

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2022

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Arjay West, Craig Carpenter, Gidget Dolan-Dodge, Sue Lovering

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

BJ called the meeting to order at 6:01.

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

It was agreed to delete item #5 as the village does not yet have a letter from Lion, and to add discussion of paid holidays, a fire department budget presentation and an executive session to discuss applications received for the Utilities Estimating & Logistics Specialist position.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Ken moved to approve the minutes of November 9, November 14 and December 2, 2022, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.

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

Rosemary said if the board wants to convert the village clerk and treasurer positions to appointed there will need to be articles on the village meeting warning asking the voters to approve the change. If it is approved by the voters it will go into effect 45 days after the vote, after the period during which a petition for a revote can be submitted has ended. Lynda asked if Rosemary will put together wording for the articles. Rosemary said yes. She can get the articles ready and when the board approves the village meeting warning that will be part of it.

Rosemary said in the past employees have been given \$100 each around Christmas. Does the board want to do that this year? Lynda asked what the total would be. Rosemary said in the past the village and town have each paid \$50 for office employees. If we do that again the total for the village would be \$800. **Ken moved to provide the same holiday pay to employees that has been provided in the past, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.**

Rosemary said today we got the fire department payment for Belvidere so all fire department payments have been received. The final fire department payroll will be done this week.

Rosemary said she thinks the electric department may end the year with a \$50K deficit. That is not assuming any use of ARPA funds. Ken asked what the main sources of lower revenue are. Erik suggested the problem is more likely to be higher costs, like the cost of power. The cost of renewable energy credits has gone up substantially. Rosemary said we have done a lot of contract work for customers. That has gone well but it also costs money. Lynda said it is charged back to the customer, though, so it balances out. Erik said the indoor cannabis grow operation will be a source of some increased revenue. Steve said if we get Percy as an electric customer that will really help. Erik said there is a very good chance that Percy's sand pit will switch from a diesel generator to electricity.

Rosemary said she thinks the water department is in pretty good shape. The state has finally paid all the bills on the River Road pump station project. We have one more set of minor bills to send in, around \$2K.

BJ asked if any houses will be put up for tax sale. Rosemary said we will start that process in January, piggybacking on the town's tax sale.

Ken said he noticed on the news that the state is still providing help with utility bills. Can we send out information on that with the next utility bill? Rosemary said we send out a newsletter that it can be mentioned in.

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

Erik said VPPSA has approved a budget. There will be an 18.4% increase for the Village of Johnson. We are probably in the bottom third of all the VPPSA municipalities as far as our cost increase.

Ken said he finds it absurd that VPPSA is increasing our cost that much due to Renewable Energy Standards costs at the same time they are asking us to send out a letter saying rolling blackouts may be needed. Erik said Renewable Energy Standards are the law. We don't have a choice. VPPSA doesn't like it any more than we do. Ken said at the VPPSA focus groups he attended there was general agreement that VPPSA is not lobbying enough and needs to do a better job. Erik said most of the VPPSA costs are pass-through, not their costs. The money goes to the state. Lynda asked how the state uses it. Erik said there is a fund that helps increase use of renewable energy.

BJ asked about how member fees and the Sanders grant match apply to us. Erik said member fees are based on actual VPPSA cost. They had a massive rise in health insurance costs. BJ asked, so we are paying for their health insurance along with ours? Ken said VPPSA is a management group for all utilities that are members. We are paying for all their expenses. Johnson has to pay part of the match for the Sanders grant VPPSA received to implement a revolving loan fund for commercial electrification projects. BJ asked, businesses get a loan from VPPSA? Erik said there is grant money too. There will be an incentive for Percy to get off diesel and onto our grid. BJ asked if the money can help businesses with things like improving insulation or if it is just for switching from one form of energy to another. Erik said he doesn't know the details at this point.

Erik shared a draft budget timeline for budget season. It is the same as last year's, with dates changed slightly to match the calendar.

The board packet included as an example a letter sent out by a utility in Massachusetts warning of possible rolling blackouts this winter. The grid may not be able to keep up with power demand if there is a cold snap this winter. Rolling blackouts are an unlikely possibility. Natural gas is in shorter supply. Most of the electric plants in this area use natural gas. If there is a cold snap and more gas is being used to heat homes there may not be enough to run electric plants. Diesel stores are also low in this area. If the power supply is low enough they will force all utilities in rotation to have 3-4 hour rolling blackouts. If this happens there will be a lot of notice ahead of time and first there will be voluntary conservation requests.

Erik brought up the VPPSA program he talked about at the last meeting. VPPSA is partnering with Efficiency Vermont. There is a cap of \$60K for all projects and no one project can be more than \$24K. We are supposed to do at least 4 but no more than 6 projects. This will be managed at Erik's

level but he wants to get ideas from the board. Maybe there could be a project at the municipal building or the waste/wastewater plant. He has already told NVU we want to do a big project there. There might be a project at Sterling Market. Ken asked if anyone has ever looked into Holcomb House energy use. Rosemary said it is not much. Ken said if we want to do a project at the municipal building we have to make sure the selectboard is okay with it. Erik should talk to Brian Story.

6. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report prepared by Tim Howell in Dan's absence. The E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted to the state. Two electric motors were rebuilt at Farrell Electric, one for the gravity belt drive on the press, the other for the process water pump for the press. Both are back on and installed and working properly. There was a callout for a plugged siphon under the river on November 26. Manosh was called in and within 2 hours it was jetted and opened back up and the alarm float was reset. Staff repaired outlets and installed new heat tapes and heat tape insulation on decanter valves for holding tanks and performed E. coli tests. Wind River cleaned grit channels.

Coliform samples were negative. Two 6" caps were purchased and installed to complete the piping change at the Nadeau well to provide an air gap from the existing well on the property to the village system. The Nadeau well is now completely removed and disconnected from the water system and an e-mail has been sent to Andrew Ferguson at the state asking what we need to do now to have it removed from the state as a water supply to the village. We are awaiting his reply. Water loss numbers for November were 25%, an increase from past months. A contributor to that could be a leaking flushing hydrant on Clay Hill that has now been isolated. A vent in Katy Win meter house #3 was repaired where the insulation had fallen out and it was open to the outside. All heaters for Katy Win meter houses and the Nadeau well are turned on and being checked weekly. There was a callout for the Clay Hill booster station for the light and audible alarm. We seem to be getting "ghost" alarms there. Staff met with Nate and went through the program on the panel researching the cause.

Erik said he and Tim will meet with an inspector Thursday for the sanitary survey that is usually done about every 2 years.

7. *Electric/General Report and Action Items*

Erik read Troy Dolan's report:

Electric Dept.

The crew completed the following tasks:

- Began cutting the right-of-way at 807 Foote Brook Road in preparation for an overhead line relocation.
- Worked with the property owner at 11 Provoncha Lane to remove some large pine trees that were close to the electric lines.
- Responded to a call at 240 Lower Main East for a complaint of flickering lights. The crew checked all the connections on the pole and the line side of the meter socket and found no issues on the Village's side of the service.
- Responded to a call out on November 26th at 268 Plot Road for a tree on the line. The tree was safely removed without de-energizing the line.
- Completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, substation check, and dig safes

Water/Sewer

The crew shut off a leaking flushing hydrant at 285 Clay Hill and they are currently waiting for parts to make the final repair.

General Department

At the Town's request, the crew adjusted the risers on two manhole covers on Clay Hill. All Village trucks were sent out for annual undercoating. The crew removed the US flags and fall banners and installed the winter banners and holiday lights. Assisted the Town with installing holiday lights on the Railroad Street bridge.

Safety

The crew attended the November NEPPA safety meeting. The topic of the class was protective grounds and metering.

Administrative

Troy completed the following administrative tasks:

- Completed two mutual aid invoices for assistance provided to Hyde Park Water & Light.
- Created a new estimate for mutual aid for Hyde Park Water & Light to assist them with the installation of a new utility pole, primary underground connections, and transformer installation in their service territory (transformer and other material being provided by Hyde Park).
- Reviewed the CPG for the solar array at 1775 Clay Hill.
- Continued working on the material order with Green Mountain Electrical Supply.
- Reached out to Lion Electric to request confirmation in writing that the Village's \$10,000 deposit will be returned if the order is cancelled. As of the writing of this report, I have not yet received a response. I had the monthly call with State representative for the bucket truck grant and provided her with an update on the Village's position. She indicated that if the Village decided to move forward with the purchase, the grant would need to be extended and this would need to be requested by January 4, 2023.
- Worked with Nate on the line relocation at the end our service territory on Foote Brook Road. Worked on monthly invoice coding.
- Worked with Johnson Farm & Garden regarding clarifying a credit on the Village's account related to a primary underground wire purchase from earlier this year.
- Completed a questionnaire created by VPPSA on distribution transformer issues, the results of which will be sent to the Department of Public Service.
- Continued speaking with Nate daily to discuss scheduled work and answer any questions he has.

Transformer Availability

Continued trying to obtain quotes for transformers. Quote requests were submitted to six vendors over the last several months, but only two have responded. Of those two, neither can provide the dual voltage transformers the Village has purchased in the past. It appears that currently, no manufacturers are producing dual voltage transformers. Additionally, only one of the vendors can provide single-phase transformers, which are primarily what the Village

currently needs. The lead time for the single-phase and single-voltage transformers that are available ranges from 148-180 weeks, which is significantly longer than the Village has experienced in the past. The delay in receiving transformers is a problem being faced by utilities across Vermont and the whole country. I recommend the Village discuss a policy regarding how to manage its existing transformer inventory to ensure a minimum supply for existing customers is maintained while creating a process to fulfill transformer needs of new customers.

BJ asked if we can refurbish old transformers ourselves. Erik said not ourselves; we would have to send them out. Ken asked if there would be a shorter lead time for refurbished transformers. Erik said not much. Morrisville has promised us some used dual voltage transformers. BJ asked if we should order more than we need, knowing what the lead time is. Erik said the ones available are only single voltage. If this town grows we will need to step up to a higher voltage. We need to find a balance between not ordering enough and getting more than we really need. We also need to discuss the balance between protecting existing customers and serving new customers. Ken said he thinks we should reach out to Troy and get a recommendation. (*Craig Carpenter and Gidget Dolan-Dodge arrived at 6:44.*)

Lynda asked if a business necessarily needs dual voltage. Erik explained that businesses and residences don't need different voltages. The voltage is for our entire system. Currently the voltage we use is 2400. If we grow as a system we will need to step up to the next level. BJ asked how close we are to needing to upgrade. Erik said we are a ways away but dual voltage transformers don't cost that much more so it makes sense to put them in. (

8. *Fire Department Report and Action Items*

Erik read the fire department report for October 27 to December 1:

Calls:

JFD responded to 12 calls. 7 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) 5 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 102 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 2 - automatic alarms, 2 - carbon monoxide alarms, 1-medical assist, 2- vehicle crashes, 3 - structure fires, and 2 - mutual aid (structure fire & water rescue)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 10
Total hours of service was: 201

Other:

We have taken delivery of the Rescue 2 replacement from LV Chevy. Vehicle undercoating was completed at the dealer. Warning lights, lettering, and radio install has been completed by Hard Wired Auto Electronics. Bedliner was done by Rail City Liners. We are arranging materials and scheduling the retro fit for Rescue 3 after the new year.

Other:

Desorcie Emergency Products completed inspection, maintenance, and repairs on both fire pumps for Engine 1 and Engine 2. This should position us well for the next year - year and a half of operation.

Arjay arrived at 6:48. He said Craig and Gidget are participating a lot in management and learning more about budgets. They worked with him on a budget for 2023. One of the primary drivers is the minimum wage increase. It is going up 63 cents to \$13.18. The fire department hourly wage is currently \$13.00. The request is for a 50 cent increase effective January 1. That will cost about \$1500. Another hurdle is that we will lose the \$6K income from NVU next year. That is almost 4 1/3% of fire department revenue.

Lynda asked why we are losing that payment. Erik said NVU is now completely integrated as part of Vermont State University. They are tightening the belt and trying to be more equitable from campus to campus. The \$6K is an annual donation. They don't do that in any of their other locations. They originally hadn't budgeted to pay it this year, but he and Susan prodded and it went to the state university president's office and they decided to do it again this year but they won't continue.

Arjay said the college is the biggest location for automatic alarm responses. Lynda asked if the other towns bill the campus if they make a call. Rosemary said we did that years ago. We used to bill Waterville and Belvidere for each fire. But then we went to a contracted services model. Erik asked if NVU was ever billed. Rosemary said yes. Lynda asked what Castleton and Lyndon do. Arjay said the assistant chief in Lyndonville told him they do not receive any contribution from the college and they do not bill the college. He doesn't know about Castleton.

Lynda asked if the fire department would consider billing the college in the future. Rosemary said we get PILOT money for the college. BJ said that is not for the fire department. Arjay said if we wanted to bill for false alarms we would probably need to create an ordinance that would affect everyone. But we may not want to discourage homeowners from protecting their buildings because of concerns that they would receive a bill if there were a false alarm.

BJ asked if the fire department contacts the college safety office rather than immediately responding to alarms. Arjay said around 6 or 8 years ago the fire department and college agreed that when the fire department gets an alarm a fire officer calls the college to find out if they need help. If it is a non-emergency situation they are able to reset their system and assume responsibility and the fire department doesn't need to respond.

Arjay said for the 2023 budget the biggest hurdle is the \$6K gap. There are no big surprises in operating expenses. The increase to payroll will cost about \$1500 or \$2000. There was some surplus this year. Insurance costs are supposed to be the same as last year. Heating costs have gone up. This year the fire department was over budget on that line item. For 2023 they cut the budget for building supplies. They decreased vehicle maintenance a little because they switched the primary garage the big trucks go to and because they now have a newer truck. One priority was not to jeopardize the capital plan. They did not cut planned contributions. They made small cuts to gear and accessories and communications. They did not cut the small equipment fund contribution.

The proposed budget is \$186,500. If the budget were spread out evenly across the village and the towns of Johnson, Waterville and Belvidere it would be a 3% increase for each. If the village had no increase the increase to each of the 3 contract towns would be 4%.

Ken asked what we did last year. Arjay said it was a 4.75% increase, the largest he can recall. The reason for the large increase was the accelerated inflationary cost of fuel, oil, etc.

Arjay said he would like to see more budget growth. The fire department is in a difficult position with the loss of the \$6K. They tried to present something they think is reasonable given the climate. They were not comfortable asking for more so they are trying to make some cuts.

Ken asked if any of the cuts are going to inhibit the fire department from doing the outstanding job they have been doing. Arjay said no. The proposed budget severely tightens things up. If they had a heavy call volume with a large number of hours they could run over budget. Historically there has always been some cushion in their budget, maybe as much as \$2K. That cushion is going away. He doesn't think they will be unsafe but they won't have as much buying power as in the past. They will have to keep using things longer. If there is a broken axe they might have to repair it instead of replacing it. The price of goods has gone up a lot. They are holding to their plans for rotation of safety items but they may need to do more in-house maintenance to deal with wear and tear or damage.

Ken asked if education to kids will be affected. He thinks that is important. Gidget said money for that comes from the firefighters' club. Arjay said that community outreach is not in the budget.

Ken asked if the cost of the new repeater is part of this budget. Arjay said the license request is paid for out of the 2022 operating budget. They are getting indicators that there will be a favorable outcome to the request but they will not know for about 2 months. In the future they will need to increase the small tools capital contribution in order to cover the amount borrowed from that account for the repeater project. (*Sue Lovering arrived at 7:13.*)

Diane asked if the heat at the fire station is low when no one is there. Arjay said the infrequently occupied spaces upstairs are kept at 58 degrees and the downstairs is kept at around 60 or 61. The building has an oil boiler with radiant floor heat downstairs and baseboard water heaters on the second story.

Lynda asked if the fire department would be interested in having a fire truck at the village green next year for the Holiday Jubilee. The SD Ireland truck comes and kids are very excited about it. Arjay said they would be willing to think about it. They need to consider life safety equipment that members of the public can't be free to touch.

If there is a 3% increase for the village and the three towns, the increase will be \$1361.22. BJ said we don't usually have an increase for the village because that is a double hit to village residents. Ken said village residents pay town and village taxes so we have been passing on increases to the town and not the village but that is starting to cause animosity. This year he will suggest equal increases for town and village. We have gone many years without increasing the village portion. BJ asked, with all the other increases we are going to have this year, we are going to make the village residents pay twice? Ken said he knows there is some animosity about the village not having increases. It is double taxing if there is an increase for the village, but it has been a long time since

the amount increased for the village. He asked how long it has been. Arjay said last year there was a slight last minute adjustment of a few hundred dollars. Outside of that he thinks it has been 6 or 7 years. Ken said we have discussed passing on the cost of the repeater to the towns. That is where the animosity is coming from. If we share the cost of the increase this year we can say we are trying. BJ said he doesn't think it will make a difference. People won't even remember it when the repeater comes. Steve said he agrees with Ken's line of thinking. He thinks the small amount is worth it for the goodwill. Ken said he thinks it would be a good gesture from the village. He asked what the cost would be spread out among taxpayers. Erik said it is too small to calculate. Lynda said she agreed with Ken. BJ said we are already increasing so much and it won't even make a difference when it comes time for the repeater. He doesn't want to double tax people again. Diane asked if the fire department has to go to the selectboard for approval of its budget. Ken said we will present the cost to the selectboard.

Ken moved to set a fire department budget as presented and to fund it with a 3% increase to all communities served, Steve seconded and the motion was passed with BJ opposed.

Arjay said the fire department was fortunate enough to be able to pay the repeater licensing cost this year and also secure some equipment. They have been proactively positioning themselves to have the smallest possible amount remaining to borrow. Ken said he will strive his hardest to find funding to make the repeater project happen. He thinks it is one of best things we can do to help Lamoille County as a whole. It will help a lot of emergency services, not just our fire department. (Arjay, Craig and Gidget left at 7:26.)

9. *Initiatives to Welcome NVU Internationals to the Village*

BJ said Smugglers' Notch is paying NVU to house international workers. He thinks there will be 70 or 80 of them. He asked Johnson Works if they want to put something together for the internationals so they can see what is going on in Johnson and maybe we can get their money here – a welcome telling them what they can get in Johnson and where.

Lynda asked what transportation they have. BJ said a Smugglers' Notch bus will be going back and forth all day long to transport them and will take them to Burlington twice a week for shopping. They will be here for the winter season. Smugglers' Notch is paying for use of two dorms. Last year, employees housed at Smugglers' Notch walked from there to Jeffersonville all the time. Walking the distance from NVU to downtown will be nothing for them. He is the contact point here for emergencies and security issues concerning the internationals. Steve asked how this is funded. BJ said Smugglers' Notch charges internationals for staying here but Smugglers' Notch pays upfront. The workers are given \$16/day for food on campus and anything else they have to go off campus for.

Diane said she called NVU and talked to the associate dean of students, who said she would like anyone like Johnson Works, village trustees or selectboard members to do activities with those students. She was very excited about having us work together. BJ said if they are there all the time with nothing to do, it can lead to trouble, so it would be a good idea to provide activities for them. He would like to see if the Bijou can offer something. Diane suggested maybe Jenna's Promise can offer movies.

Erik asked how much space there is on the Smugglers' Notch buses for NVU students or Johnson residents. BJ said no one else can ride on the buses for safety reasons.

Diane asked if this is just a one-year thing. BJ said Smugglers' Notch made this arrangement at the last minute. Internationals used to stay on Smugglers' Notch property and at a small motel down the road but the motel has now been revamped and is being used differently so for now Smugglers' Notch is using NVU. It is very expensive and he doesn't know if that will continue in the future.

BJ said the workers are college age. They can speak and understand English but are not as good at reading and writing it.

10. Discuss Avenues to Use ARPA Funds and Options to Manage Those and Other Grants

Rosemary said ARPA funds must be committed by 2024 and spent by 2026. Ken said it looks like \$125K has already been committed. Diane said that leaves \$325K. She thinks sidewalks need to be looked at and discussed. Maybe we could put money towards an economic development and grant writing person. We can at least start looking at it and maybe working with the selectboard to hire someone. Ken said the selectboard already said they didn't want to do it together. Lynda said we voted it down and they voted it in. Diane said if we do contribute money to it maybe they would work with us. Lynda said it would mean spending money to make money. BJ said the main contention the last time there was a shared economic development person was who got more of the person's time. He thinks the village would have to do it on our own for the village alone. Lynda said we could still share the same person and they could work half time with each entity. Diane said she would think we could work something out.

BJ suggested the board should have a designated time to discuss uses of ARPA money and then could narrow down the possibilities over the course of this year. Erik suggested putting it on the April agenda immediately after village meeting, when the budget work is all done. Ken said there could be 3 new members on this board in April. Do the three members who are up for election want to proceed right now? BJ, Ken and Diane are all up for election. Ken suggested that board members all come up with a couple of ideas each and have a quick discussion at next month's meeting.

Erik noted that ARPA funds can be used for match money. We are looking at having to spend a million and a half to two million dollars on the garage. Ken said if we used it for what logically is the best use we would get some harassment for not using it on other things. Lynda said a grant writer could be the best possible use. Erik said a grant writer is the best way to use the money for the garage if we get the person soon enough. Steve said he thinks the basic idea is to consider funding a grant writer and possibly increasing the spending power we have.

Ken questioned having a grant writer if we don't have projects in mind for that grant writer to search for. Lynda said we can come up with things. Diane agreed. Erik said the Railroad Street stormwater infrastructure and the powerhouse site are ideas for a grant writer. Diane said she thinks there was a grant for the stormwater project. Erik said that was for a study.

Ken suggested all coming up with a couple of ideas for the next meeting, then setting a date for further discussion. Steve agreed.

11. LCPC Communities Survey

Diane said LCPC wanted us to respond to a survey about possible positions LCPC could help fill. Which positions could the village possibly use if they could be shared with other communities? An assessor is one position on the list. We need one, but not full time. She thinks all the other communities in Lamoille County want to hire someone and share that person. BJ asked if our

assessor is appointed or hired. Rosemary said hired and the person doing it now wants to retire. Johnson and other towns are going to be sharing someone.

Diane said she thought maybe we could share an information technologies manager. Ken said he thinks that is what we pay Erik for. Erik said our IT work is handled by The Tech Group. They do a good job. They are in South Burlington but they can do almost everything remotely and they are located near his house if we take to take something to them to be worked on.

Erik said the online survey closed but Diane talked to LCPC and they said they would take a paper copy.

Board members discussed which positions they think could be useful to the village. Steve said a lot of these just add to bureaucracy but a couple of them look helpful, like an assessor and possibly a grants manager. Ken said everyone in the county may want to go for the same grant. One person can't represent that many municipalities. BJ said ARPA money could pay for a grant writer now, but in the future we would have to pay and we just put this before the voters for \$40K. Erik said he would suggest a contract, not an employee. Ken said we have to say we need to find a grant for a specific thing and pay them a percentage of the grant they get. We can't be paying someone for trying to find grants without projects for the grants. Diane said she would think the community development person might also be a grant writer. She asked if Erik thinks a grant writer is a good idea. Erik said right now we have a need for one. BJ asked, as an employee or a contractor? Erik said he thinks a contracted grant writer will push harder than an employee. Lynda agreed that we can use a grant writer right now. BJ said we should reach out to the person Greg Tatro used. Ken said we still need plans for the garage to put out to bid. Erik said that could be grant funded.

Steve said for the next meeting everyone should bring two things they feel are important and we can have a concrete discussion about what is really important.

Ken said he thinks there are other steps we need to take before we could even consider searching for a grant writer. Lynda asked if it is possible to get grants for engineering. Ken said yes, we have in the past.

12. Review Propane Prices and Choose to Throw Out Bids, Remain with Current or Otherwise

Erik said Corse's price for propane is a lot better than the bid price we got. It would be reasonable to reject the bid and continue to get propane from Corse. Corse did not submit a bid. **Ken moved to reject all bids for propane and continue to buy propane from Jack F. Corse, Inc., Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.**

13. Funding Suggestion by a Resident for the Tree Board

Erik said we received a request from a village resident to "consider funding the Tree Board for their incredible work maintaining the trees in the village as well as creating the Johnson Arboretum."

Sue Lovering said the Tree Board started 10 years ago. They planted a lot of the street trees in the village and two years ago they started the arboretum. This year they got a \$5K grant in the spring. They were chosen for a Vermont Tree Steward award in July and the Vermont State Forestry Council had part of their annual meeting at the Johnson Arboretum. Their proposed budget is \$2787. The selectboard asked why the village is not paying for some of the Tree Board's budget as all the trees they have planted are in the village. The selectboard would like to see the village contribute a minimum of \$500. They would love to see the village pay half of the tree board's

annual budget, which is usually \$2500 to \$3000. Their budget covers compost, mulch, replacing damaged trees, trees for Arbor Day, fencing, attending an Arbor Day conference, signage, etc. Their budget will grow as the arboretum grows but the arboretum helps with economic development.

There was a question about who takes care of the arboretum. Sue said Robert and Sons has been mowing it but she is not happy with the way they have been doing it.

Sue said the Tree Board takes care of trees on Main Street. The arboretum is growing. They have had a lot of donations. The town is putting in a road at the arboretum and next year they will put in a path. They support it heavily. She sees where the idea that the village needs to contribute more is coming from.

Ken moved that the village budget \$787 for the Johnson Tree Board, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed

Ken asked how the funding will work when the village's fiscal year is not the same as the town's. The money from the village will not be available until after taxes are received in July. Sue said that is fine.

14. Discuss and Possibly Adopt the Final Draft Harassment Policy

Erik said someone from VLCT reviewed the harassment policy the board had agreed on and she loved it. He asked about the necessity of formal legal review and she said that officially she should always recommend it but this policy is straightforward. (*Sue left at 8:09.*) She didn't see legal review as a good thing to spend money on. Steve said this policy has already been through that process in other towns. Erik said Milton's policy was already vetted, as was the language recommended by VLCT. **Steve moved to adopt the Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedure as presented, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.** Erik said he will have employees sign off that they received it.

15. Executive Session to Discuss Candidate for Utilities Estimating & Logistics Specialist Position

Lynda moved to enter into executive session to discuss a candidate for the open Utilities Estimating & Logistics Specialist position under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a)(3), Ken seconded and the motion was passed at 8:10. The board came out of executive session at 8:24.

16. Executive Session to Discuss Labor Relations Agreement Negotiations

Diane moved to enter executive session to discuss labor relations agreement negotiations as allowed by 1 VSA 313(a)(1), because premature general public knowledge of labor relations agreement negotiations would clearly place the village at a substantial disadvantage, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed at 8:25. The board came out of executive session at 9:17.

17. Paid Holidays

Lynda moved to adopt a new village employees' paid holiday list of New Year's day, Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday, President's Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence day, Labor Day, Indigenous People's Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving & the adjacent following day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Ken seconded and the motion was passed.

18. Adjourn

Diane moved to adjourn, BJ seconded, the motion was passed and the meeting was adjourned at 9:20.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths