

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2022

Present:

Trustees: Steve Hatfield, Lynda Hill, Diane Lehouiller, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau (remote)

Others: Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp (remote), Shawn Enterline, Julia Leopold (remote), Ken St. Amour, Rob Rodriguez, Aaron Calvin (remote), Cynthia Hennard (remote), Nate Brigham, Mike Stevens (remote)

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Steve called the meeting to order at 6:01.

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

Diane asked to add a request to apply on behalf of the village for an AARP Winter Placemaking grant for Legion Field.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Lynda moved to approve the minutes of August 31, September 12 and September 21, 2022 with the September 21 minutes corrected to show that the date chosen for the joint meeting was October 12, not October 19, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

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

BJ asked if Rosemary sees any red flags or anything out of the ordinary. Rosemary said not yet, but she plans to do another budget status report after the checks are run for the bills approved tonight, because those payments will change things dramatically. The electric department is not doing as well as she thought it would be.

Rosemary said we got our final payment of American Rescue Plan Act money today. We now have about \$450K in ARPA funds that needs to be committed by 2024 and spent by 2026.

Diane asked, were we talking about using about \$125K in ARPA funds to cover budget shortfalls? Rosemary said we will have to wait until we get closer to the end of the year and the board can decide whether to use ARPA money for that.

Lynda said when the selectboard discussed possible uses of ARPA funds at its last meeting a lot of the uses on the list were crossed off because they pertained to the village, not the town. Steve said we should have that list in front of us when we have our meeting to discuss ARPA spending. He said Kyle Nuse emailed him a list that seemed very reasonable and included some things that could be considered safety items.

Rosemary said the state still needs to sign off on the J.A. McDonald invoices from July for the pump station project. She has emailed Cynthia Parks from the state several times. The engineering firm plans to reach out to her boss if they do not hear from her tomorrow. While we are waiting for money from the state Rosemary is wondering if she can borrow short-term from the Community Improvement Grant fund. The board agreed to that. Diane asked if we have ever had to do this before. Rosemary said we did it when the fire station burned and when we had some other big projects.

Rosemary said delinquent taxes are 97.37% collected. Probably 85% of the people who owe money are in mobile homes.

5. *Requesting Renewal of Snowmobile Riding Permission*

Rob Rodriguez, president of the Sterling Snow Riders Club, said periodically the snowmobile club asks for permission to travel on the jointly owned talc mill property and on village-owned property at the end of Reservoir Road as well as some village property the snowmobile club leases on French Hill. The previous permission has expired and the club wants to get a new permission form signed.

Lynda asked how often the permission needs to be renewed. Rob said this time he set the form up for 5 years. It could be one or two years, whatever the landowner wants. Lynda asked how long the last one was for. Rob said he thinks for 2 years. He made this one last for 5 years because it is easier. But even if the board signs a permission form for 100 years, at any time there is a problem the board can revoke permission.

Ken asked, this is standard use that the snowmobile club has been doing for 25 years? Rob said at least that long.

Ken moved to allow Sterling Snow Riders use of all existing areas they have been using for the proposed 5-year term, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

Ken moved to authorize the chair to sign the landowner permission form for Sterling Snow Riders on behalf of the village, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.

6. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

Dan said the E-DRM and Wr-43 were submitted to the state. An air line blew on the belt press and a gear shaft was bent as a result. The gear shaft was repaired. Employees began rehabbing the belt press. Champlain Associates corrected the Mission Communications alarm dialer at the Railroad St. pump station. Brookfield services the emergency backup generator. The siphon under the Gihon River plugged. Manosh jetted it and the overflow siphon. Final mowings and fall cleanup were done at all facilities. Erik was given a tour of the wastewater and water plants and the pump stations.

Coliform samples were negative. There was an overheating problem with the emergency backup generator. Leaking gaskets were tightened to solve the immediate problem. The radiator is starting to fail and we are getting a quote for a replacement.

Diane asked if there is anything new about the Katy Win pump station. Dan said there is nothing new. That project will be put in the budget for next year.

7. *Fire Department Report and Action Items*

Steve read the fire department report. From August 25 to September 29 there were 20 calls, 14 during the day and 6 at night. The average duration was 70 minutes. There were 6 automatic alarms, 1 carbon monoxide alarm, 3 vehicle crashes, 3 medical assists, 1 smoke condition, 1 odor investigation, 1 wilderness rescue, 2 mutual aid (structure fire and propane leak) and one public assist. The average number of firefighters responding was 11. Total hours of service was 208.

The fire prevention committee is preparing materials for distribution at Johnson and Waterville elementary schools for Fire Prevention Month. Three firefighters are enrolled in the nearly year-long Firefighter 1 class, which provides state and nationally recognized certification. In last

month's report, the period should have been July 28 – August 24, not July 28 – September 29 as printed.

8. *Appoint Erik Bailey as Water & Sewer Commissioner and VPPSA Board of Directors Representative*

Ken moved to appoint Eric Bailey as Water & Sewer Commissioner and VPPSA Board of Directors representative, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.

9. *Discussion of Wind Power*

Shawn Enterline, a power supply analyst for VPPSA, said 6 weeks ago VPPSA recommended that VPPSA utilities make a 5-year commitment to buy wind power from the Howard Wind Farm in Steuben County, NY. This is intended to replace part of the power we have been getting from the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant. That agreement will expire soon. The price for the wind power is excellent. We will be importing the power from out of the region because of the price.

Steve asked, isn't it true that we are required to buy a certain percentage of our power from renewable sources or face penalties? Shawn said yes, the Renewable Energy Standard requires increasing percentages of power from renewable sources through 2032. VPPSA likes nuclear power but it doesn't qualify under that law.

Diane asked if this power is cheaper than the power from Seabrook. Ken St. Amour said no. That power costs about \$50 per kWh and this will be more like \$60 when the renewable energy credits are taken into account.

Shawn explained that if we do not buy power ourselves the grid operator will force us to buy it. We don't want to run that risk. We want a fixed price, not a variable one. During the winter this power will be much cheaper than the market price. Fortunately wind power produces most of its energy in winter.

Lynda said the materials sent out to the board indicate that we would be purchasing more than the demand requires. Shawn said VPPSA tries hard to match demand and supply within 5%. They are pushing the top end deliberately.

Lynda asked, what if we didn't have enough? Shawn said then ISO New England would provide it to us at their price. They price power hourly and the price moves by factors of 10. It can be \$50 in the morning and \$500 in the afternoon. About once in a decade it can be \$5,000. We will face that range of uncertainty if we don't do this.

Diane asked what happens if we purchase a certain amount and don't use it all. Shawn said when supply is less than demand we buy from the grid operator. When we have a surplus the grid operator buys from us.

Lynda asked, what if something happens to that wind farm? Is there any backup or insurance? Shawn said this contract places that risk with the purchaser. If something happens to the wind farm we won't get as much power from it and we also won't pay for as much. VPPSA will have a master agreement with the power marketer and the Village of Johnson will have an agreement with VPPSA. The master agreement covers all the rare what-ifs.

Steve asked how much it will cost us now or if it will cost anything. Shawn said the village doesn't prepay anything. It is a pay-as-you-go arrangement. The village will be billed monthly by VPPSA.

Lynda asked, this is what we have done in the past, just through Seabrook instead? Shawn said that is right.

BJ moved to authorize Erik to sign the agreement to purchase power from the Howard Wind Farm and the motion was seconded. Ken asked Rosemary if this sounds right to her. Rosemary said yes. **The motion was passed.** (*Shawn left at 6:45.*)

10. VPPSA Update

Julia Leopold, director of public affairs for VPPSA, spoke about the Value of Public Power campaign and VPPSA's interactions with NVU. About a year ago VPPSA hired an organization called Momentum Communications to help support VPPSA in outreach to multiple different audiences such as customers, legislators and regulators. They wanted to make sure the message they were conveying showed the value of public power. (*Nate Brigham arrived at 6:46.*) They started last fall by having Momentum conduct some interviews. Momentum met with all the directors and a couple of trustees from each utility. What they learned was that what VPPSA really needed to do was come up with solid values, a positioning statement and a tagline that all could agree on. The values are things we all feel strongly about. The positioning statement is about what sets us apart and makes us different. The tagline is a unified message we can all use in external outreach like social media posts or messages to legislators. The VPPSA board of directors has decided on some values and a positioning statement. These are considered to be internal statements that will not be used publicly. Everyone at the different municipal utilities will ideally say that they feel comfortable with them but they are not for external sharing. She reviewed the values the board of directors agreed on in the areas of affordability, reliability, accountability, sustainability, community, collaboration and equity. She read the positioning statement that was agreed on. She said she can send it out to board members.

Next VPPSA needs to come up with a tagline. This is a little more controversial because it will be public facing. Ideally all VPPSA members would support it. The board of directors came up with two possible taglines. They would like to have two focus groups meet to consider these two options, with up to two members of each utility's board attending one of the focus groups. After hearing the reactions to the taglines the board of directors will vote at its November meeting to approve a tagline and in December VPPSA will start creating content. They expect to launch their Value of Public Power campaign in January 2023.

11. NVU Electric Meter Replacement

Ken St. Amour said about a month ago he was approached by Julia and her group to look into getting a price quote for replacement of the primary meter at NVU. He approached Eric Waterhouse at Morrisville Water & Light for a quote. Eric is proposing a particular kind of meter with an Ethernet or telephone modem communications channel. The price to install it with telecom equipment would be around \$2,000. If it used a phone line there would be a monthly charge of around \$45. Lynda asked if one is better than the other. Ken said Ethernet would be more reliable. For Ethernet it would need a router at a cost of around \$600 and there would be a cost of around \$20 a month beyond that.

Lynda asked if Eric Waterhouse would be the one actually installing it. Ken St. Amour said yes. Lynda asked what role, if any, Nate would play. Ken said he would not be directly involved. Steve asked if Nate has to shut off the power of the college. Ken said no, he just needs to isolate that socket.

Steve asked if Ken is confident that the meter can be changed without losing readings from the old meter. Ken said he is confident that Eric Waterhouse can accomplish that. He would have to work with Nate.

Lynda asked why we are replacing this meter. Julia said VPPSA has a program where they work with their largest customers, the economic drivers of the community, to enable them to thrive. It was clear that NVU was the biggest customer for the Village of Johnson. They are experiencing high utility costs. One component of that is the demand charge, which is set based on the highest demand in the month. They can't tell when or where on campus the demand is peaking. They started working with Efficiency Vermont to put in submetering but they need to understand when the demand is occurring campus-wide. They need more frequent data from the main meter so they want to switch to one that can provide hourly data. VPPSA has an array of solutions to help them cut costs but they can't implement any until they have data and replacing the primary meter is the way to access that data. VPPSA plans to work closely with NVU as they try to reduce their budget.

Lynda asked if there is one meter for the whole campus or if each building has one. Nate said they have a couple of satellite meters but the main meter is at our substation. Lynda asked if this new meter will distinguish between buildings. Julia said no. Efficiency Vermont has already established six or seven submeters on buildings they think might be driving the peak. But the primary meter will provide campus-wide data.

Mike Stevens said he was formerly the facilities director at NVU and now he is on the transformation team from the chancellor's office. He said that the meter being replaced is not the only meter on campus but 95% of their cost goes through that one meter.

BJ moved and Lynda seconded to purchase the new primary meter needed at Northern Vermont University with an expected cost of about \$2,000.

Ken Tourangeau said Rosemary just told us that she is worried about electric department income. We have to be wise on this. We are falling short on a lot of things. Julia said NVU provides revenue of over \$582K in the course of one year. This is a \$2K investment to support that revenue. Lynda said she thinks we need to support the college. Steve said he agrees, though Ken's concern is not unfounded.

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

Ken St. Amour said for next steps he will work with the new village manager. (*Ken St. Amour left at 7:12.*)

Nate said the billing is the only thing he worries about. Once the old meter is pulled he is not able to read it. If he ever needed to try to get data from it he would have to send it to Morrisville Water & Light and see if they could get data from it. He thinks they could do it. Diane asked if we can find out before we pull it whether they will be able to get data from it after it is pulled. Nate said we definitely would do that. He said it would be easiest from a billing standpoint to do the meter replacement right at the time when we would normally be reading the meters.

12. Electric/General Report and Action Items

Steve read the report submitted by Troy Dolan. The crew completed the following electric department tasks:

- Installed a new 200 amp service at 664 Gould Hill Road and completed other line maintenance at that site.
- Set a new pole and upgraded the overhead service at 1126 Route 100C.
- Provided 10 hours of mutual aid to the Village of Hyde Park, of which 4 hours were for an outage related to a broke pole and 6 hours were related to a staffing shortage at Hyde Park.
- Responded to an outage on September 17th at 116 Sinclair Road. The cause was a blown transformer fuse. Service was restored within one hour.
- Retired an overhead guy wire near the twin bridges.
- Continued in-house right of way cutting on Sinclair and Rocky Roads.
- Responded to a call at 562 Route 15 West related to flickering lights. The electrician on site made repairs to the meter socket.
- The village's digger truck was sent to Allegiance Trucks to diagnose check engine light issues.
- Reached out to Altec Inc. who repaired a leaking hose on the bucket truck in the boom.
- Completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, substation check and Dig Safes.

The crew completed the following water/sewer tasks:

- Witnessed a wet tap on the water main at 66 Lower Main West.
- On September 15th, assisted Utility Partners to unplug the sewer siphon on Main St.
- On September 19th, responded to a water leak at 33 Katy Win East. The issue was on Ship Sevin's side of the service.
- Replaced a curb stop valve box and road at 542 Clay Hill.
- Fall hydrant flushing will begin on October 11.

The crew attended the September NEPPA safety meeting which covered arc flash topics. Rubber gloves and sleeves were sent in for 3-month testing.

Troy completed the following administrative tasks:

- Met with Steve Hatfield and Erik Bailey to discuss the status of projects and next steps. Compiled information on the village garage project and summarized information in email to Erik.
- Worked with the property owner and completed a true-up for a new 200 amp service that will serve 664 Gould Hill Road.
- Completed an estimate and true-up for a new 200 amp service that will serve 1126 VT Rte. 100C.
- Scheduled the yearly generator servicing for the backup generators that serve the village facilities.
- Reached out to TSI to schedule yearly substation transformer testing.
- Reached out to NA Manosh and Wind River to get quotes for the annual sewer and catch basin cleaning.
- Reached out to Northeast Transformers and Wesco for quotes to update the village's transformer inventory. Transformer availability currently is very limited.

- Reached out to Wesco and Green Mountain Electrical Supply for quotes for electric department inventory.
- Reached out to Vision Metering to place an order for electric meters. Due to a lack of supplies Troy was informed that it would be at least a year until the village could expect delivery. Troy recommended to Nate that the village have some of its used meters tested for accuracy so they could be put in service if needed.
- Completed the monthly invoice coding.
- Continued speaking with Nate frequently to discuss scheduled work and answer any questions he has.

Diane asked if we have any new meters in inventory. Nate said we have about 6. He sent some old meters out for testing and 10 came back in good condition ready to go out. BJ asked how many meters we go through in a year. Nate said about 24. BJ asked, knowing it will take a year to receive meters we order, should we put in a double order? Nate said it is currently cheaper to reuse our old meters than to order new ones. Lynda asked what the reason is to replace a meter. Do they go bad? Nate said sometimes. Ice falling off a roof sometimes breaks the glass. Sometimes one fails. We also need new meters for new houses. We try to put meters on a gable end to protect them from ice but it doesn't always work. He thinks only one was damaged last year.

Steve asked Nate to give a brief summary of the issue with the Manchester property that he and Nate looked at today. The board is going to vote on having our attorney begin investigating that situation. BJ said he read about two different issues in that area – an issue where something was fixed and the town wants payment and one where they gave us a deadline of November. Steve said he is referring to the issue that we have to respond to in about a month involving four storm drains Manchester put in that do not meet standards. Nate said the catch basins were put in by Manchester Lumber years ago. They are cinder block. We did not put them in and have never maintained them. He doesn't believe the town put the culverts in. Manchester did it to help with issues they were having. During the 25 years he has been here the village has not done anything with that infrastructure.

Diane asked who owns that land. Nate said Manchester Lumber. BJ asked if the issue interferes with any of our storm drains or if it is a standalone mess. Nate said it is a standalone mess that goes from one side of the road across to the river on the other side. BJ asked why the town wants us to fix it when we did not approve it or put it in. If it is within the village boundaries and is not interfering with any of our storm drains, why does the selectboard care about it? Steve, Nate and Diane said they are concerned that the town road might fail. Ken said if this was installed without the town knowing about it the town did not do their job because they had to dig across the road to install it. It is not the village's infrastructure.

Diane asked what the cost would be to fix the catch basins. Nate said he would estimate half a million dollars.

BJ asked if there are other circumstances where private entities put in their own catch basins. Lynda said in the past people often did things like that. Nate agreed. He said he talked to former foreman Bob Sweeter who said he had no recollection of ever working on that infrastructure. Ken said C.J. Manchester said the catch basins were installed 60 years ago.

BJ said they have to have gotten permission from the town to go across the road. There is no sign that the village ever gave permission or ever worked on that infrastructure. We can give the town permission to work on it. Ken said we can't because we don't own the land. Nate said he doesn't know where the Manchester Lumber sewer line goes. Diane asked, wouldn't Manchester have asked the trustees when the work was done? Nate said no. Henry Manchester probably just put the line across without asking. The road could have been a dirt road back then.

Steve said it sounds like Ken and Nate are the ones that know the most about the situation. He hopes Ken will reach out to Brian Moynihan when Brian is gathering information.

BJ moved to approve having attorney Brian Moynihan start investigating the issue of the catch basins installed at Manchester Lumber and figuring out responsibilities for this infrastructure and to have Ken and Nate update Brian, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.

13. Executive Session for Personnel Matter

Diane moved to go into executive session to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee as allowed under 1 VSA § 313 (a)(3), Lynda seconded and the motion was passed at 7:37. Nate and Rosemary were invited to join the board for the executive session. Nate left during the executive session. The board came out of executive session at 8:14.

14. Review, Possibly Adopt Draft Anti-Idling Policy

BJ moved to adopt the Village of Johnson Anti-Idling Policy for Fleet Vehicles, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.

15. Possible Water and Wastewater Applications for AJ Shinner on River Road West

Rosemary said we have not received the applications from AJ Shinner.

16. Review Draft Employment Harassment & Discrimination Policy

A draft policy was provided to the board. Diane said she thinks the board should not vote on this one until board members have read the one from Milton. She thinks it is more friendly and readable and gets into more specific things. She thinks the one in the packet is more legalese. She talked to someone at VLCT who agreed that Milton's reads better and said that if we decide on one we want to adopt we can send it to her to make sure it is legal before we send it to our attorney.

17. Appoint Village Negotiating Team for Upcoming IBEW Contract Talks

Ken moved to appoint BJ to the negotiating team for IBEW contract talks, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed. Diane moved to appoint Steve the negotiating team for IBEW contract talks, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed with Steve abstaining.

18. Application for AARP Winter Placemaking Grant

Lynda said she will hopefully apply for another Winter Placemaking Grant as she did last year to do more things at Legion Field during the time of year when the ice rink is being used. She needs to put down a municipality as the entity applying for the grant and she would like to name the Village of Johnson. Tomorrow night she will ask the selectboard to give permission for leveling Legion Field for the rink. The grant application will include other items such as a sound system and a lining for the rink.

Ken asked if it is a 100% grant with no match. Diane said yes. Board members all agreed that she can apply for the grant on behalf of the Village of Johnson.

Ken asked if we got the watering issue at the ice rink resolved. Others said they did not think so. Ken suggested that we should get this on Erik's radar as something for him to address.

19. Accept VT Transco Equity Offering

The village has the opportunity to purchase 103 Class A transmission cost share units and 131 Class B units for a total cost of \$2,340. Steve asked, there is no problem with us affording this? Rosemary said no. This is standard. Most years Transco has some stock offerings. Diane asked, it is high risk, right? Rosemary said no. **BJ moved to purchase the transmission cost share units offered by VT Transco, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.**

20. Other Business

Diane said the selectboard will also need to authorize this. There is a window missing a pane at the food shelf. There is a stop sign screwed to it that doesn't prevent heat from going out. Can she find out how much it will cost to fix it? Board members said yes. Lynda asked if the windows there should be covered with shrink plastic for the winter. Steve suggested maybe an efficiency grant could pay for it. Ken said maybe we should get Efficiency Vermont to help. Steve said he will check it out when the food shelf is open.

21. Adjourn

Ken moved and Diane seconded to adjourn at 8:32 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths