

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2022

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Arjay West, Craig Carpenter, Lisa Crews, Greg Tatro

Absent: Lynda Hill, Ken Tourangeau

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Steve called the meeting to order at 6:00.

2. Fire Department Vehicle Purchase

Fire chief Arjay West said the vehicle the fire department had previously talked about buying got sold. They have found another that costs \$2,685 more. He thinks the fire department can absorb the price difference and he thinks they should move forward with purchasing it.

BJ moved and Steve seconded to authorize the fire department to continue to move forward with the plan to purchase a new R2 at a cost not to exceed \$51,700 and to rehab R3. Diane asked if the \$1000 rebate is still with it. Arjay said yes. Craig can secure it with the board's approval tonight. **The motion was passed.**

3. Water and Sewer Permit Applications

Erik said the village has received 3 water and sewer permit applications. He said when he worked in Hinesburg he was given signature authority for all applications under 1000 gallons to make it easier for the board. **BJ moved to give the village manager signature authority for all water and sewer permit applications with allocations of 1000 gallons or less, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.**

4. Ideas for Use of ARPA Funds

Erik handed out a list of ideas from the town's ARPA meeting. He highlighted ones he thought were good ideas for the village.

Steve read a list of 13 items from the Johnson Beautification Committee:

- Repairing and resurfacing the cold spring area
- An extra handrail in the middle of the stairs to the cold spring
- Grading sidewalks near the corner of Pearl and Main and in several spots along Railroad Street and Clark Avenue.
- Repairs to the sidewalk that goes past Jenna's Promising Goods and extension of the sidewalk beyond there.
- Repairs to the sidewalk along School Street.
- A seasonal gardener/landscaper for village properties (could be jointly contracted with the town)
- A new brick planter and plants for the area around the municipal building/flagpole area
- Sculptures for the three pedestals on Main Street
- More art work above the wall at the village green
- A small gazebo on the village green
- New picnic tables and umbrellas for the village green

- The new scenic pull-off spot near the Powerhouse Bridge that was proposed last winter
- New trees to replace some on the southeast side of Main Street that don't seem to be growing or have died.

BJ said he would like to see a good sidewalk on Railroad Street from the bridge to the rail trail.
(*Greg Tatro arrived at 6:17.*)

Lisa Crews said her idea is that the town and village could hire a teenager or two to work on spring weekends and in the summer helping to take care of the parks – picking up garbage, cleaning, tidying and doing whatever Jason decides is appropriate. We would be training someone who could be a future public works department employee.

Lisa asked how much ARPA money the village has. The board said \$325K.

Board members suggested the village garage as a use for ARPA funds. Steve and Erik said we are hoping to use some ARPA funds as matching funds to leverage grants. Lisa said to her as a taxpayer, the village garage is really important. Last year the crew went home constantly because they couldn't be in the garage.

Lisa asked if the fire department wants anything. Board members said they want a new repeater.

Steve said the village had a study done and it was determined that the foundation of the village garage is adequate. Most of the frame is okay. They recommend a new roof and new siding. Some of the inside can stay. Greg Tatro asked if the study gave a cost estimate. Erik said he thinks pre-pandemic the estimated cost was about a million dollars. There are some pots of money out there we can apply for. Steve said there is a Small Cities Grant from USDA that we are eligible for that can pay some percentage of the project.

BJ said a grant writer is a possible use for ARPA funds.

Greg Tatro suggested adding more parking downtown by leasing space from the United Church. He believes there could be room for 10 or 12 cars at the front of their lot by the sidewalk. Maybe the same could be done on the Hoag property. He also thinks the line striping along the street could be changed to allow more cars. Currently there are places where a wedge is painted and people commonly fit 2 cars into an area designated for one. He thinks changing the line striping could add 4 or 5 spaces. We should talk to the state about the way it is designed.

Greg said 30 or 40 years ago there was a blinking traffic light in town. He would guess traffic then was half of what it is today. Traffic sometimes goes fast in town and it is hard to get out of Railroad Street or Pearl Street. He thinks we need to do something at those intersections, a 3-way stop sign or something else to slow people down, especially where the crosswalks are.

Lisa suggested a click-together ice rink kit.

BJ brought up the shed that needed to be built for the ice rink. Diane said the grant she is applying for has more money for the shed. She found someone who would match the \$4K grant. It would be great if the village could also put some money into it. She thinks Legion Field needs an attractive

shed. It would be good to have lights, music, heat and refrigerators. Lisa suggested it might be good to build a bigger shed with more uses now, rather than just a small shed to keep the water from freezing. Diane said the shed needs to be in the area that has been used by the Historical Society, so we need to get their input. Maybe the shed can help them during Tuesday Night Live. If we can match the grant money, she thinks that will pay for it. Erik suggested a design like a sugar house.

BJ asked, what about storage for recreation activities? Lisa said the original design for the shed has room for rink equipment. Part of the cold storage building has been designated for rec storage. That is currently working. BJ said he wonders if we should make the shed a little bigger to hold that equipment. Lisa said there is a substantial amount.

Diane said she thinks some of these things are very important for attracting people to this town so they will want to start businesses and live here. She thinks we need to do that to help pay for other things.

Lisa asked if the water, sewer or electric departments have any needs. BJ said we could use ARPA funds to help balance the checkbook. Erik said ARPA funds could defray some of the rate increase that is probably necessary. But he is not certain that is an allowed use. Lisa asked what is driving the rate increase. BJ said there has not been any increase in a long time and costs are high now. Other utilities have done small increases more often but we haven't done one in so long that now we need a big one. Lisa asked, is the need for more money because of failing infrastructure, cost of the crew, insurance? Are there costs that can be offset by ARPA money?

Steve said the garage project is a big expense. Erik suggested ARPA funds could be used for the cupola at the wastewater facility. Steve said we would hope that could come out of the budget.

Diane asked if Erik knows about the wastewater system at the library that we need to work on. Erik said he and Jeanne Engel are planning to meet to talk about that and it is on the agenda for the next meeting. Diane said she believes there is grant money for that but she doesn't know if there is a match required.

Greg asked, can you do whatever you want with this money? Erik said not completely, but there is a lot of latitude. The money must be committed by 2024.

Greg asked if the village has someone who looks for grants. Erik said he does some of that. It would be good to have a grant writer. We are part of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and they just created a position for someone who looks at grants available to towns.

BJ asked if we could use ARPA funds for the cost of a more detailed merger study. That would be about \$30K. Steve said if we decide to merge there will be lawyer costs.

BJ asked, wasn't something going to be done with storm drains on Railroad Street? Steve said just near the library. Diane brought up the sinking manholes on Railroad Street.

BJ suggested funds could be used for GIS services to help the crew locate things. Steve asked if there are any other grants that could pay for that. Erik said there could be, but ARPA funds could be used as matching funds.

Another use suggested was sprucing up the municipal building.

Diane said a newsletter from the Lamoille County Planning Commission mentioned a special bonus round of funding for the downtown and village center tax credit program. She doesn't know how that program works. The program could give a tax credit to someone who owns a historical building to beautify it and make it safe. She doesn't know where the money comes from. Erik said it sounds like a state program. Greg said it is. Diane said the village needs that tax revenue. Where does that get made up? Greg said the state gives you tax credits that you can apply or sell.

Diane suggested it would be great to have a brewery in what is currently a storage building behind the Masonic temple, right over the river.

Diane said she thinks a grant writer/economic development person is very important. Greg asked if the person would be hired year round or just retained. BJ said he likes the idea of paying them per grant. He thinks the town and other trustees like the idea of employing someone year round. He thinks the idea is to have someone working under 30 hours a week. His only worry is how to split costs and time between town and village if we share an employee. Greg said there are grants for grant writers. Steve said he is with BJ. He likes the idea of paying a specific person to work on a specific grant. BJ said then we wouldn't have to pay for benefits.

Steve said now that we have a list of possible uses for ARPA funds the whole board will need to prioritize them.

5. ***Other Business***

Greg said a medical facility for those 14 and older will soon be opening in the building that used to be the Subway. There will be a counselor and an office for an outside group helping Jenna's Promise. The counselor will be working with Jenna's Promise but may take other clients. There will be a free vending machine for Narcan, the first in the state.

Erik said he and Steve recently met with someone from NVU. Their vision involves learning in the community.

Greg said his coffee shop is getting close to being ready to open.

6. ***Adjourn***

BJ moved and Steve seconded to adjourn at 7:16 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths