

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2023

**Present:**

Trustees: GiGi Beach, Steve Hatfield, Lynda Hill, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Nate Brigham, Arjay West, Craig Carpenter, Gidget Dolan-Dodge, Rob Moore, Tim Baker

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

**1. Call to Order**

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:01.

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

The other selectboard members and Erik presented Ken with a \$500 gift certificate to Powderhorn Outdoor Sports Center as thanks for his flood response and recovery efforts.

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

**BJ moved to approve the minutes of June 14, June 20, July 10 and July 19, 2023 with corrections to the July 19 minutes as suggested by Ken to clarify which assistance was provided by Wallingford and Enosburg, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

Rosemary said the state sent our PILOT money early. We got \$62,719, which is more than what was budgeted. Electric sales are at 60% of budget.

Ken said his daughter, a renter, got her latest electric bill and it was 3 times the normal amount even though she has not been in her apartment since July 11. The usage must be for equipment the landlord has been using. He doesn't believe any tenant should be charged for their landlord's usage. We may need to figure out a way to alleviate these charges or at least come up with a policy to prevent this in the future. Erik said he will look into what the village has the ability to do.

Rosemary asked if we have heard anything on our rate case. Erik said there is a hearing scheduled in September.

Rosemary said water sales are at 62% of budget. Sewer sales are 59%.

GiGi asked if there is a way she can review the payables earlier than an hour before the meeting. She feels that doesn't give her enough time. Rosemary said she can come in at any time and look through the invoice pile.

Rosemary said Dan received quite a few large invoices today. She hasn't used any of the line of credit yet.

GiGi asked if the Railroad Street bridge line issue is all resolved. Erik said no, the work that has been done so far is just temporary.

GiGi asked if all the staff have the equipment they need. Rosemary said we have not yet received the new computers that were ordered. We will be getting more shelving Thursday so the temporary office space can be more organized. There has been discussion about opening the office.

BJ asked if we have thought about moving things upstairs in the municipal building permanently. Ken said after the lower part of the building is repaired we can discuss possibly moving the office upstairs. That is down the road. The town is handling the repairs to the building.

Rosemary said tax bills went out. They are due October 1.

#### **5. *Fire Department Report and Action Items***

Ken congratulated Chief Arjay West and the fire department on their recent award. Arjay presented the fire department report for July. The fire department responded to 75 calls – 53 in the day and 22 at night. Those calls were: 1 structure fire, 2 smoke conditions, 15 automatic alarms, 3 medical assists, 3 vehicle crashes, 29 water rescue and 22 other. Tanker 1 had a brake can failure. It has been repaired and is back in service.

During the day of the flood event firefighters were on duty for an 18 hour period. They had 43 calls/incidents during that period and 13 flood-related calls/incidents afterwards. The 43 calls during the event were 28 water rescue/evacuations, 5 hazardous material/propane, 3 medical assists, 2 welfare checks and 5 other. Nineteen of the calls were handled before the fire department had to evacuate the station and 24 were handled afterwards. Evacuations were accomplished mostly through boat and kayak deployment of water rescue staff, in some cases with coordination with town highway equipment and crew. A typical evacuation removed 2-8 occupants, often with animals. The total number of people and animals removed is uncertain as record keeping became a challenge after leaving the station. Many evacuees were moved to the emergency shelter. Transportation to the shelter was somewhat of a problem. The fire department requested mutual aid from Stowe Hazardous Terrain Water Rescue but they were not able to respond. All on-hand inventories of food and supplies have been used. Out of pocket expenses (mostly JFD Auxiliary) total \$245.62. Labor expense to date for the flood event totals \$8,200. That was not planned for or budgeted. Damage to equipment identified to date totals \$53,300. This does not include building damage. The numbers will go up. There is still a lot of apparatus maintenance needed due to operation in flood water.

BJ asked if there is anything Arjay can think of that would have helped the fire department during the flood. Arjay said one issue was that flooded roads had underwater sections alternating with sections that were not underwater, making it impossible for either a boat or a vehicle to travel all the way down the road. Maybe in the future it would be beneficial to have some type of vehicle with both land and water capability. Another issue was that all the hydraulic extrication equipment is attached to the rescue truck. If there had been a structural collapse there would have been no way to bring those tools through flood waters. The battery technology that exists might have given them the ability to put the tools into a boat or loader.

Lynda asked if it is feasible to go in with Cambridge or Hyde Park to purchase equipment like that. Arjay said before this event he would have said joint ownership might be reasonable, but during the event we called for Stowe Water Rescue and they could not come. Cambridge called for us and we could not come. If we want to increase our capabilities he would advocate for us to own and

control the equipment. If we are in a position to respond with mutual aid he would be in favor of doing that.

Lynda asked if people were warned ahead of time about the flood danger. Arjay said no. Lynda said she recalls there is some type of warning horn. Ken said there is a siren. How to use that in the future will be a later conversation. The plan for using it was 25 years old and it failed us. Lynda asked if the siren works. Arjay said yes. Arjay said at the emergency operations meeting the afternoon before the flooding the fire department was asked if they wanted to identify high hazard areas but it was decided not to take action. About 11:00 he came back and shared some concerns about high hazard areas but no action was taken. Lynda asked who makes that decision. Ken said emergency operations command. The flood was not expected to be as high as it was. GiGi said when she went to bed at midnight the forecasted height had actually been reduced. Arjay said any action is much more successful if it can happen before darkness.

GiGi said the fire team was amazing. She saw them carrying boats to rescue people. Arjay said they are a strong team.

#### **6. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items***

Dan reviewed the results of the flood. As the flood water rose staff secured the facility and he left in knee deep water Monday night. Wednesday morning they walked into complete destruction of the facility. They immediately started bypass pumping to relieve the backup of sewer in the lines. They pumped down the headworks and influent wet well so they could start primary screening of rags and grit removal. This was done with an operator and pump from the Burlington wastewater facility. They used that for 2 days until they could get a rental pump onsite. The state approved every action taken. They had us start drip chlorinating the influent to reduce the amount of pathogens being pumped to the river. The Vermont Rural Water Association gave us the use of their emergency trailer to store 500 gallons of chlorine. There was discussion about whether to work on setting up primary (non-biological) settling and chlorination. This would have been expensive and taken a lot of time. It was agreed instead to put efforts into getting back up and running fully and producing effluent that will pass our permit requirements. We got Manosh to start pumping out and hauling away sludge. Morrisville took what they could and the rest was taken to Montpelier once they were able to handle it. Manosh cleaned out accumulated rags and pressure washed both SBR's. Pratt and Smith electrical started sourcing VFD's and motors and pulling electricians off their scheduled jobs to start rewiring the entire facility to the critical components we need to run. LCS Controls built and installed a temporary SCADA system to operate the facility. The state did river sampling for E. coli to see if our discharge was having much effect on the river. The numbers were roughly 30 upstream of the plant in the Gihon, 89 upstream in the Lamoille, 359 at Willow Crossing and over 800 in Jeffersonville. It was the belief of the sampler that the higher counts downstream were due to other causes, such as manure. We rented a portable emergency generator from Milton Cat to take over power if we lose power at the plant. The emergency generator onsite is destroyed. We got sludge seed to help start the process. We are taking daily E. coli samples Monday-Thursday until we can prove to the state that we are consistently meeting permit requirements.

We had damage to the new River Road pump station. Laramie Water Resources was hired to take the lead on repair. The control panel had to be leveled and all electrical components had to be replaced. A temporary control panel is running and a new one will arrive in 4-6 weeks. The

Highland Heights pump station control panel took on some water. The capacitors and relays were not affected but the circuit boards went under water. It was up and running the day after the flood. We will use the temporary control panel at River Road to permanently replace the control panel at Highland once the new River Road panel is installed.

So far, electrical work has cost \$42K. The River Road pump station has cost almost \$30K. The control panel alone is \$36K. We spent about \$20K for Manosh and another \$2K on sludge. We bought two blowers for \$15K and we need to get another two.

Sludge processing will be the biggest problem. We will have to haul our sludge for a while. We will not be able to grind it. Dan will try to process it in Morrisville but he is not sure if they can do all of it. Sludge processing will probably cost about \$10K a month.

Dan reviewed operational status of the water plant. Monthly reports were submitted to the state. Coliform samples were negative. Luke assisted the village crew with hydrant flushing. We rotated pumps at Katy Win booster stations.

The water system fared well during the flood. The plant and wellhead stayed above water and there were no leaks in the system. There were line breaks in residents' basements that were shut off or repaired quickly. Usage was very high for the two days after the flood but then returned to close to normal usage.

A contractor was here Wednesday to perform a free leak detection survey on our system. One leak was found. It is not huge – about 4000-5000 gallons a day. Unfortunately it is right under Route 15. Erik said we applied for a progress valve exercising and cleaning program that was originally scheduled for the week of the flood. Cleaning the valves will give good metal contact for listening devices that can help triangulate the location of the leak.

Erik pointed out that as E. coli moves further downriver from the point where it enters the water it becomes less concentrated, but the state's testing downstream of our outfall showed increasing concentrations, which are unlikely to be caused by our outfall. Dan said many septic systems and farm fields got flooded.

Dan said we were lucky that no employees' homes were affected so they were able to spend time here. We had a lot of help from H2O Innovation. They sent people from New Hampshire. Other plants in Vermont helped as well. Hardwick gave us pumps.

Ken thanked Dan, Tim and Luke on behalf of the board. They were outstanding. Tim was planning to leave but when the flood hit he changed his mind.

#### **7. *Electric/General Report and Action Items***

Nate gave the July/August Water and Light Report. We provided 21 hours of mutual aid to Hyde Park. We shut down for substation maintenance on June 19 and 20. The first outage went smoothly and the spare transformer's oil was de-watered and de-gassed. The main transformer was scheduled for a leak investigation and the work was not completed due to issues with the pressure gauge. We should schedule TSI to come back in the fall to replace the valve and locate the leak. In addition, the transformer oil should be dried out.

The crew set a pole, changed out two transformers, hung/changed out LED street lights on Park Street, installed a new LED street light at the Woolen Mill, did right of way cutting, purchased new FR clothing and returned uniforms to UniFirst as our contract ended, and completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, substation check and Dig Safes.

We met with a representative of Consolidated Communications to discuss joint use issues. He provided us with all of the contractual paperwork he had, which was not much and was very outdated. We will want to prepare a list of things to clarify with them and produce a new agreement.

The crew performed hydrant flushing, helped jet out the syphon chamber, and pressure washed the municipal building. One employee has been out for arm surgery since June 27.

The topic of the June 14 NEPPA safety meeting was system protection.

During the July 11 flood power was shut off to the western half of the village. The majority of customers had power turned back on by 9:30 that night. A tree on the line near the skatepark was removed on July 12 with the help of Enosburg Electric. VEC would not help. Also on July 12 the crew pulled meters and re-energized transformers to be able to give individual customers power as they got electrician's inspections. We still have 24 electric customers off and 4 water customers off. We have replaced 50 electric meters due to the flood so far, thanks to Wallingford Electric in Connecticut. We have another 100 meters coming from Wallingford. We relocated the pole pile, which was flooded, to higher ground on Lendway Lane. Jason Whitehill moved poles when the flood water reached them. We did not lose any poles.

Ken said he authorized Erik to purchase some maple syrup to send to Wallingford and Enosburg.

Nate said we did not lose much except for meters. Claims were filed with VLCT for insurance on damaged village property, which includes the sewer plant, two sewage pumping stations, the lower storage building and the village offices.

Ken said he asked the crew to assist the town with sweeping streets as they were moving debris and then he asked them to sweep sidewalks and grassy areas.

Ken said Chan, Jeff and Nate were outstanding during the flood. Dan thanked the fire department for hosing out mud. Ken said all our employees, including Erik, Rosemary and Marla, did a great job.

#### **8. *Village Manager's Report and Action Items***

Erik said the \$824K CDS grant for the garage through Senator Welch made it out of committee and is officially part of the Congressional Spending Package. Now we just wait for the budget to pass.

The sewer bridge crossing temporary pipe has been in place since about 8 or 10 days after the flood. The cable bridge for the workers to install the permanent pipe is nearly finished and they expect to be done by early October or sooner. We have paid about \$128K for the work done so far and the quote for the rest of it is not to exceed \$249K.

Tomorrow morning all office staff and department heads are meeting with Perry Plummer of MRI. Also attending will be Tim Baker, the area FEMA Public Assistance Supervisor, and Heather Collins, who has been placed in charge of Wastewater Flood Recovery Tech Assistance for VT ANR.

#### **9. *JVFD Repair Status Update***

Ken said the first three contractors contacted about fire station repairs declined. GW Savage will be giving us a quote and is willing to move us ahead on their schedule because it is for an emergency service. They would be able to start within 2 weeks. Lynda asked if we need more quotes. Erik said we have multiple refusals and contractors who did not reply. Ken said one other contractor will be coming in to give a quote. We have done our due diligence. Ken said GW Savage will be giving us a quote on the lower storage building later. The fire department needs repairs to lower walls similar to the municipal building and some rot was found in a corner that also needs to be addressed. Erik said the fire department repairs may not ever get to be a FEMA expense because they may be covered by insurance.

Ken said we discovered that pipes under bridges are not covered by our insurance so we need to look into how to get them covered.

Ken said if we get a bid he and Erik like for the fire station work the trustee board will probably need to have a quick meeting to approve a contract.

#### **10. *LCPC Update***

Rob Moore of LCPC said the village garage RFP is moving forward. It includes some language that may help as the village moves forward with the wastewater plant. Once we get bids the board can decide how quickly to move forward with the garage project.

An application was submitted for grant funding for a scoping study for sidewalk on Main Street going toward the gas station. Once grant awards are announced the board can choose to accept or decline a grant. He expects awards will be announced within 2 or 3 months.

Erik said state financing options for engineering require a quality based acceptance process. A firm has to be proven qualified to do the work. We added in the quality selection necessary for the wastewater plant and anything else the village might need.

Erik said we applied for a Phase 1 brownfield study. Rob said Tori Hellwig is moving forward with the energy assessment piece. Ken said we can probably pull the sewer plant off the list of buildings for an energy assessment. Maybe we can substitute the fire station.

#### **11. *FEMA Update***

Tim Baker, FEMA Public Assistance Supervisor, said the request for public assistance has been submitted. He mentioned that some villages in upstate New York have air boats with nylon runners so they can go on land. He recommended that as the village does repairs we look at elevating things above flood level. It may be possible to move all the insurance revenue to a subset of the insured buildings rather than having insurance apply to each project because projects without insurance may move faster. Because the staff operating the wastewater plant are contractors, all their time dealing with the flood, not just overtime, should be eligible for reimbursement. He is

here to spend tax dollars wisely but he wants to make the village gets all it is eligible for. He described the approach he believes he can use to get reimbursement as quickly as possible.

Ken asked if he should be asking contractors how to move heating and air recovery systems up above flood level. Tim said yes. He said FEMA may have to ask the village to bring in a surveyor and survey elevations of buildings. He is thinking he would like to classify this as a flood of record. He asks that we consider mitigation when we rebuild. Erik said an initial estimate of what it would cost to move the wastewater plant as mitigation was roughly \$27 million.

### ***12. Donation Center Update***

Lynda gave an update on the flood relief efforts she organized. She and others provided clothes and food to people at the emergency shelter. Then the Red Cross took over the shelter. Lynda called Greg Tatro and he offered space at his building for donated items. The Red Cross can only offer new, prepackaged items. At least 50 volunteers helped her staff the donation center. Shaw's in Stowe donated a lot of items. The Latter Day Saints came up from Kentucky and North Carolina with truckloads of supplies. The Church of Christ in South Burlington is providing furniture for people. Johnson Farm and Garden donated things like socks and boots. The Forget-Me-Not Shop donated two outfits for each person at the shelter. People from all over showed up with donations.

In the next week or two all the clothing at the donation center will be given to the United Church. Their thrift store lost everything in the flood. One family has found a place to live and needs furniture and today the donation center got them everything they need. The volunteers can keep using the current space indefinitely but will need to be out by the end of October because it will freeze. They have a second warehouse as well with boxes of food from the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. She thinks they will distribute it at Tuesday Night Live. The local food shelves are loaded. Some of donated items will go the Clarina Howard Nichols Center and the Family Center. They will hold onto some things people will need when they move into houses.

Lynda said we need to be prepared for the holidays. She thinks we probably need a community meeting at some point. People are wondering what they will do about this or that. She thinks we need a brainstorming session.

GiGi said she spoke to someone from FEMA today who said FEMA is bringing trailers and wanted to know where we would be putting them. She said she would bring it up at this meeting. Ken said he assumes that will be under the selectboard's purview.

Lynda said Ken, Beth Foy and Eben Patch worked 14 or 18 hours a day for 2 weeks straight. She can't begin to tell how much she appreciates their efforts. If anyone wants to donate furniture, she is open for donations.

### ***13. Discuss Emergency Management Coordinator Positions and Appoint Members to EMC 1 and EMC 2 Positions***

Ken said he feels he made a huge mistake when he told Steve the emergency management coordinator position was just a title. He didn't think about the ramifications of Erik serving as emergency management coordinator. He, Beth and Eben discussed it and agreed that the village should appoint two new people as emergency management coordinators. He volunteered and Beth and Eben appointed him as EMC 1. BJ volunteered to be the second EMC, but Ken had some concerns that BJ might get flooded again.

By consensus, Ken was appointed Emergency Management Coordinator 1 and BJ was appointed Emergency Management Coordinator 2.

**14. *Discuss/Act on Allowing Town to Negotiate with Contractors and Handle Finances for Repairs of Municipal Building***

The town was going to take the lead on the lower storage building repairs but Tim told us that because we insure it it would be less hassle if we handled it. The town insures the municipal building so they will take the lead on that. But both town and village still each need to pay 50% of any costs.

**Lynda moved and Steve seconded to allow the town to take the lead on municipal office repairs, informing the village of any major mitigation or expenses, with any cost remaining after insurance and FEMA reimbursement to be split 50-50 between town and village.** GiGi asked if we have any idea what percentage of the cost will be covered by insurance and FEMA. Ken said we don't know yet. The town hasn't had an insurance adjuster here yet. **The motion was passed.**

Ken said he believes the town will take a similar action giving the village permission to work on the lower storage building repairs and at the end we will split costs.

Ken said he will talk to GW Savage about possibly moving some items above flood level as Tim recommended.

**15. *Other Business***

BJ said Erik has gone above and beyond. Ken agreed he has done an outstanding job. The rest of the board agreed.

Ken suggested that he and BJ meet with Erik to discuss his evaluation and then bring it to the full board to discuss in executive session, probably next month. The board agreed to that.

Ken thanked Rosemary for her efforts. Rosemary said it takes a team.

**16. *Adjourn***

**BJ moved to adjourn, Steve seconded, the motion was passed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:19.**