

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Diane Lehouiller, Kyle Nuse

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:00.

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

Ken added an executive session for employee review.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Lynda moved to approve the minutes of February 12, 2024, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

4. Appointment and Swearing in of Village Clerk and Treasurer

Ken said last year the voters approved the trustee board appointing a clerk and treasurer. That should have been done 45 days after the annual meeting, but it never happened.

Steve moved and Lynda seconded to appoint Rosemary Audibert to the office of Johnson Village Clerk and Treasurer, with an effective date of April 5, 2023 as per 24 VSA Section 2651e and 24 VSA Section 2651f.

Ken said this appointment will last until either Rosemary or the village chooses to end it.

GiGi said she feels next year we should hire someone to replace Rosemary when she retires so that she will be able to train them before she leaves. Unless we get someone with a lot of experience we need to train them for the 12 month cycle. Lynda said that is why we have been talking about having the current employees work with Rosemary. Ken said we would pursue hiring someone before her term is up. He is assuming Rosemary plans to work through the end of the term the town elected her for and if that if she decided to leave earlier she would give us adequate notice. Rosemary said that is the case. She said she thinks having a new person in place a few months before she leaves would be adequate.

The motion was passed.

Erik swore in Rosemary as Village Clerk and Village Treasurer.

GiGi said Rosemary should ask if she needs support in catching up after being out with her leg injury.

Steve asked if anything was resolved with the Bobcat. Erik said we are close to getting an answer. The dealership is being cooperative. The issue is with the manufacturer.

5. Discuss and Select Village Report Dedication Recipient

The board discussed and agreed on a dedication for the village annual report.

6. Review and Approve Bills and Warrants

The board reviewed and approved bills and warrants.

7. Approve Articles for Village Meeting

Ken read each of the proposed articles and the board discussed them.

Article 2 is about borrowing \$140K for purchase of a late model used 4x4 bucket truck for the electric department. Ken said the truck to be replaced is a 2008 that is overdue for replacement. He believes we originally planned to replace it in 2020. Lynda asked what happens to the old truck. Ken we will trade it in or sell it. Lynda asked if the money we get from that will go toward paying off the loan for the new truck. Erik said it will at least go into the electric department budget. Ken said we will get more for the truck if we sell it than if we trade it in. *(Kyle Nuse arrived at 6:39.)*

Steve moved to approve Articles 1 through 9 as presented for the 2024 annual village meeting warning. Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.

8. Possible Approval of Draft General Department 2024 Budget and Possible Tax Increase

Erik reviewed the draft general department budget. Our insurance company said the fire station was in a flood zone and would need to be covered under a limited policy that would pay a percentage of damages depending on the amount available for all properties in that category. Erik hired a surveyor to do a FEMA elevation survey and sent the insurance company the data and they agreed that the fire station would not be considered to be in the flood zone and we could get a full policy.

Lynda asking why there was a big jump in miscellaneous income last year. Rosemary and Erik said it was insurance reimbursement for the damage caused by raccoons.

Erik said he adjusted the amount of expected general department work from electric department employees based on timesheet records.

Ken said the amount budgeted for beautification should be adjusted to \$500.

Ken asked why the computers we replaced are not in the budget. Rosemary said because we will get insurance reimbursement. Ken said we still had to pay and insurance won't cover all costs. Rosemary said the town is paying and we agreed to split uncovered costs with the town. Ken said he wants to separate our costs more from the town's costs and not rely on them to give us money back. He never agreed to let the town pay for it and then figure it out at the end.

Kyle Nuse asked if any sidewalk repairs are scheduled for this year. Ken and Erik said none are scheduled. Erik said we will try to get some repairs in. The electric department will have a lot of work this year. We haven't been doing enough electric work and will refocus on it this year. Kyle said there was some flood damage to sidewalk on Railroad Street.

Erik said general labor expense is going down because he adjusted it based on how employee time is being spent. More of the labor cost is going to utilities.

Lynda asked, no tax increase is needed for this budget? Erik said no.

BJ moved and Steve seconded to approve a 2024 general department budget of \$369,177.

Ken asked about the amount budgeted for lawn care. It did not appear to be in the budget.

There was discussion about whether to budget for putting money into reserves. Ken said he wants to make sure we are putting money in reserves to replace equipment. Board members agreed that the budget should be changed to include putting some money into reserves.

The motion failed.

Kyle said she would love to see the sidewalk reserve fund come back if it has been taken away. Ken said we have a sidewalk reserve fund. He thinks it has about \$30K. Last year we didn't use any of it. Kyle said she would like the village to be proactive in continuing to add to it. Ken said the board is not thinking of doing major sidewalk projects this year. We fell behind on equipment replacement. The crew can do some small repairs.

The board talked about putting money into a general department reserve fund. Rosemary said the voters have not voted to create a general department reserve fund. Ken suggested adding to the existing sidewalk and capital equipment replacement funds. Rosemary said there is currently \$47K in the sidewalk reserve fund. The board discussed adding \$10K to the sidewalk reserve fund and \$10K to the capital replacement fund. That would not result in any increase to taxes.

Ken said he would like to see a 2-3% increase in taxes because we are falling behind. Lynda said she thinks village residents would really appreciate an increase of just 1-2% or a decrease after all they have been through. She would be okay with a 2% increase. Steve pointed out that we don't know what the school tax will be.

It was agreed to add \$20K to each of the reserve funds.

The board agreed that Erik should look at revising the budget as discussed and the board will revisit it at the next meeting.

Erik said the village bought 200 pairs of eclipse glasses to give out at the village annual meeting.

9. Possible Approval of Draft Electric Department 2024 Budget

Erik reviewed the draft electric department budget.

Lynda asked why large commercial sales revenue is up. Ken said some is due to a new cannabis operation. Erik said the rate increase will also contribute.

Erik said he created a new capital reserve line item. Ken asked how we budgeted to replace trucks in the past. Rosemary said we bonded for the purchase. Erik said that is what the Public Utility Commission wants to see.

Erik said he disagrees with VPPSA's estimate of our power purchase cost. If we use their number that puts us at a deficit. If we use a number he thinks is better we will end with a surplus. He is using VPPSA's higher estimate because we are going for a rate case.

Labor expense is up a good bit due to Nate getting supervisory pay. Mutual aid will go down a little because Hyde Park got another person. We have more mutual aid revenue than mutual aid expense because we also get paid for use of our equipment. Erik increased the amount budgeted for line maintenance. The crew is planning to get out into the field more. Insurance costs are up. Uniform expenses are down due to the change made in how uniforms are provided. Expenses are about \$3 million. With the VPPSA purchased power cost estimate we will have a \$200K deficit. With Erik's estimate we will have a \$102K surplus. We will use the VPPSA number to help our rate case and hope Erik's number is better.

Steve moved to approve a 2024 electric department budget of \$3,019,948, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

10. Executive Session for Employee Evaluation

Lynda moved to go into executive session as allowed by V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) for evaluation of an employee, BJ seconded and the motion was passed at 8:15. The board came out of executive session at 8:50 with no action taken

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths