might want assistance with budget development.

**Ken moved and BJ seconded to extend Meredith Dolan's contract for 6 months.**

Diane asked if Meredith would consider a month to month contract. Meredith said the contract includes the ability of the trustees to cancel at any time with 2 weeks' notice. Contracting month to month just means the board would need to have this conversation monthly. But if that is the board's preference that is fine. Steve said he is in favor of a 6 month extension because it sounds like it is flexible.

Kyle Nuse asked if there will be an overlap period when the village is paying someone full-time as manager and also having Meredith as a contractor. Will said yes. Kyle said she wonders if the village has the money to do that. Will said yes.

**The motion was passed.**

***17. Other Business***

BJ said he has been talking to Michael at Green Mountain Access TV. They have ordered some new mics and equipment that should arrive in about three more weeks. We will cancel the trustee YouTube on Meredith's account and start a brand new account for the trustees. We will record the meetings and GMATV will put up the videos. Ken asked if we should set up an account with Rosemary as the keyholder. Will said it is not our account; it is GMATV's. They are the ones providing the service. We do not need to have access.

***18. Adjourn***

**BJ moved to adjourn at 7:14, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*