

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

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Dan Copp (remote), Kyle Nuse, Kelly Locke (remote)

Absent: Lynda Hill

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Steve called the meeting to order at 6:03.

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

It was agreed to move the water/wastewater report before the other agenda items.

3. Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items

Dan said the E-DRM and Wr-43 were submitted to the state. The belt press rehab is 95% done. It should be completely done in a few weeks. So far it has cost about \$14,000 out of the \$20,400 we budgeted. It should come in about \$5,000 less than anticipated. The emergency plant generator at the wastewater plant went down with a bad water pump. It took a week to get the replacement so Brookfield had to set up an emergency generator on site. While the water pump was being replaced it was determined that the main bearing for the fan and the water pump was also bad. That is likely what caused the water pump to fail. We had to wait almost 2 weeks for the bearing. Dan thinks they made a mistake and forgot to order the bearing and that is why it took two weeks. He will have a conversation with them about the cost of generator rental after we receive the invoice. All fire extinguishers at the plant were serviced and recertified. Some UV bulbs were replaced. We will need to buy more in a few months. The UV channels were pressure washed and scrubbed. Wind River pumped out the wash water in the channels after they were cleaned.

Coliform samples were negative. Luke assisted the village crew with flushing hydrants. We have the spare well pump on site now. Dan would like to isolate the Nadeau well pump from village water at the well house. This would require buying two flanges and pulling out the T that connects the systems. This would allow us to have the state rewrite our permit so that well is not included in our sampling for 2023. PFOA sampling is required in 2023. This would save roughly \$1,000 in sampling costs and would give us time to consult with Percy about how they want to handle taking over the well and how they want to deal with the piping in the ground to divert around the well house. We will maintain the building and check the heaters throughout the winter as we have done in the past. We are not going to be able to reroute around the building this year. Dan hears from Nate that Percy wants to be consulted but Percy hasn't gotten in touch with Dan yet. The parts needed should not cost more than \$200. This plan would mean that we would maintain electricity through the winter as we have in the past. The board agreed to what Dan suggested. Dan said water loss for October was 17%, which includes loss during hydrant flushing.

Erik brought up the plan to rehab the Katie Win meter house. Dan said the plan was to put the cost of that in the budget for spring. Ken asked if the Ship Sevin issue is taken care of. Dan said we still need a lawyer to draft up an agreement with Ship Sevin regarding liability. They have verbally agreed; we just need a legal document. He forwarded the information to Steve but doesn't know if

Steve forwarded it to Brian Monaghan. Steve said he or Erik will talk to Brian Monaghan tomorrow about it. Ken asked Dan to send the information to Erik.

Diane asked about the difference between the original \$197,000 cost estimate for the pump house work and the current \$35,000 estimate. Dan explained that if we change the capacity at the pump station then everything has to be brought up to the newest codes, which costs more. If we do not change the flow but just replace what is there and reorganize it, then we can rehab the building within the same footprint, saving money. Diane asked, there is no problem with the flow now? Dan said we have never had complaints from anyone in the trailer park. The state was going to require more flow but we have data showing that the current flow is adequate. By not changing the flow we have fewer hoops to go through.

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

Diane moved to approve the minutes of October 11 and October 12, 2022 with one change to the October 11 minutes: replacing “Lynda” with “Diane” in “Lynda said she will hopefully apply for another Winter Placemaking Grant.” The motion was seconded and passed.

5. ***Village Manager’s Report and Action Items***

Erik said the air scrubber has been in the garage for over a month and it works. BJ asked if we need to have anyone come and check the air quality to make sure it is working. Erik said it has a pressure sensor on it and when the pressure reaches a certain level that means we have to change the filters. Ken said he recalls that we were only allowed to have employees in the building for so many hours a day. Steve asked if that was an official requirement. Ken said he doesn't remember. Steve said we need to find out if that was an official requirement. Ken said he thinks we probably should have an air quality test done. BJ agreed. Ken said the employees say they are okay with the air in the building right now.

Erik said a wastewater study is being done with grant money. The initial meeting with the person doing the study was on October 4 and the final product should be ready in December. VPPSA put us in the queue for developing a rate case for electricity. We are 6th in line and they think it will happen in February. Erik is meeting with Seth Jensen from the Lamoille County Planning Commission on Wednesday regarding the cleanup project. Nate is on vacation this week. The crew has a task list and Morrisville and Stowe are ready to assist if we have an emergency. Erik approved a wastewater allocation of 210 gallons per day for an accessory dwelling at 210 Sinclair Road.

The first union contract talks will be on December 2. Erik, Steve and BJ will be there. The first meeting will be to set the tone and receive the union’s demands, then we will go from there. Diane asked if the board will talk about what we would like to see in the contract. Erik said he would suggest an executive session to discuss the contract at the next meeting. Ken asked if some notes about what the union wants could be sent out after the negotiations meeting so all board members are informed before the trustee board meeting.

6. ***Electric/General Report and Action Items***

Erik read the report from Troy. The crew installed a service, connected a new solar array, energized service for the charging station at Jolley, retired an existing overhead service, completed a pole transfer, provided 2.5 hours of mutual aid to the Village of Hyde Park, addressed a flickering light issue, did right-of-way cutting and completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, substation check and Dig Safes.

Hydrant flushing was completed. The crew assisted with sewer main cleaning and stormwater catch basin cleaning, changed the water pump at the cold spring, performed fall cleanup at the village garage and outside areas, assisted the fire department with removing a water tank from a truck, helped AOT with a gravel spill from a state truck on Route 15, worked on the village tractor tires, painted the Bobcat, and prepared equipment for winter. The village furnace was repaired. The crew attended the October NEPPA safety meeting, restocked first aid kits and replaced outdated face shields and water blankets.

Troy had multiple conversations with Lion Electric and the state about the status of the electric bucket truck. He wrote a report about the situation for the board. He discussed a line relocation with a customer, discussed the line relocation project on Clay Hill with Nate, did a true-up for the property owner at 280 Sinclair Road, completed an estimate for new secondary service to serve new properties on River Road West, and scheduled sewer main and catch basin cleaning. He reached out to three transformer suppliers for quotes and only got a response from one. They are in the process of getting pricing together. At this time most transformers are a year out from delivery, whether rebuilt or new. He continued to work on getting pricing for a line materials order, reviewed budget actuals and monthly financials for all departments, discussed budget status related to materials and staff time with Nate, talked to a solar developer and property owner to discuss installation of a new array, forwarded water and sewer permit applications to Erik, completed monthly invoice coding and continued to meet with Nate.

Ken asked if we are staying within the budget. Other board members said they would be interested in that information as well. Ken asked Erik to let the board know if we are very far over budget.

7. *Fire Department Report and Action Items*

Erik read the fire department report. For September 29 to October 27 there were 11 calls, 4 during the day and 7 at night. The average duration was 47 minutes. There were five automatic alarms, one CEO alarm, one medical assist, two smoke condition, one debris fire and one wilderness rescue. The average number of firefighters responding was 10. Total number of hours was 57. Fire prevention and awareness trinket bags were distributed to children in preschool, kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 and to homeschool students, and students had the ability to view a fire safety video prepared last year. Annual service and state inspection was completed on several trucks. Diane asked if members of the fire department went to the school. Ken said yes; their Facebook page includes pictures from the visit.

8. *Village Manager's Report and Action Items (continued)*

Erik said our community is being targeted by Efficiency Vermont in 2023. As part of that we are eligible for \$60,000 to cover the costs of some energy efficiency projects. No one project can be more than \$25,000. They can be municipal, commercial, farm, or non-profit projects.

Ken asked if we could use the money for the new meter at NVU. Erik said possibly. Ken said he thinks we should look into that. He doesn't think our ratepayers should pay for it.

Erik said we need to figure out where we want the money to go. We need to provide a list to Efficiency Vermont before the first of the year. Diane asked Erik's thoughts about where the money could go. Erik suggested heat pumps for the new garage might be a possibility, though he is not sure if we can buy heat pumps for it when it is not built yet. Or perhaps we could evaluate putting heat pumps at the municipal building. It has to be something to save energy. Ken suggested converting some furnaces to propane, which is cheaper than fuel oil. Diane said heat pumps would be even better. Ken said he thinks it would be cheaper to convert our furnaces than to put in a

whole new system. Erik said he thinks Efficiency Vermont would go for heat pumps before conversion to propane. Erik said we may want to talk to NVU and see where they want to spend money. BJ suggested an energy audit for the municipal building. Ken said he would like these funds to be used for the meter for NVU. He said he got a lot of complaints about ratepayers paying for it. Erik said board members should think about where we could use the money besides municipal projects. We will have to use the money in multiple places because each project can be no more than \$25,000.

Ken said the selectboard had previously asked to see fire department monthly reports. Do we know if Arjay has been sending them to the select board? Erik said he doesn't know. Ken suggested checking with Arjay and making sure he is also sending the reports to the selectboard.

9. *Railroad Street Beautification Project Request from Beautification Committee*

Kyle said the Beautification Committee is hoping to decorate the Railroad Street bridge with a banner, colorful flags and solar powered LED lights for winter. They brought a proposal to the selectboard and the selectboard was supportive. The village budget includes \$500 for the Beautification Committee. The committee was thinking maybe they could give that \$500 back to the village as payment for installation of the decorations using electric department equipment and crew. If that is not a possibility they thought they could use that money to either rent a lift or pay someone who is insured and able to use a rope and pulley system.

Erik said Nate told him that using the bucket truck in the bridge does not work because of the angles inside the framework. Ken asked if the Beautification Committee has asked Johnson Farm and Garden about donating a lift. Kyle said not yet. Johnson Farm and Garden has been very generous in the past, so that is a possibility. Then there is the question of who can do the work. Diane asked if the village crew could help out with that, perhaps along with some of the town crew. Kyle said the selectboard had suggested that the town crew could help with flagging if the village crew could put up the decorations. Ken asked if the town is going to waive the right of way fee or release the village from any responsibility. The village does not have a right of way across that bridge. Erik suggested it might make sense for the village to do traffic control and for the town to do work on the bridge since it is the town's bridge. Ken said if the village crew were going to do the work he would want the town to accept all responsibility and clear the village of any liability. The town charges thousands of dollars for a right of way. He suggests they either give us the right of way at no cost or agree to cover all liability. Our insurance would only cover us if we had a right of way.

Diane suggested Brian Story should have information about right of way requirements. Kyle asked if Erik wants to initiate a conversation with Brian or if she should. Erik said it would be convenient if she could do it.

Steve suggested maybe a person could work from the sidewalk on a ladder. Ken said he thinks a drivable lift would be the quickest and safest way to do it. He expects Johnson Farm and Garden would donate use of one but he has no problem with using the Beautification Committee's budget to rent one. He said it would be nice to see something red, white and blue set up at one end or the other. Renting a lift for a day should cost around \$225.

Ken moved to allow the Beautification Committee to use up to \$500 of the money budgeted for the committee for installation of decorations on the Railroad State bridge and to direct

the Beautification Committee to actively seek a donation from Johnson Farm and Garden. The motion was seconded and passed.

10. Johnson Works Request for Village to Cover Event Insurance for Holiday Jubilee

Erik said in the past the village has paid for event insurance for the Holiday Jubilee. Brian Story estimated the cost would be just under \$1,200. Event insurance comes through VLCT but is from a different carrier than our usual insurance. An amount not to exceed \$1,500 should be a safe number to approve. Ken said he wishes Rosemary was here to tell us if we budgeted for this insurance.

Diane moved to authorize paying for event insurance for the Holiday Jubilee if it is not already in the budget, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Possibly Revoking Contract to Purchase Electric Bucket Truck from Lion Electric

Erik said the electric bucket truck keeps being delayed. Lion Electric has changed major components because their suppliers dried up so it is not even the same truck we originally contracted to buy. They are willing to give us back our deposit and the state is willing to let us step away from the grant. That is the suggested move.

Ken said he thinks before we cancel the contract there needs to be written verification that we will get our deposit back. Steve said they won't even guarantee the price anymore. Diane said another consideration is that we need the Tier III credits we would have gotten from purchasing this vehicle. Ken said the state will still push us to do something to get Tier III credits. Steve said if we don't get them we may have to pay a penalty.

Diane asked if there is another company that we could possibly get a truck from. Erik said right now the technology is not there for an electric truck to be a smart purchase. If the crew has to be out for 12 hours working on a big power outage, would we have to bring in a generator to charge the truck? Ken said Troy said there is another company that has made and delivered a few electric bucket trucks but there are no reviews on them yet because people have only had them a short time. Erik said it is easier for a big company to be a guinea pig since one vehicle is not as important to them. We have a total of two bucket trucks and we can't afford to have half not working.

Steve said it sounds like we are not going to vote to cancel the order until we have received a letter telling us when we are definitely going to get our \$10,000 back.

Ken suggested the possibility that we could get one of the state grants in the future to replace the smaller bucket truck with an electric truck in order to get Tier III credits.

12. Stetson Wind Power Purchase Opportunity Presented by VPPSA

Erik said the wind power purchase the board approved at the October meeting fell through. The VPPSA board of directors is now looking at purchasing wind power from Brookfield Electric in Maine. Their average price is a little more but their bandwidth of prices is steadier so price can be tracked better. Their price will beat the market rate based on market projections. We will get renewable energy credits and save money.

BJ moved to approve the Stetson wind power purchase presented by VPPSA, Ken seconded and the motion was passed.

13. Utilities Estimating & Logistics Specialist Job Description and Advertisement

The board reviewed a proposed job description and an advertisement for the Utilities Estimating & Logistics Specialist job. Diane asked if any of the things in the job description are things Nate was asked to do. She thinks Nate could do most of them. Steve said it is true that he could, but we are trying to free him up to be a working foreman. If he did these things he couldn't do a lot of what he

is doing now. Erik said a lot of this work can be done by a part-time exempt employee and then we will not have to hire more linemen. Diane asked, we will stick with four linemen and this person? Erik said we will also have a general labor/plow person. He thinks that should be a full-time job. Diane asked if this person would help with employees having to be on call. Erik said no. Diane asked how we can alleviate that problem. Erik said that will get better when the two employees who are currently apprentices become first class linemen. That will give more flexibility. Currently they can't be the lead on call.

Erik said he plans to advertise with VPPSA and VCLT. He will try to advertise with NEPPA. There might be a small charge. He will distribute it to the board of directors of VPPSA. Diane asked if we will use Indeed. Erik said we could. Steve suggested advertising in the other places Erik suggested, waiting a month and seeing what response we get and then deciding if we need to broaden where we advertise. We could even get some consulting from Alan Gould of Municipal Resources to suggest other places to run the ad. Diane suggested maybe we should get him to advertise the position right now. Ken suggested just going with what Erik already had planned. Steve agreed. The board agreed that Erik can choose an application closing date that seems appropriate.

14. Possibility of Clerk/Treasurer Position Transitioning from Elected to Appointed

BJ said we have already discussed the idea of making the village clerk and treasurer positions appointed rather than elected. The selectboard is in favor of it and so is this board. **BJ moved and Diane seconded to start the process of turning the village clerk and treasurer positions into appointed positions rather than elected positions.** Ken asked what we have to do to start the process. He said Eben Patch had mentioned making sure nothing needed to be changed in our charter. Steve said he thinks we should check with the Secretary of State. We can look in our charter. BJ said Erik should check with Rosemary when she comes back. Ken said he thinks Rosemary had a good idea of how to move forward. **The motion was passed.**

15. Choose Two Trustees to be Members of the Merger Inquiry Committee

Ken moved to appoint BJ and Diane to serve on the joint town-village merger inquiry committee. Ken reminded them that they are representing the village residents. **Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

16. Discuss the Two Draft Harassment Policies as Presented

Erik said we have the further edited VLCT model and the Milton model. He doesn't have a preference except that the HR specialist at VLCT suggested some wording (shown in red on one of the drafts) that he thinks should be part of whichever policy we accept.

Ken asked, did she say that it is no good to have harassment and sexual harassment policies that are separate from each other? Erik said she said that it is better to have the language as part of a fully upgraded personnel policy. Diane said the VLCT specialist said we haven't worked on the personnel policy for a long time so we should work on it. Ken said she mentioned statutes that have changed. Erik said he plans to work on the whole personnel policy.

BJ said we now share a personnel policy with the town so we will be separating and having our own policy. Erik said unless they adopt what we adopt. BJ said he remembers them saying that they can't change their policy now since they are in the middle of negotiations.

Ken said the two model policies say the same thing but one is longer than the other. BJ said he is not partial to one over the other. Diane said she really likes the wording in the Milton one. Steve said he does too. Ken suggested having Erik add his suggested language to the Milton policy and

sending it to VLCT for review. Erik said he can send it to their HR specialist and if they think it needs lawyer review they have some people they work with.

Diane moved to send the draft harassment policy based on Milton's policy, with the added language recommended by Erik, to VLCT for review, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

17. Funding of Employee Holiday Party

Ken moved to pay 50% of the cost of an employee holiday party (\$300), BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

18. Executive Session regarding Municipal Security or Response Measures

Steve asked if Erik could explain to all board members what the executive session is going to be about. Erik said the nature of it needs to be in executive session.

BJ moved to enter executive session as per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(10) to discuss municipal security or response measures, the public disclosure of which could jeopardize public safety, Ken seconded and the motion was passed at 7:36. The board came out of executive session at 7:46.

19. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths