

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2023

Present:

Trustees: Steve Hatfield, Lynda Hill, Diane Lehouiller, BJ Putvain (remote until 7:21), Ken Tourangeau

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Steve called the meeting to order at 6:13.

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

Erik noted that the minutes to be approved are actually from December 12 and December 21, not the dates printed on the agenda. He suggested tabling item #4 due to not having feedback from Brian Monaghan. BJ asked to have items #5 and #6 moved to the end of the agenda when he can be there in person. He also has something he wants to bring up but he is not sure if it should be in executive session. Ken said he doesn't know if we can add an executive session without warning it. Can it wait until the next meeting? BJ said he might be able to discuss it without getting into too much detail.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Ken moved to approve the minutes of December 12 and December 21, 2022, Diane seconded and the motion was passed.

Diane asked what a policy on managing existing transformer inventory, as recommended by Troy in his last report, would look like. Steve said he thinks we will pass that on to Anne Crockett. Erik said he thinks in this environment it would be good to have a policy so if a very motivated customer comes in and starts leaning on people there is something in writing saying we will not provide transformer if we don't have enough to protect our current customers. Ken and Erik said the policy would say how many transformers we need to maintain in reserve and say that we cannot provide new service if we do not have that many.

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

The board informed Rosemary that Anne Crocket was hired for the Utilities Estimating and Logistics Specialist position.

Ken moved to purchase a laptop and a phone for Anne Crocket for an amount not to exceed \$2,500, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

Rosemary said electric sales are down almost \$130K from what was budgeted. We are at 94.25% of budget. Without ARPA funds she expects the electric budget will have a deficit of \$50-75K at the end of the year. Ken asked if we would be able to use ARPA funds as a loan if we had to. Or could we use our revolving loan fund? Rosemary said we could use the revolving loan fund. Steve asked, if we get a rate increase, how long will it take us to see that? Rosemary said she would say we would be able to implement it in the 2024 budget.

Rosemary said water and sewer sales are above budget. Water sales were 102% of budget. Ken asked about ways other than the revolving loan fund to cover the shortfall. Rosemary said if we borrow from a bank we would probably pay 3-5% interest. Erik said he thinks the revolving loan fund is the best route.

5. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

Erik read the water/wastewater report:

- E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted to the state
- Still working on the belt press rehab, we have done 2-3 solid runs with it and with a few more parts and some adjustments things are coming into place nicely with it
- E-Coli samples were done on time and well within limits
- Grit Channels were pumped and cleaned by Wind River
- Dropped off old UV bulbs to the transfer station
- Worked on some rust mitigation on some piping in plant and have been painting and freshening pipes, stairs, in Sludge room, press room, and Influent area
- Blowers were serviced, complete with belt changes if needed and grease.

- Coliform samples were negative
- Tim and Erik did a walk around Sanitary Survey with Heather Collins from the state of Vermont, she will follow up with Erik on the results from that with any instruction issues or questions
- Pressure pumps were rotated at all meter houses in Katy Winn
- Both Tim and Luke took several continuing ed classes for both water and waste water
- Luke and Tim spent some time on an alarm issue that was happening at Clay Hill booster station, after making some pressure adjustments on the panel, it seems to have cured the problem, and should not create any unnecessary call outs

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

Erik said the Lamoille County Planning Commission has assigned Rob Moore as project manager for the water and light garage project. The water and light garage security cameras are operating. Our Efficiency Vermont Targeted Communities landing page is up and running. It will be accessible from our home page and Erik made a Front Porch Forum post about it today. One of Erik's focuses for the winter will be drafting a job description for the assistant foreman position, formerly known as lead lineman, and bringing other job descriptions up to date. He will also be drafting the personnel policy.

A major windstorm on December 22-23 knocked out power to much of Vermont but caused zero outages for the Village of Johnson. Great credit is due to our crew for their work cutting trees and brush threatening lines. Hyde Park benefitted from that because our crew was instrumental in helping them get their power back up. They paid for our crew's time, so we saved money from the storm.

Ken offered kudos to everyone and also condolences to Nate and his family.

7. *Electric/General Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report from Troy Dolan:

Electric Dept.

The crew completed the following tasks:

- Responded to an outage on Gould Hill Road on December 17th, which affected 21 customers. The cause was heavy wet snow. Power was restored in 2 hours.
- Provided approximately 7 hours of mutual aid assistance to Hyde Park Water & Light on December 21. This was related to the high wind event that caused outages in the Hyde Park service territory.
- Worked with a contractor at 807 Foote Brook Road to install two new utility poles that are part of a line relocation project and also completed necessary right-of-way cutting at that location.
- Responded to a call at 560 Route 15 West for a complaint of flickering lights. All connections on the Village's side of the service were replaced and this resolved the issue.
- Began right-of-way cutting on Plot Road.
- Repaired various street lights that were out in the Village.
- Cleaned all di-electric tools.
- Completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, substation check, and dig safes

Water/Sewer

- The crew removed a manhole riser ring at 415 Railroad Street at the Town's request to resolve a road plowing issue.
- Removed the cover at the Wescom/Osgood well as part of the State's Sanitary survey.

General Department

Cleaned debris out of the cold spring after the high wind event on December 21-22. Completed winter sidewalk maintenance as needed.

Safety

The crew attended the December NEPPA safety meeting. The topic of the class was chain saw and chipper safety.

Administrative

Troy completed the following administrative tasks:

- Created two invoices for the most recent mutual aid assistance provided to Hyde Park Water & Light.
- Reached out to Green Mountain Electrical Supply to obtain a status update on the line materials order that was placed in December.

- Continued working on the 10-pole line relocation project planning on Clay Hill. I am in the process of putting together a cost estimate for that project.
- Made arrangements with Alexander Tree Service to cut two large danger trees at 807 Foote Brook Road.
- Placed an order with T&R Electric to restock the Village's transformer inventory. The expected date of delivery will be in approximately 40 weeks, which was a considerably shorter lead time than other entities I reached out to. Additionally, we were able to order dual voltage transformers, which will create a savings for the Village in the future.
- Reached out to the Village's contact at Lion Electric multiple times regarding reimbursement of the Village's deposit on the electric bucket truck. At this time, Lion has indicated they will need formal cancellation of the order in writing before they will commit to returning the deposit. I also updated the Village's contact at the State for the grant regarding the status of the project.
- Worked with a local contractor to answer questions about the process to connect a property to Village water.
- Began reaching out to contractors to assist the Village with repairs to the R2 breaker at the substation. Currently, the control panel is not communicating with the breaker.
- Made arrangements for the annual substation transformer oil testing Worked on monthly invoice coding.
- Continued speaking with Nate daily to discuss scheduled work and answer any questions he has.

Rosemary presented a list of electric accounts from 2018 that cannot be collected. These are people who left and we have no way to get in contact with them. The bills have been sent to our collection agency and they were not able to collect. **Diane moved to approve writing off \$1,972.99 of uncollectable unpaid electric accounts from 2018, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

8. ***Fire Department Report and Action Items***

Erik read the fire department report for Dec. 1-30, 2022.

Calls:

JFD responded to 10 calls. 6 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 4 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 82 minutes.

Nature:

Those calls were: 1- automatic alarm, 1- carbon monoxide alarm, 2 -medical assists, 3 - vehicle crashes, 1- chimney fire, 1- hazardous material, and 1- mutual aid (carbon monoxide situation)

Staff:

Average number of firefighters responding: 12. Total hours of service: 168.

Other:

We have completed an above average call year, and all indications are that demand will continue moving forward.

Budget planning for 2023 is complete and was approved by the Board of Trustees at their Dec. 12th meeting. Correspondence and contract information has been distributed under separate cover to the pertinent Towns.

Ken read the summary of all calls for 2022 from the fire department's Facebook page:

34 alarms
17 structure fires
16 medical assist
22 MVA
9 CO calls
7 smoke reports
4 brush fires
3 wilderness rescues
2 water rescue
2 wildland fires
2 station coverage
2 unpermitted burns
2 odor investigations
2 propane calls
2 false alarms
1 chimney fire
1 ME assist
1 elevator incident
1 camper extrication
1 animal rescue
1 grass fire
1 public assist
1 rekindle

Mutual Aid calls
NHP/Eden 10
CFD 9
HP 2
Stowe 1

Total hrs on emergencies 152.83

Lynda asked, when they do mutual aid do they bill? Ken said no.

9. Review Draft Winter Sidewalk Policy

Erik said there haven't been a lot of problems this year so far but the village needs a sidewalk policy to deal with customer concerns and protect us from frivolous complaints. He prepared a draft policy. He noted that whoever was on call used to decide if they would clear sidewalks. Now they only do it if Nate says they should.

Lynda said she was recently walking down School Street while the village crew was plowing the sidewalk and she saw snow piled in some people's driveways when she thinks it could have been pushed onto lawns more. If there had been an emergency there was no way the people in those houses could have gotten out. She feels that for good will in a situation like that the employees should back the Bobcat up and push the snow away. That was beyond what anyone could have driven through.

Ken said he doesn't agree. The easement out to the road is maintained by the homeowner and the homeowner only. Lynda said she thinks what she saw that day was excessive. A homeowner stopped our crew and said they were unable to get the snow out of their driveway and the crew did move out a big chunk of snow. Erik says village bylaws say that snow removal on sidewalks is the responsibility of the adjacent landowner.

Ken said he thinks it is okay not to remove 4 inches or less of snow on weekends, as stated in the draft policy, but he doesn't think that should apply on weekday holidays. He feels one lawsuit could make up for money saved. Erik said we have immunity for much of that. Ken said he thinks the sidewalks should be cleaned and maintained as well as they can be. He feels we could save money by closing the cold spring for the winter. Then we would save on manual labor, sand and salt. Steve and Lynda disagreed. BJ said we are talking about not plowing sidewalks to save money and we are not doing what we could do to save money at the cold spring. People shouldn't be drinking that water. Ken said when roads are plowed and road snow is added to what is on the sidewalk, if 4 inches has fallen there will be 8 on the sidewalks.

Diane suggested accepting the draft policy as is and trying it out. We can change it if it becomes a problem. Lynda agreed. Erik suggested that the crew might do something different if conditions warrant. He said the crew does a very good job on sidewalks, but with that comes part of our overtime problem.

Steve asked how much it costs us to keep the cold spring open. Erik said the employees are already called in when they work on it so the village is already paying them. If they are called in they get paid for at least 3 hours anyway. They might as well clear the cold spring area. Steve said he feels people should not have to pay for water and he is concerned about all the plastic packaging. If the cold spring can eliminate some of that, that is great. Lynda said when people had no water during the power outage there were people filling up big coolers at the cold spring. It was the only way people could get water. BJ said if we clean out the access and maintain it, we are basically saying that it is good water and people should drink it. Lynda said if we don't maintain the area and they get hurt we could be sued. BJ said if we do not maintain it we are not at risk. It is their problem. Lynda said she thinks we

should bring up at the village annual meeting and at town meeting the question of whether it should be closed. People in the town outside the village use it as much as anyone.

Ken said he would like to hold off on voting on this policy until we can get Nate to tell us what he thinks about the 4 inches. Erik said Nate has already said he likes this policy. Ken said he wants to hear it from him. Erik said he asked Nate for his input and Nate had some minor changes but he said nothing about the 4 inches. Ken said he thinks the sidewalks should be taken care of on holidays. He is okay with the 4 inches on weekends. Erik said we could have an understanding that certain holidays are treated differently, but as far as overtime there is no difference between President's Day and Christmas. He would like to know which days are the high traffic days.

Lynda moved and Diane seconded to accept the sidewalk maintenance policy as presented.

Ken asked that approval be put off to the next meeting so the board can have more time to review the policy and maybe come up with better ideas. Steve agreed that it could be put off until the next meeting. Ken said he would like Nate to come to that meeting to discuss this. Erik said he can talk to Nate about the idea of 4 inches becoming 8 inches after roads are plowed and have him weigh in.

Diane suggested we could add a clause to the policy saying that if there is an event where we need to make sure sidewalks are cleared then they will get cleared.

Lynda and Diane agreed to withdraw the motion.

Lynda asked what the current policy is. Erik said there is no written policy. There is now a written internal policy that a supervisor makes the decision on when to clear sidewalks.

10. Review Draft Bereavement Leave Policies

BJ said the electric department employees have bereavement leave as part of the Contract Bargaining Agreement, but other employees do not have it. Erik said he provided policies for the board to review based on the policies of Hinesburg, Burlington and South Burlington. BJ suggested adopting what we already have in the CBA. That way all employees are the same.

Diane said we should probably run it by the selectboard so all employees can have the same benefits. Lynda said we could have them look at it and adopt the same policy. Ken said the town and village are separate and we should not ask the town for permission to do things. Erik said we would be advising them of what we are doing. Lynda said it is so everyone in the office is on the same page. Erik said he can add the CBA policy to the list of possible policies and the board can consider that option along with the others at the next meeting. The board asked him to run it by the selectboard.

BJ arrived in person at 7:21. He brought up the question of which family members we want the policy to apply to. He said we have very good CTO benefits and we want employees to use their CTO. Diane asked if employees can roll over CTO time from one year to the next. Erik said yes, up to 1 ½ times the amount employees earn in a year. Once they have accumulated more than that, whatever is over that amount is put into a sick bank and then

once that is full the time goes into a bank for catastrophic leave. Ken said they have so much CTO time this isn't even needed. As far as wanting to show this to the selectboard so they can adopt it, they didn't adopt the village's holiday policy. Diane said we should have talked to them before we adopted that. BJ said we weren't able to because we were conducting our own time-sensitive contract negotiations. Lynda said they didn't want to adopt our changes because of their own contract negotiations.

Steve asked Rosemary if there has ever been a time when someone had a family member who passed away and it was difficult or a financial hardship to take time off. Rosemary said at the time the board made the policy Paul's father was in failing health and she thinks that was the main reason it went into effect but other than that she can't think of a time.

Erik said he thinks BJ's idea of matching the union has a lot of merit. Ken said he would like to push this off until next year because we have already reached the village's budget limit. We made two new hires recently. Lynda asked, what if there is a new employee whose family member dies before they have accumulated CTO time? Erik suggested he could include bereavement leave in the personnel policy he is trying to draft. Lynda asked if people can donate CTO time to other employees. Rosemary said yes, if an employee or their spouse has a medical issue and doesn't have enough CTO time.

Ken said he thinks we need to implement policies more slowly. If this policy had been in place it would have cost us \$2,000 just for Nate alone. The board agreed to table this for now. Ken said he thinks we should discuss it for next year's budget. Erik said in the spring he can bring the board a draft personnel policy and he can include a bereavement policy for the board to consider that is the same as the CBA. BJ said electric department employees have bereavement leave but Erik and Marla and the other office employees have none. That is why his thought was to give the others the same leave that is in the CBA. Ken said he doesn't have an issue with the policy. His issue is with the money we have spent.

11. Processes for Documentation for Employee/Customer Interactions

BJ said he thinks if someone from the public is really forceful and crosses a line there should be a statement written up and put in a folder in case something happens in the future or we see a pattern, so we can tell the police. He is not talking about any negative interaction, just those that are more threatening. He feels we should have documentation. Steve asked, this is for incidents that wouldn't warrant calling the sheriff? BJ said a recent example was a person who was very belligerent with someone in the office. Steve asked who would be responsible for this. BJ said it would just be a folder. Erik said we would have to draft a basic incident report. Lynda said the sheriff's department or Jolley's could probably help with that. BJ said Smugglers' Notch has one that we could use. The board agreed to the idea

12. Discuss Job Audits and Review

BJ said on January 20 he and Lynda are planning to talk to employees about their needs and wants to show support. This is not performance based, just to ask if there is anything they need or want. If they hear anything substantial they will bring it back to the board. *(Rosemary left at 7:38.)*

13. Discuss Trustees' ARPA Funding Ideas and Process to Collect Ideas from Village Residents

Each board member was asked to give two potential ideas for spending ARPA money.

Lynda suggested sidewalk repairs on School Street. The sidewalk is very uneven there. She also thinks a sidewalk should go all the way to the Beard Park. Many people walk there in the summer. Ken said one right of way for a sidewalk could cost us all of the ARPA funds.

Lynda said her second idea is a grant writer. She thinks spending money on a grant writer will bring in money. Erik said that is part of the services the Planning Commission provides for free. Steve asked if we need to give them a list of what we want. Diane asked, would they have the time? Steve suggested maybe we can invite them to come to a meeting and talk to us.

Ken said one of his ideas is the village garage. Another is flashing lights for crosswalks as an alternative to using colored pavement.

Steve said some of these items we could probably get a grant for.

Ken said another inexpensive idea he has is signs to direct people to the Beard swimming hole and the future spot we have been talking about developing.

BJ said he thinks we could get software for office employees to use that would allow them to do their work more easily and efficiently. It might only cost \$2,000. Ken said his only concern is whether that qualifies for ARPA funds. Steve said let's put our list together, then find out.

BJ said there is no walkway to Jolley's or to Katy Win. He suggested connecting whichever is easier and cheaper. Lynda said there are a lot of people that walk from Jolley's. Ken said we do not have enough ARPA funds to pay for the rights of way and bank cutting that would be needed.

Diane said one of her ideas is work on sidewalks. She also would like to keep \$125K for a grant writer if the Planning Commission can't do that and as backup money for any grants that need matching funds. She also has questions about other things that were on the list she sent a while back. She doesn't know where we sit with some of those things that we really need to do and if we were able to get grants for them, such as the sewer and electric rate hike studies. Erik said the wastewater rate study is funded through the state. The electric rate study is part of the services provided through VPPSA membership.

Diane asked about the library stormwater project. She knows there was grant money but she doesn't know where that project stands. Ken said that is the town's project. Diane said the stormwater part is the village's, isn't it? Ken said the stormwater wasn't going into our system. What was planned was something to keep water from getting into the library as he recalls. He thinks the town has already had engineering and environmental studies and the project is in the works. Erik said the library stormwater infrastructure is the town's. The thing

that relates to the village is their sewer line, which they want to replace because it is impacted by roots, etc. There was discussion of redoing the Railroad Street sewer line. That has been set aside, at least for now. The town wanted to wait to pave until after we do our stormwater line work. To him it makes more sense for us to do the work while the road is dug up for the paving project. Ken said we talked about Railroad Street last year. It will take serious money and 3/4 of a year to do that project and it involves the bridge. The sewer line runs under the bridge. Erik said his suggestion is that the village should not break up Railroad Street for the town.

Steve said we will also give the public an opportunity to suggest ARPA projects. Diane can have the opportunity to bring up other ideas as part of that public input. Tonight board members are just giving two ideas each.

Erik said Lydia's idea was to use SurveyMonkey to survey resident. We could probably copy the town's survey. Steve agreed to that.

Steve said one of his ideas was the village garage. He thinks the most important sidewalk project is continuing the sidewalk to Jolley's or the trailer park. We might need more money than the ARPA funds we have. Ken said there has been talk about a bridge across the river to connect to the VAST trail. That could be an alternative to building new sidewalk.

BJ asked if we could use any of the ARPA funds to make the cold spring good water. Ken said it is not a spring; it is a culvert in the ground with a pump. BJ said we need to hook into a spring in that bank. Ken said no; there is a cemetery above it.

Steve said we will create a survey with the list from the previous public meeting as well as anything we want to add and then ask residents to pick priorities from the list.

Lynda brought up the puddles on Pearl Street. She doesn't know whose responsibility that is. Ken said the town. Diane asked what needs to be done to get rid of those puddles. Erik said repaving.

14. Cost Concerns

BJ said we pay \$200 a week for uniforms to be cleaned for the electric department crew members. Some weeks we have to pay for damage. He gave some examples of damage charges: \$237, \$118, \$347. We don't have insurance with Unifirst and he thinks we probably should. They have some sort of insurance that covers damage. There is also an option to buy our own clothes and just use Unifirst as a cleaning service. Now we rent the uniforms. Maybe we should try a different avenue.

Erik said he has talked to Nate about the idea of having an industrial washer and dryer at the village garage once it is rebuilt, purchasing uniforms and having the employees service them themselves. BJ suggested looking into the insurance in the meantime.

Ken said the cost of what we are doing seems high. He thinks we would save money by buying uniforms.

BJ asked if we have gotten the phone from Troy yet or if we are still paying that bill. Ken said he thought it came back. BJ said he doesn't think it did. We have to look into it. Steve said he and Erik will be sending a letter to Troy and they can mention the computer and the phone.

BJ said Troy has been picking up invoices collected by Nate, coding them and giving them back. It looks like we are paying for Troy to drive here and pick them up, code them and then drive back to drop them off. He would like to try giving the easier coding jobs like Unifirst or Johnson Farm and Garden to Nate. Lynda asked if that is something Anne could do. Erik said when his contract ends, Troy won't be doing anything. BJ said we have to get Nate used to doing the day-to-day invoices.

15. 2023 Contract Bargaining Agreement with IBEW Local 300

Board members agreed that no executive session was needed. Erik said he has reviewed the contract and it is what we agreed on.

Ken moved to execute the 2023 Contract Bargaining Agreement between the International Brotherhood of Electric Workers 300 and the Village of Johnson, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

The board discussed asking if Troy would be willing to assist Anne while she is getting started in her job.

Erik found a typo on the copy of the contract he had brought that needs to be corrected before the board signs it. **Ken moved to authorize the board chair to sign the 2023 Contract Bargaining Agreement on behalf of the village, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.**

16. Adjourn

Ken moved to adjourn, Lynda seconded, the motion was passed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:17.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths