

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Alec Jones, Adrienne Stevson, Jan Gearhart, Kyle Nuse, Doug Molde

Absent: GiGi Beach

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 and Additions

Erik said #1 under “other discussion or action items” is not needed. The board just needs to sign the application.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Lynda moved to approve the minutes of January 8, 2024, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

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

The board reviewed the budget status report. Rosemary said there have been no big changes since last time.

BJ asked where we stand with figuring out how much the town employee accidentally charged to our fuel account. Erik said we are still figuring it out. Rosemary said it was several thousand dollars. Ken said he thinks we should get a good idea of the amount and pass it on to the selectboard so they can budget for it. It is still undecided how to handle reimbursing the village.

Rosemary said water sales are 98% of budget and sewer sales are 97% of budget.

5. Village Manager’s Report and Action Items

Erik read his report:

Updates from my most recent Johnson Funders Summit meeting:

The VT Bond Bank project to assume commercial debt is live. The fund was way oversubscribed, but they used a triage vs % method to award the loans, and while yet official, I have assurance that the Village of Johnson will receive the full \$1.2 million we applied for. This takes 1-year, high interest debt and brings it to 1.3% interest over 5 years with the first 2 years being interest only. A further bonus is that VLCT PACIF is going to underwrite all of our interest, making this free money with no payments at all for 2 years!

The VT Agency of Administration is planning an ERAF (which is the VT portion of a FEMA reimbursement) advance for the Johnson WWTF of approximately \$1.4 million dollars. This should happen in 30-45 days. This will do wonders to help our cash flow during the coming period of rebuild.

The target date for the 90% FEMA declaration has been pushed to April/May but will be retroactive when it happens. This will move our share of match on FEMA projects from 12.5% to either 5%, or 3% depending on what the legislature decides to do. Whatever the match ends up being, as a result of these summit meetings, VT ANR has developed the Small System Capacity and Resiliency Program. This will provide 0% interest; no admin fee loans to cover those matching funds. This program will be unveiled in 2-3 weeks.

When I asked about a CWSRF subsidized planning loan for the W&L garage project, the VT ANR rep suggested we could likely get a CWSRF (at least partially) forgivable loan to cover the 20% match required by the CDS grant. Even more buffer to ensure that project is fully funded without local taxes.

Not from the Summit, but related, some of our earliest expenses in Emergency Protective Measures and debris clean-up will be covered 100% by FEMA.

Finally! The first 2 FEMA projects which were the River Rd pump station temporary and permanent repairs obligated and made their way 90% through the state channels. I just signed-off on them and we should be getting checks totaling almost \$65,000 very soon. The first is always the hardest, then the subsequent ones should slide through easier.

I became a member of the VPPSA Legislative committee. This may involve a trip or 2 to Montpelier to testify on our behalf at committee or chamber hearings. Much is going on with the Renewable Energy Standard and other bills affecting utilities.

I got an answer from PACIF, there is no need for a child molestation rider on the TULIP policies we require of those who reserve Village property for an event. Email to that effect is attached.

In our search for a Water & Light Assistant Foreman, we had only one applicant, but a very worthy one. Jeff Parsons applied for the promotion, and Nate & I interviewed him.

Erik read letters he and Nate Brigham wrote to the trustees recommending Jeff Parsons for the Water & Light Assistant Foreman position. **Lynda moved to approve promoting Jeff Parsons to Water & Light Assistant Foreman, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

The board signed the DWSRF 100% forgivable loan document to fund our EPA-mandated lead service line inventory project.

Lynda moved to authorize Ken to sign the Engineering Service Agreement with Aldrich & Elliott for the WWTF Relocation Feasibility Study, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

6. *Fire Department Report and Action Items*

Erik read the fire department report submitted by fire chief Arjay West:

Johnson Fire Department Report

Dec. 29 – Jan. 25, 2024

JFD responded to 11 calls. 4 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 7 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 127 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 1 – smoke condition, 2 – automatic alarms, 3 – vehicle crash, 5 – other (assist PD with forcible entry, station work details flood related)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 12

Total hours of service was: 220

Other:

We used all available time in January to move contents and equipment back into the station. The classroom is near complete. The dispatch office furniture is complete and waiting on some electronic and base radio equipment. The kitchen is complete. The apparatus bays are nearly finished. We've installed some new shelving and storage racks, helping with organization and storage of equipment. The mechanical room has installed the new door locking system. Additional work with the data terminations and alarm system remain. There are still equipment replacement orders that are several months out for pending delivery.

We worked all day on Friday, January 12th with Burlington Communications to reprogram radios to operate with the new tower repeater. The electronics and technical portions of this project are operational.

The bed-mounted rescue skid for the UTV has arrived.

Lynda asked about the status of the alarm system. Ken said it has not been tested in several years. The fire department will explore that option.

7. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

Dan read his report:

Operational Status of Wastewater Plant and Callouts

- E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted to the State
- We hauled 40,000 gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing.
- While snowblowing the impeller on the blower broke. Brought it back to Farrells and found that the gear box failed due to no gear oil in it from the factory. 100% covered under warranty with a new gearbox and impeller and is operating properly.
- Mike Kaufman, HSE Manager for H2O spent the day at the facility recreating LOTO, HAZCOM and Emergency response plans. Toured and performed a safety audit at the plant

- Participated on the panel for VRWA roundtable training on flood preparedness in response to the flooding. We gave a tour of the plant to approximately a dozen people after the training.
- Had an alarm at the syphon. Found a float had pulled off the bracket and was covered in rags. Cleaned the float and remounted it to the bracket and all is normal.
- Having alarms at River Road pump station. Possibly a faulty radar level sensor. Laramie Water Resources is going to see if it is faulty or if something else is causing the alarms.

Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- Nate assisted us and VRWA check areas of the distribution system for leaks. Verified there is still a leak under Rt 15. We found an area on Gould Hill of concern. During meter readings they found a big leak coming from under the slab of a trailer. Shut the water off and it was repaired by the homeowner.
- Average daily water production was 116,242 gal/day before the leak was found. It has been 103,355 gal/day after. A difference of about 13,000 gal/day. Not all of our problem but definitely a good amount.
- Water loss was 47%, but all but 2 days of the period measured were before the leak was found. Since then loss has been around 30%.

Ken said a water line runs across his driveway and he has noticed that the area where it may be is wet and sinking. There could be a leak there. Dan said he will get into touch with Nate about it.

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

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham.

Electric Dept.

Mutual aid Hyde Park 3hrs

Replaced Service 2146 RT15E

Outage at 280 Sinclair Rd

Installed Transformer and new service at 93 River Rd. West

Replaced flood light for the town at Legion Field to a LED

Removed Christmas lights

Moved equipment and materials in Lower Storage for contractors

Completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, substation check, and dig safes

Water/Sewer

Found a water leak at 47 Gould Hill Rd, on customer side. Worked with the contractor to get it fixed.

Completed water/sewer inventory

Meeting for water/sewer budget

General Dept.

The S595 Bobcat is still down due to a problem with the motor, working to get Bobcat to fix it under warranty.

Town assisted with snow pick up on School St and Railroad St

3500 dump truck got fixed at Sterling Auto Body

Did maintenance on sander

Had the furnace blower motor replaced on the Talc office furnace

Plowing/sanding of sidewalks

Picked snow 2 times

Safety

Safety meeting with NEPPA in Jan. was System Protection

9. *Select Design and Engineering Firm for Water & Light Garage Project*

Erik said we had one response to the RFQ for the water and light garage project. LCPC recommends hiring the firm that responded, as the contractor is very qualified, as is their subcontractor (Engineering Ventures) who also has direct experience with the facility.

Steve moved to select AES to develop a formal scope of work for the water and light garage rehab project, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.

Alec Jones, a transportation planner with LCPC, said this project is not eligible for EPA funding. LCPC can continue to push back on the EPA, but they provide funding if there is redevelopment or change of use. The fact that there will not be a change of use is an issue for them. Erik said we have other funding lined up so there is a good chance we may not need to use most of the available ARPA funds. There is a good chance of getting a partially forgiven loan. (*Alec left at 6:46. Doug Molde arrived at 6:46.*)

10. Town Administrator Call-In on Municipal Office Rehab

Tom Galinat joined the meeting by phone at 6:47. He said damaged items downstairs were valued at \$100K for the town and \$60K for the village. He thinks town and village should take the opportunity to replace as much as we can. It was suggested that we replace metal furniture. We probably have enough money to replace everything, including getting copies of moldy documents. The contract with the contractor will soon be signed. As of Friday afternoon, FEMA gave approval to split the project into inside remediation and renovation and exterior mitigation projects. Phase 1 will be the interior work. *(Tom left at 6:51.)*

11. Rail Trail Committee to Discuss AARP Community Challenge Grant Opportunity

Kyle Nuse said the Rail Trail Committee has the opportunity to apply for an AARP livable communities grant. The intention is make the community more livable and accessible, especially to older community members. The committee has town approval to apply for the grant. Randall Szott will be applying with assistance from the committee. The committee is asking for the trustees' blessing because what they hope to do with the grant money will impact village infrastructure on village property. They are hoping to attract more people off the rail trail into the village by providing amenities like bike racks, benches, trash receptacles, etc. They would like to add an e-bike charging station. E-bikes are popular with the older population. The MOU between the village and AOT when the Main Street project was done states that it is the village's responsibility to maintain the infrastructure in the right of way. This grant would help the village to do that. The committee would like to put benches and bike racks on Main St. and Pearl St. They would like to put a bike rack and benches at the Cold Spring. The Village Green could be a great place for an e-bike charging station. It is a central location and there is electricity there. A charging station would require hardwiring. It would be a 5-bike charging station. We could charge for people to use it. It would be tapping into village electricity.

Erik said for anything new that goes in, the location needs to be coordinated with the foreman. Kyle said she thinks an e-bike charging station could go where the current bike rack is, but we would have to measure.

Kyle said there is no match required for the grant but the committee would need support in the form of labor to take out old benches, etc. and put in new ones. Erik said he thinks the village could handle that.

Lynda moved and Steve seconded to support the Johnson Rail Trail Committee's application for an AARP Community Challenge Grant.

Ken said his only concern is the village having to maintain a charging station. How much does it cost? Kyle said it is \$15K. There is an option to get a metal base. She was told that makes it easier to install. BJ said the first step is to get the grant, then the committee can determine exactly what to get with the grant funds. There might be different charging station options. Kyle said there are different options. She will ask more questions about maintenance. If the committee doesn't get the whole amount requested they will have to cut something and they probably would cut the charging station. It is not necessarily needed now. And they might be able to get a different grant just for a charging station. Erik said we will need to know the lifecycle cost for a charging station. The cost of the power used is minimal.

The motion was passed.

Kyle asked if the board wants to approve colors. Board members said they trust the committee's taste. Kyle said they want the items to fit into the landscape but be visible. Ken suggested checking with Erik. He said there is no need to check with the board. Erik said the main thing is to get Nate's input on the location for anything new. He thinks Nate has a pair of never-installed bike racks in storage already. Ken suggested maybe existing bike racks can be cleaned up and repainted. He suggested using a common color to make it easier to touch up the paint as needed.

Kyle said the grant application is due March 2 and it usually takes about 6 weeks to get a decision. Ken asked the committee to keep Erik informed. (*Rail Trail Committee members left at 7:07.*)

12. *Discuss 2025 Employee COLA Adjustments*

It was agreed to wait until the next joint meeting with the selectboard to decide on 2025 COLA adjustments for employees.

13. *Draft Water Dept. 2024 Budget and Suggested Rate Increase*

Erik said last year we planned to increase rates 4%. With our costs and the reduction in users we need to add another 5% to that and increase rates by 8.9%. He showed how much the monthly dollar amount will increase for different classes of users.

Erik reviewed proposed water revenues and expenses for 2024. Distribution labor is up due to promotions. Lynda noted that insurance expenses have doubled in 2 years.

BJ asked what the effect on customers would be of increasing rates by 9.9% rather than 8.9%. Ken brought up the fact that we will also be increasing electric rates.

Dan said our spare well pump went through the flood. It has been cleaned but floodwater is corrosive. FEMA would replace it, but it would cost \$26K and we don't know how long it would take to get reimbursed. He would not have an issue with using the current spare if the main pump were to fail. At some point we will replace it but he did not include replacement in the budget for 2024.

Lynda moved to approve the proposed water department budget of \$363,060 and a water rate increase of 8.9% for 2024, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

14. *Draft Wastewater Dept. 2024 Budget and Suggested Rate Increase*

Erik said he is recommending a 4.9% increase in wastewater rates. That takes into account the lower usage we are seeing now. He is being very conservative in what he believes we will see this year from FEMA and insurance.

Steve asked if it is still costing more to run the plant than before the flood. Dan said yes. We have new expenses for sludge hauling, the generator and the trailer. Erik noted that some expenses are lower now.

Erik reviewed the proposed budget figures. The amount budgeted for testing is up because we have to do more biological wet testing.

Erik said when the state did the post-flood inspection that found the blockage they also found a couple of holes in sewer lines on Main St. and Railroad St. They haven't told us yet that we have to do anything about them. Erik is planning on spending \$12K to fix the line on Main St. this year and to fix the Railroad St. line next year. We will slip a new line in rather than digging.

Erik said the rate increase dollar amounts he had shown earlier (just under \$3 per month for a single family home) were for the combined water and wastewater increases.

Lynda moved to approve a total wastewater budget of \$1,064,264 and a wastewater rate increase of 4.9%, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

Dan said an engineer has contacted us about a possible 48 unit development. The board will need to figure out how much of the village's spare capacity to allocate for this development.

15. Set Date and Time for Special Meeting for Electric and General Draft Budget Presentations

It was agreed to schedule a special meeting for 6:00 on February 28.

16. Executive Session – Employee Evaluation

BJ moved to enter executive session as allowed by 1. V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) for evaluation of employees, Steve seconded and the motion was passed at 8:13. The board came out of executive session at 9:07 with no action taken.

17. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths