

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022

Present:

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

Others: Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan (via Zoom), Meredith Dolan (via Zoom), Arjay West, Lisa Crews, Mike Dunham (via Zoom), Brian Raulinaitis, Kyle Nuse, Marla Emery (via Zoom), Kate Lalley (via Zoom)

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Will called the meeting to order at 6:04.

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

No changes to the agenda were needed.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Ken moved and Steve seconded to approve the minutes of December 13 and December 15, 2021. Rosemary noted that the date needs to be corrected on the December 13 minutes. Diane said she would like the letter from Laraway about economic development and grant writing attached to the December 15 minutes. The board agreed to that. **The motion to approve the minutes with the correction and addition was passed.**

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

Rosemary said she will have a budget status report through the end of 2021 next month after more invoices for 2021 have arrived. (BJ arrived at 6:06.)

5. Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items

Dan was not at the meeting as he had traveled to Maine to pick up a part but he had sent a written report. (Kyle Nuse arrived at 6:08.)

6. Foreman Report and Action Items

Troy said there was an outage on December 17 on Clay Hill Road due to trees on the line because of the high wind. Nine customers were affected and power was restored in about an hour. The crew completed cleanup on Gillen Road related to the December 13 wind storm. They responded to a call on Route 15 about blinking lights, found a broken neutral wire at the point of attachment on a house and repaired it. A new service on Park Street was energized. A circuit was repaired. The crew continued in-house right-of-way cutting and did monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

A water service on Park Street was turned on. A frozen water meter at Katy Win Park was repaired and service was reestablished. Winter sidewalk maintenance continued. Troy is working on scheduling 2022 NEPPA safety classes. He continued working with the RSM engineer on estimates for the project at Jolley. All repairs on the small bucket truck have been made and it is now operating properly. Repairs cost close to \$2,800, which was lower than the estimate. Troy was contacted about a water line for a new building.

7. Fire Department Report

Will gave the fire department report for the last 2 months. For the month ending December 2, the fire department responded to 13 calls, 8 at night and 5 during the day. The average duration was 99 minutes. An average of 8 volunteers responded for a total of 87 hours. The tanker completed its annual service and inspection and budget planning was underway.

From December 2 to December 31 the fire department responded to 9 calls, 5 in the day and 4 at night. The average duration was 59 minutes. An average of 12 volunteers responded for a total of 108 hours. The 2022 budget was approved by the board and contracts were sent out to the three contract towns.

8. 2022 Budget Timeline

Meredith said by the regular February meeting she should be able to have first drafts of the budgets for the water and sewer departments. She proposes a special meeting during the week of February 28 to go over the first drafts of the general department and electric department budgets. At the regular March meeting the board would be able to look at a complete draft of all department budgets, make any desired revisions and hopefully approve them. The village report will be sent out the week of March 21 for the annual meeting on April 5.

The legislature may allow remote meetings again this year. In a month or so the board may discuss whether there is desire or ability to do anything different with the annual meeting this year. Rosemary said a bill passed both the house and senate and last she heard was waiting for the governor's signature. It will allow boards to decide whether to have voting by Australian ballot or hold a regular meeting. Will asked the capacity of our Zoom account. Rosemary said she thinks it is 100. But people can't vote by Zoom. Will said his opinion is that the board should discuss this next month based on current information at that time. The board agreed.

Diane asked if the board could get the proposed budget before the next meeting. Meredith said she can send it out a few days before the meeting.

The board agreed to schedule a special meeting at 6:00 p.m. on February 25.

9. Joint Property MOU

Meredith prepared a draft memorandum of understanding based on minutes of the last joint selectboard-trustee board meeting and her conversations with Will.

Diane mentioned that Beth Foy had asked that we check with the rec department about what will happen in the future. Will said he thinks that is separate from this. This is about financial responsibility and doesn't affect the rec department. He said he hasn't had a chance to talk to Troy yet about looking at the cold storage building as a possible place for the electric department.

It was agreed that Meredith should forward the draft MOU to Brian Story.

Ken said the partial building is the only thing not addressed in the MOU. Will said he spoke with Troy about it. The building itself is sound; it is just the wooden interior wall that needs

to come down. The village crew will do it they can and if they need help Will is sure the town would be willing to help. (*Brian Raulinaitis arrived at 6:24.*)

10. Review of Grant Funded Village Projects

Meredith had sent out a list of grants or outside funding the village was able to obtain since she started working for the village. She noted that there is nothing on the list for the electric department. Grant funding for electric departments is basically non-existent. But Ken Nolan said there has been some revision to ARPA rules that may allow some of the village allotment of ARPA funds to be used to replace lost electric department revenue. She has to research what that means. The board agreed to add the list of grants obtained this year to this year's annual village report.

11. Water for Ice Skate Rink

Will said he got notification that there was an issue involving some misuse of the hydrant. No other municipality allows a non employee to operate a piece of safety equipment. He wants to ask the board's position on allowing any resident who is a not an employee of the water or sewer or fire departments to operate a fire hydrant.

Brian Raulinaitis said he has been doing it for 4 years with almost no issue. This year when he went to the town garage to get his equipment which was stored there they gave him the wrong fittings and they leaked for a few days. The village doesn't get billed for his volunteer work. It is the same as if the fire department did the rink. The hydrant leaked for 3 days and made some ice. It has been cleaned up and everything is good. That was addressed without calling him. There could have been a phone call to him. He went back and got the right fitting and now the hydrant doesn't leak and there is no issue. He has a pump and he pumps it every time. Early in the season when the temperature was in the 20s he would leave hoses running and check them every few hours. If it is colder than that he won't leave while the water is running. He is doing a lot for the town and he thinks it would be an injustice to take that away.

Will said the issue was brought to him from a fire safety standpoint. (*Arjay West arrived at 6:33.*) Does this board want to continue to allow a non-employee to have access to safety equipment?

Lisa Crews asked, if firefighters are using the hydrant, what is the training for safely using it? Are some of them volunteers and some of them paid? Will said they are all paid volunteers. Lisa asked, instead of saying the ability to operate the hydrant has to be taken it away, is it possible to address how to train people to use it? The ice rink is important for the community. It is highly used. Instead of shutting it down, let's think about teaming up to keep it going safely in a managed way using town resources instead of volunteer resources. Can we come up with a sustainable and safe plan for keeping the ice rink in the community?

Brian said taking away his ability to operate the hydrant would get rid of the ice rink completely. He thinks the ideal situation is not to use the hydrant regularly, just at the beginning of the year. He bought a second pump this year to make sure he would always have a working one. He uses the pump to make sure the hydrant is not left full of water. Village employees showed him how to use the hydrant and reviewed proper use this year. He is open to what they say. It is their equipment. But we should have an ice rink. Ideally he

would be able to use the hydrant to make a lot of ice at the beginning of the season. He is working with the town to enclose another hydrant that is not a fire hydrant and can be more easily operated by others.

Will asked what can be put in place and how quickly to take the fire hydrant out of the equation. Troy said he doesn't know what can be done this time of year. There could be a small heated building where the attachment is made. He had discussed with Brian that Brian was going to figure out a way to provide shelter and some heat where the meter is so it won't freeze. Brian said he talked to Brian Story about that and Brian Story is good with finding money to heat a small building. He needs a second opinion from a plumber. Brian R. has talked to Richard Whittemore about it and is working on a plan. He thinks in the long term we can come up with a better plan but in the short-term he would hate to see the ice rink canned.

Will asked Troy to explain what happened. Troy said he got a call from Jeff that the sidewalk was covered with ice because the hydrant was leaking. It was probably 2 inches of ice and water was running into the street and freezing. It was unsafe. An employee went out on Christmas and dealt with it. His advice is that no members of the public should be operating our infrastructure. We also need to think about who would be liable if something went wrong. Brian said he has been running it every day since Christmas and there is no leak anymore. Troy said he thinks the insurance question is something that needs to get looked at.

Will said he personally agrees with Troy about a non-employee operating our infrastructure but we need a solution to keep the ice rink running. BJ asked if we could get the fire department or a town employee to do it. Brian R. said he is smart enough to learn to do anything the fire department volunteers can do. Or maybe he should be paid a small amount and put on the books as an employee.

Lisa said she knows other rec projects have volunteers operate equipment and move things around on the fields and the volunteers are somehow covered under town insurance. She would think this is similar. Will said a hydrant is a \$5,000 piece of apparatus. It provides fire safety for that street. He is not willing to put the entire street at risk. There is no life safety risk with recreation equipment.

Kyle Nuse said a firefighter could accidentally break a hydrant and it would cost \$5,000 to repair it. Isn't that where training comes in? You try to train people as best you can and then the likelihood of breaking it is small. Will said if the training is not repeated frequently you lose it. Brian may be knowledgeable but if there are people occasionally helping him out they won't keep up with the training. Firefighters all watch each other and train every week. He doesn't want someone only doing it a couple of times a year. He wants to get away from the public having access.

Brian said it would be okay if he was the only person allowed to use the hydrant. He just needs to be able to use it to continue making ice. He could possibly join the fire department. He has considered it. Will said he would have to take that up with the chief but even if he did he still wouldn't be operating the hydrant under the umbrella of the fire department.

Will asked what time of day Brian fills the rink. Brian said at night or maybe very early in the morning. Will asked if a village crew member would be available to assist Brian some mornings. Brian said he does it when the weather is good, not on any set schedule. Diane asked if he knows ahead of time when he is going to do it. Brian said when he can make time for it. Diane asked if it would help to have someone else to back him up when he can't do it. Brian said he thinks the backup could come from people using the other hydrant. He just asks for the ability to continue as he has been for now. Hopefully the other hydrant will be able to be used in a month or so.

Kyle said the larger context is that we just got a \$4,000 grant that includes this ice rink as a cornerstone piece. For that grant to be fulfilled properly we need the rink up and running. Will said he is not talking about shutting the operation down.

The board agreed that Brian should be able to continue to use the hydrant for the next few weeks and then after that it should become policy that only employees are allowed to access hydrants.

Brian asked if we could look at creating a position so he would be an employee. He doesn't care what the pay is. It could be \$10. Will said he is not willing to move forward with that. Diane asked if we could talk in the future about hiring Brian. Will said the issue he sees is that Brian may get help from other people who don't have the appropriate knowledge. Brian said he would still be the only one doing it. Will said the issue will go away once there is access to the other hydrant. Brian said he will still want to use the fire hydrant for some part of the year. Lisa said she thinks if we are thoughtful we can come up with a sustainable plan as a community for next year.

Will suggested that perhaps the fire department could do a drop of water to establish a base at the start of the year and then it could be maintained using the other hydrant. Brian said that was done in the past and it worked well when the liner was new. Right now the liner is so shredded that it wouldn't work. Will said he agrees with Lisa that we can work together and come up with a plan to make this happen.

Brian asked what the cost to replace a hydrant is - \$5K? Kyle said Will had previously said there was a cost of about \$2,300 for the hydrant and a couple of thousand dollars for labor to replace it. Brian asked, what if someone put up a retainer? Will said there is also the issue of it being needed for safety/fire protection. Troy said if a hydrant broke it would mean the village would have to issue a boil water order.

Will said he thinks we should have the fire department dump water for a base and maintain the rink with the other hydrant.

BJ moved and Steve seconded that Brian Raulinaitis be allowed to continue to use the fire hydrant on School Street for up to 4 weeks as long as the village's insurance provider does not say he cannot, with Brian to receive training on proper use of the

hydrant before using it again and that after that it will become policy that members of the public are not to have access to village water infrastructure.

Diane asked if four weeks is doable. Brian said he will go with that. Diane asked if Troy can find someone to work with Brian. Troy said as long as there are enough people who are healthy and able to come to work. Brian asked Troy if he thinks Brian needs more training on using the hydrant. Troy said he feels Brian understands how to use the hydrant. Will said he will leave it up to Troy to determine how much of a tutorial Brian needs. If Troy talks to Brian and feels he already knows what he needs to know, that is all right with Will.

Lisa asked if a dump from the fire truck would help now. Brian said not at this point.

The motion was passed. *(Brian left at 7:00.)*

12. Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund

Arjay West said the fire department had originally planned to replace Rescue 2 in 2020. A prior trustee board gave approval for that. When the pandemic hit, the replacement was put on hold. Now he wants to reaffirm that the trustees approve replacement of that truck. The fire department has money available to pay for it.

BJ asked about a trade-in of the old truck. Arjay said if there is extra money at the end from the sale of the old truck it goes back into the capital truck fund. The purchase plan doesn't rely on income from the trade-in.

Diane asked what the price of the new truck is. Arjay said the price in the capital plan is \$51,700. That was the 2020 price.

Ken asked if the fire department has located a truck to purchase. Arjay said no, they didn't want to restart the truck purchase project without reaffirming with the board that the purchase was approved. He doesn't know if there will be supply issues. They most likely would buy a chassis from one company and a body from a second company.

Diane asked what the trade-in value of the current truck is. Arjay said he doesn't know until we present it to a dealer.

Kyle asked, what if the department can't find a truck to purchase? Arjay said if they can't purchase one that can serve their purpose they will have to change their goal. If inflation has driven the price up they will have to look at their financing options. It is important to him to get a truck that is able to do the job for the lifespan that is planned for in the capital plan. If the fire department has to replace the truck prematurely it puts them in a tough spot financially.

Ken moved and BJ seconded to allow the fire department to use money from the fire department capital reserve fund to replace Rescue 2.

Kyle asked if Will plans to recuse himself from the vote. Will said no. There is no benefit he will gain from this. Kyle said Will is a lieutenant in the fire department. Recusing himself

keeps things clean and separate. Will asked if Gordy Smith ever recused himself from votes on fire department budget things. Rosemary said no.

The motion was passed 5-0. (*Arjay left at 7:12.*)

13. Powerhouse Site Plan

Kate Lalley said last week she spent a couple of hours at the powerhouse site with Diane. Diane was able to give Kate an overview of what the board might be looking for in this project. Her understanding is that the board supports a design scheme that would allow people to get near the ruins and have views of the river but not have access to the river. It would probably require grading, adding clean fill, capping some contaminated areas, a ramp and some stairs and probably more than one terrace leading to the platform. (*Lisa left at 7:13.*) The idea would be to develop something that is not massive looking and to showcase the beautiful bridge, which is more visible now.

Will said he is not remembering any discussion about terraces. His recollection was that we discussed having enough of a paved area for a picnic table, having a guardrail to terminate the parking area and capping the contaminated area. Where would the terrace be? Diane said we would have to landscape so people with disabilities can come from the parking lot to the platform. Will asked, what platform? Diane said a platform over the old foundation. Ken said he thought we were talking about doing something simple like grading the area, planting grass, covering the brownfield and putting in picnic tables. If we put in something like what Diane is talking about we have to comply with ADA. If there is just a natural slope then we don't have to worry about that. We still haven't found out if we can get rid of the concrete. Diane said we talked about being able to see the river from the foundation. The foundation currently blocks the view of the river. We want to create something that is going to attract people to come to the town. Part of that is creating something that is beautiful. She thinks it is important to make that site beautiful. Let's see if we can get funding to help us make that a beautiful spot. Ken said he thinks it could be turned into a great spot just by being mowed. That will keep the cost of the project down.

Meredith said there is an unknown regarding the concrete pile. Based on our general idea of the future use there we need to do a corrective action plan to understand what needs to be done to the site to make it safe. We want to determine the future use before we do the corrective action plan, but what is in the plan will affect the scope of what we do there. It is an open question how much more site work needs to be done regarding the concrete, the foundation and the soils there.

Ken asked if Diane and Kate looked at where the state right of way is. Kate said it is measured from the center line of the road. It is a little under 25 ft. It extends to just about where the road embankment is. Then the elevation drops and there is a little space that is lower than the road. It seems like there is an opportunity to create a seating area there where it feels like there is a little protection from the road. But there is quite a steep slope to get down to the ruins themselves, which are exciting and interesting. She imagines a deck built over the ruins. It could even be cantilevered over the ruins, raised up on some supports. Apparently it is quite possible that there is contamination in the ruins so the idea of direct contact with them seems unwise. We will probably have to think of something that floats

people over it. That is where the idea of shaping terraces came into mind to create more usable space and have a route down to the ruins.

Ken asked if the foundation is clear of PCBs or needs future testing. Meredith said there was some problem with access for testing but she thinks there is at least a high probability and belief that the ruins have some level of contamination. She would have to look at the report and see if they were able to do any testing. Ken asked, they allowed the foundation to stay? Will said there is a possibility of it being capped. Meredith said she thinks a lot of the future requirements will depend on what we say we want to do with the site. Maybe if we decide what we want to do we can ask KAS to give us a ballpark figure of the cost to make it possible.

Will asked if anyone knows what the grade is between the shoulder of the road and the top of the ruins. Kate said it is probably 20 ft. or a little less. Will said he assumes we are going to have to cap what is there. If we are going to build a structure over the top, why not bring it up to grade instead of using a ramp? Kate said that is a possibility. Or maybe there could be some combination of the two.

Will said it doesn't make sense to him to put infrastructure in a flood zone where high water could disturb or destroy it. Diane said that spot is pretty high above the river. She has never seen it flood. The powerhouse was there for many years. Kyle said that is another reason having it elevated is a good idea. Will said the potential for flooding affects what we will elevate it with.

BJ said he thought the idea was to have a scenic site where people can stand and there are a couple of picnic tables. Kyle said there is a difference between a pull-off with dust and cars that is not that interesting and a real destination spot. Having a platform over the foundation is much more inviting.

BJ suggested there could be a bluestone patio. Kate agreed. There could be gravel with big rocks to sit on. She and Diane thought there could be signage with information about things to do in Johnson. That could bring people into Main Street businesses.

Diane said there could be bushes and flowers and a sign saying Johnson Village. She thinks it might encourage people to slow down and cross the bridge and come into the village. She thinks we need to seriously consider the plan. She talked to Seth Jensen. LCPC may have resources to help develop a plan for the site. Seth has thoughts on how to fund planning and design and can support whatever direction we decide to go in. Let's talk to LCPC and see what they can do for us. Let's give this a try.

Ken said we have to look into the foundation contamination. Will said he thinks whatever we do starts with a plan. He wants to make sure we are all thinking of the same plan. He does not want to add a lot of time for workers to maintain the site. He thinks bringing it up to grade is better.

Kyle said she thinks it is a good idea to develop it with intention and interesting elements. The more we make public spaces interesting places for tourists and people who live here the more we will attract people, increasing the grand list and providing funds to maintain the spaces.

BJ asked if we have some grant we are thinking about using for this. Diane said we have to have a general plan or need for a plan first, like a decision that we want to put a platform over the foundation. Then she thinks LCPC can help with a plan.

Will asked if Kate has enough information about what the majority of the board favors to send something to Seth to start applying for a grant for full scale planning. Kate said she thought she would come up with a couple of broad brush concept schemes to present to the board. Then she would have back and forth with the board and we might end up with some combination of the two. That would be a starting place to go to LCPC to start looking into next steps. Anything with brownfields would have to be engineered.

Will asked about the funding for Kate's time on this project. Kate said her understanding is that the funding will come from LCPC municipal assistance. There will be no charge to Johnson.

Ken said at least one of Kate's plans should be a basic bottom dollar plan. Will suggested maybe one low cost plan and one medium cost plan. Kate agreed to that. **Diane moved to ask Kate Lalley to draw up two concept plans for the powerhouse site: one low-cost plan and one medium-cost plan, Ken seconded and the motion was passed.** (Kate left at 7:46.)

14. Economic Development/Grant Writer Position

Diane said she thinks we should move on hiring someone. She thinks there are some grants we could go after without an economic development person. We could hire someone now to look for those grants. But she thinks it is also important to have an economic development person on board for bigger things. Will asked if she is thinking of a village employee or someone working jointly for the village and selectboard. Diane said it sounded like the selectboard didn't want to share a person. She doesn't think that would work. Will agreed. Will said he thinks we should discuss this when we discuss the budget. Diane said Meredith is being paid part-time, which frees up some money. She named some grant opportunities that she thinks we do not need an economic development person to go after. We could just hire someone to apply for these grants. If the board wants her to look into a grant writer she will do it.

Will said he will entertain a motion but until we have looked at our budget he won't back it. BJ said he would consider an option like what Greg Tatro mentioned; he said Jenna's Promise hired someone who gets paid when she finds grants. If we did that the person wouldn't be on our payroll and we would not be paying for their medical benefits; we would just be paying for what they actually brought in.

Diane said Meredith and Brian have said that they aren't able to go after all the grants that are out there. She can find out what kind of grant writers are out there, try to get the best deal and

come back and talk to the board about it. BJ asked how it would be better to have someone permanently on our payroll getting benefits (who would not be able to go out and get all the grants available because we can't afford our share of every grant) versus having someone who we pay just when they get a grant and who is going after just the grants we want to apply for.

Diane asked if she could look into grant writers. The board agreed to that. Steve said he thinks we should look into what Greg Tatro did. Maybe he could help us with suggestions. Will said we will have an update from Diane on next month's agenda.

15. Economic Development/Grant Writer Position

Diane said quite a bit has been done on Legion Field with an ARPA grant. We received \$4,000. Items purchased with grant money include fire pits, hoses and couplings for Brian Raulinaitis to use, lights, cedar for benches, firewood and sleds. There are going to be art pieces for an art walk. Kyle said they will be canvas banners. Diane and Kyle said Lamoille Union, Laraway, NVU, the Studio Center and Jessica Bickford are being asked to paint the banners in accordance with a theme, which is a set of positive words like "joy," "fun" and "community." The banners don't have to have words; they can have some interpretation of the words. Each group will put their affiliation on the banner.

Diane said timers are going to be purchased for the lights. With the village install them? Will said the village electric department employees are linemen, not electricians. They don't have a license to do electrical work. Diane asked if they can do it as a courtesy to the community they work in. Will asked Troy about installing timers for the lights at Legion Field. Troy said that is something an electrician would probably do. Ken said if outlets are already there, there are inexpensive timers that can be plugged into outlets that are simple to use. BJ said he could help set them up if Diane needs help.

16. COVID-19 Guidelines

Diane moved to send a letter from the village trustees recommending vaccinations, booster shots and wearing masks in indoor spaces to area schools, businesses and community members in billing envelopes and to post it on Front Porch Forum and in the News and Citizen so citizens can make decisions based on scientific evidence. She read the letter she proposes sending. **Steve seconded.**

Ken asked how much it would cost to send out the letter. Rosemary said there would be no cost if it was included in the electric bill. Will said he does not agree with this board giving medical advice. Diane said the state gave us direction to do something for our town or village. Will said they gave us the option. Kyle said she supports the motion. BJ said he personally does not know if all the details Diane mentioned in the letter are accurate. He would support saying that we would support any business or location that wants people to wear masks but he can't put his name on something with a lot of details that he does not know for a fact are accurate. He supports any business requiring masking but won't tell people that they need to do it or should do it. Diane said the letter has facts based on scientific evidence from the CDC.

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

17. Other Business

Kyle asked if maintenance and care of the cold spring could be discussed at the next meeting. There is a lack of snow shoveling at the site and it is extremely icy at times. A lot of people use it. She has seen a lot of older people there. It has amazing potential to be a beautiful space that we can be proud of and promote but it is shabby and not taken care of and she is afraid that someone will break a bone there. Diane agreed that it is not safe. Will said if it becomes a liability his first reaction is to shut it down and not allow access in the winter. Kyle said she thinks it serves a community need. Will agreed. The water is not treated but signs are up warning people of that and he has used it for a long time. If signage is up he is okay with it staying open. Kyle said it is becoming a liability because it is not being maintained properly by the village. Will asked Meredith to have Troy call him to give his view on the cold spring and asked Rosemary to put discussion on this topic on the next agenda. Meredith said by clearing the area in winter we would encourage people to use it for drinking and we don't want to encourage that.

18. Adjourn

It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 8:10 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths