

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024

**Present:**

Trustees: GiGi Beach, Steve Hatfield, Will Jennison, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Laura Bailey, Lynda Hill, Alberto Della Torre, Arjay West, Craig Carpenter, Gidget Dolan-Dodge

**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**

Erik noted that the published minutes had the wrong dates for the minutes to be approved, which are the minutes of April 10 and April 18. It was agreed to add action on hiring a new lineman, discussions on town/village land and the college, and an executive session with the fire department.

**3. Authorization to Search for Lineman**

**BJ moved to authorize Erik to search for a lineman and the motion was seconded and passed.**

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

**Will moved to approve the minutes of April 10 and April 18, 2024 as printed, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

Rosemary said electric sales were at 33% of budget for the first 4 months of the year. Water sales were 30% of budget. Sewer was almost 32%.

GiGi asked what the \$100 gift certificate purchase was for. Erik said that was Lynda Hill's parting gift.

Rosemary handed out information about fuel use in 2022 and 2023, which indicates that the town used about 3000 gallons of fuel obtained with the village card their employee was accidentally issued. Erik said they owe us about \$11K based on the average from the previous year. It was agreed that Erik should talk to Tom Galinat and see what the town wants to do about it. Ken said he thinks we should get 2021 figures for comparison as well, if possible.

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

Erik read the first part of his report:

After repeated nagging from me, PACIF is finally cutting checks for flood damages! The only project they haven't finalized is JFD as they still have some outstanding invoices from Arjay that they are working on together. We have over a million dollars from insurance heading our way very shortly.

Anne, the entire line crew, and I all got a very good training on how to use the new GIS system through VPPSA. I will be sourcing two cellular iPads for the crew to use with the software out in the field. This system will help streamline both emergency work and work orders.

As most of you know, Dan Copp was named the US EPA WWTF Operator of the Year for Vermont in January. The accolades keep coming, as the Village of Johnson WWTF is receiving

the Green Mountain Water Environment Association's WWTF Facility Excellence Award at its annual meeting next Thursday!! This is largely due to the Herculean efforts to get it back in an altered, but full operation in under a month after full destruction of all processes in the July flood. Congrats to all involved, as it was a massive team effort.

Ken said recent selectboard meeting minutes say the village was approached about a USDA grant. That is incorrect. Erik said the grocery store is looking for help financing floodproofing of the building, which will be about a million dollar project. He looked into the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan program. Under this program rural electric or communications utilities can be intermediaries for zero interest loans of up to \$2 million. But the intermediary is responsible for repaying the loan even if the ultimate recipient doesn't pay the intermediary. The intermediary is not allowed to charge any interest or administrative fees but the intermediary must provide an irrevocable letter of credit as security for the loan, which costs 3% of the amount to be guaranteed. For a \$2 million dollar loan, that would be \$60K. The liability, costs and workload associated with being an intermediary for a loan would have been beyond what the village could do. He tried to see if it could be done at the VPPSA level but they concluded it would be too much liability. The New England head of USDA Rural Development admitted they have done none of these loans in New England. They are really designed for the massive rural electric utilities of the Midwest. Ken said this was not a grant. If it was, the village would have actively pursued it. Erik said if there is a grant the village will pursue it for the grocery store, but the village will not become a bank.

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

Dan gave his report:

##### Operational Status of Wastewater Plant and Callouts

- E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted to the State
- We hauled 20,000 gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing for the month of April.
- Cleaned up the pine tree that the top had fallen off from. Raked out all of the lawns and replaced sod where needed
- Removed the snowblower from the tractor and installed the lawnmower deck. Line crew took the snowblower deck to the village storage high and dry
- Met with Wayne Elliot, Erik and LCPC staff to brainstorm locations and details for the new location of the WWTF. We then did site visits to each
- We repaired the concrete front steps at the plant that were damaged from the flood.
- Attended a flood study review meeting hosted by Wayne Elliot to review the status of repair, relocation and mitigation of the WWTF

##### Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- Rotated the pumps at Katy Win.
- We serviced the Chlorine pump. Installed new pump, tube, line and injection nozzle.
- Started grinding rust off the pipes at the water plant. Almost ready to start painting.
- Had Paul Sestito from VRWA double check the location of the leak under Rt 15 on Upper Main St. Verified the location so we do a repair while VTRANS is doing the road work through the Village.
- Water loss was 39%

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

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham and Anne Crocket:

Electric Dept.

Helped Hyde Park Electric for 9hrs on 4-17 and 4-18 pole change out on their 34.5kv line that was damaged on 4/4. Billed Hyde Park for the labor.

Installed new permanent service to 93 River Rd West

GPS /GIS meeting. We met with the VPPSA mapping program to discuss the new system. It appears to be more functional than the old mapping system. In addition, pole and line hardware aging and planning will be easier. In discussions with the company, I verified that the mapping can be downloaded into MilSoft software. This will allow engineering analysis of the system including load balancing, voltage drop calculations, loss calculations and fuse coordination.

Met with land owners for tree removal 698 Clay Hill

Removed street light, service and pole at 68 Sweetser Rd

19 Sinclair Rd, Disco/Reco for main panel swap out done by electrician

Installed cover-up at 590 Rocky Rd

Fixed St. Lights around the system

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

Marla and Anne attended an automated meter session in Swanton. We were given updates of the timing along with the features that the new meters will include. Most importantly, the meters will not require linemen to read them monthly. In addition, requested disconnect/reconnects can be done remotely, along with move-out/move-readings, saving additional time. The meter will also inform the office for loss of power.

Two new recloser controls were ordered. These will allow the substation to be brought back to full operation. An additional control should be budgeted for the next three years, as well. That would provide standardization at the substation.

A quote was obtained for a new control for the regulator required to serve Just Send It Solar. In the mean time, Alan Lehoullier has informed Nate that he has a spare regulator. Anne will check that regulator's control for compatibility and functionality to replace the failed one.

We met with Consolidated to get a pole on School Street replaced.

Adam McPadden has informed us that he is ready for us to remove the old meter at the Vermont Green Castle farm.

Investigated purchasing a reel of 1/0 aluminum reverse-twist secondary cable for the Route 100C pole transfers but could not buy less than 5 reels. We will use 1/0 aluminum triplex, instead.

#### Water/Sewer

Dropped of 1” meter horn assembly for 93 River Rd West - Andy Minks new apt building

71 Mack Mudgett Dr. sewer line was replaced by Manosh Corp.

Ordered and received Hydrant and valve for Nadaeu Well

Located Sewer line for 120 Sinclair Rd

Met with VTums for the lead and copper service line inventory

Help with the leak detection on upper main

#### General Dept.

Cleaned up the Village Green

Swept Railroad St.

Rebuilt the planter box at the Town Clerks

GiGi mentioned a sewer cover that is not completely in place. Erik said he will have Jeff look at it. GiGi said the crew did a great job with the fire station flag area.

Figured we used about 12 yards of salt for the 23/24 winter season

#### Safety

Safety meeting with NEPPA in May was on lock out/tag out, Switching and tagging, and tailboards

Nate, Jeff, and Chan took and passed the flagging course

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

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

Johnson Fire Department Report  
*Mar. 29 – Apr. 25, 2024*

JFD responded to 5 calls. 4 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 1 call occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 61 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 2 – vehicle crashes, 1 – automatic alarm, 1 – CO alarm, and 1 – smoke investigation

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 11

Total hours of service was: 61

Other:

We received a \$6,000 donation from the Green Mountain ATV Club. These funds are being used for the purchase of an enclosed trailer to transport the new UTV. Green Mountain ATV Club supports many local causes, and has an active interest in making our community stronger. Two joint training exercises between Johnson Fire, Northern EMS, and GMATV are being scheduled for this summer to bring trail orientation and improved UTV crash response & patient handling skills. We thank Green Mountain ATV Club for their generous support and these opportunities.

The Truck committee has begun regular meetings for the Engine 2 replacement project. We hope to bring a Board update in May or June.

Ken said he is a member of Green Mountain ATV Club. Their original agreement was to donate \$2500. Once they finished their raffle for the ATV they decided to split the proceeds 50-50 with the fire department so the donation was \$6,000. Will said the club will bring different styles of ATVs so the fire department can learn about their construction, fuel shutoffs, etc. Then there will be a mock accident exercise in the field. It will be very beneficial.

**10. Members of the Public**

No members of the public wanted to comment.

**11. VCRD Resilient Communities Presentation and Possible Approval**

Laura Bailey of the Vermont Council on Rural Development said VCRD is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works statewide. They provide free services to communities that want outside third party facilitation. They were asked by the Town of Johnson to facilitate conversations about long term flood recovery and actions that could be taken in the long term. They are thinking about a 3-part series where the whole community will be involved. They will bring in other entities to help support the process and offer potential options for grants or programs. They also have some municipal technical assistance program funding that might be used to move some ideas forward. The first stage is for a small planning committee to come together to frame what the meetings should look like. (*Arjay West, Craig Carpenter and Gidget Dolan-Dodge arrived at 6:35.*) The first meeting of the planning committee will be May 29 from 6:00 to 8:30. Village trustees are invited to be part of the conversation. There will be about 20 people involved. It will be at Jenna's House.

Will asked how large VCRD's staff is. Laura said they have 8 people. They also have an extensive network of resource partners. Will asked what their coverage area is. Laura said it is statewide.

Will asked if their funding is state, federal or private. Laura said it is all of those. There is a big mix, with no one main source.

Laura said this is an opportunity for the village to ask questions and know the village is a key player. The first community meeting will probably be in July.

It was agreed that GiGi and Steve will go to the planning meeting.

**12. Village Manager's Report and Action Items (continued)**

Erik read the rest of his report. He said on May 7<sup>th</sup>, Lieutenant Dylan Jennison of the Johnson Fire Department received The Valor Award from the Department of The Interior. Erik read the award narrative:

The Valor Award is presented to Department of the Interior employees who have demonstrated unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger. The act of heroism is not required to be related to official duties or to have occurred at the official duty station. Recipients receive a citation signed by the Secretary and an engraved gold Valor Award Medal.

On July 11, 2023, Mr. Dylan O. Jennison took leave from his job as a biological science technician for the Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Program to support the volunteer fire department in his hometown of Johnson, Vermont, where he has been a member since 2011. He responded to numerous 911 emergency calls requesting rescue from the rising and fast-moving flood waters of the Gihon River during Vermont's "thousand-year" storm event. Amid rising floodwaters and torrential downpours, Mr. Jennison conducted 63 water rescues within the town. During this time, his parents' home was ruined by the rising water, and they too had to evacuate. In addition to performing rescues, Mr. Jennison protected citizens and the environment by retrieving several hundred-gallon propane tanks that broke loose from their mounts and floated down the river. He was also involved in hazardous-material management as tanks of diesel fuel – used for home heating – were dislodged and began leaking their contents. Both personally and as a first responder, Mr. Jennison spent almost 24 hours helping his community dig out of the mud and rubble left by the flood. His dedication to his fellow citizens is second to none. While others fled the floodwaters, Mr. Jennison went in the direction of the danger, risking his life to save the lives of others in his community.

Erik said he was told that when Dylan accepted his award, he accepted it on behalf of the entire Johnson Fire Department. He congratulated Dylan and the entire Johnson Fire Department.

**13. Fire Officers Update on Fire Truck Purchasing Process**

Arjay said the fire department formed a 5-person committee for replacement of Engine 2. The replacement process stalled when COVID hit. Replacement of this truck is part of the capital plan, which was reviewed in 2019. The conclusion of that review was that the plan framework was good. After a pause, the department is now trying to move forward with the plan to replace the truck. They have 2 pumper trucks. They plan to take the oldest one out of service and make the current front line truck a backup pumper when a new front line truck is purchased. It is important to have standardization between trucks. Last week the committee met with Desorcie. All the big trucks in their fleet are E-ONE products, which Desorcie sells. The truck they want to build is not the cheapest or the most expensive truck. The committee has given Desorcie Johnson's requirements and wish list. They are now getting a set of shop drawings from E-ONE so they can get pricing.

Lead time is 3 years from the time the order is placed. The capital plan assumed payments on the replacement would start in 2024. Truck prices have risen about 40%. The projections were not prepared for that. They will have to decide where they can make cuts or reductions. There is a federal emissions standard change that was originally planned for 2027. In the last couple of months the administration has made an effort to move that up to 2026. It will bring severe changes to the manufacturing process and lead to a \$75-100K increase in the cost of the cab and chassis.

**14. Executive Session with Fire Department Officers – Potential Contractual Issues**

Arjay suggested an executive session to discuss potential contractual issues.

**Will moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1. V.S.A. § 313(a)(1) because premature public knowledge of the potential contract to be discussed would put the village at a substantial disadvantage, GiGi seconded and the motion was passed at 6:55.**

Ken said the executive session would include all trustees, Erik, Rosemary and the fire department officers. The board came out of executive session at 7:16. Ken said no decisions were made.

**15. Village Center Designation Review Presentation**

Alberto Della Torre of the Lamoille County Planning Commission said the village's proposal to expand the designated village center does not match the intent and current rules of the Department of Housing and Community Development's village center designation program. But a new bill was just passed by the legislature that will change the program so it is easier to expand village centers. If the governor signs it then there will be an opportunity to expand the village center. It is recommended that we renew the existing designation and then make changes once the new law is in place. He doesn't think we need to wait until the designation is up for renewal to make changes.

Will asked if there are any restrictions on development related to historic buildings. Alberto said no, the program is not about restricting development. Ken said it opens up opportunities for grants for people who are in the designated village center.

**16. Other Business**

GiGi asked about a new bulletin board to replace the one by the post office. Tom said he didn't have a credit card to order one. Rosemary said the selectboard hasn't authorized purchasing a new one. Ken asked Erik to check with Tom about it.

**17. Rosemary Audibert Green Celebration Update by Sub-Committee**

GiGi said she and Steve discussed two options for a celebration. One would be to have a cookout July 12 on Legion Field (or at Jenna's House in case of rain.) We would need a budget of about \$600 for food. There would be a potluck and we would cook hotdogs. The fire department would assist with cooking. There was also talk of having fire trucks drive down the street, with Rosemary maybe driving the small antique fire truck. There would be free food, beverages and games. It would last from about 4:00 to 7:00, including setting things up and taking them down, with the main events from about 5:00 to 6:00.

Another option would be to combine the celebration with the tractor parade, which would ensure that people would come. Tom Carney would love to have us be part of the parade. That will be on September 7. The parade starts at 10:00 a.m. at the former Manchester mill and the tractors drive to Legion Field. We would have lunch and games on Legion Field. Tractors will be set up on Legion Field. Arjay said the firefighters would help us. There is no rain date for the tractor parade.

Erik said the tractor parade will be right after school starts so people will not be off on vacation. Steve said there is a good chance of nice weather, maybe better than July. Board members agreed they are in favor of the tractor parade date.

GiGi said they do not plan to use the pizza oven because it is too expensive. Ken said he will donate \$100. Lynda Hill said all the pizza ingredients the oven committee uses are donated. Ken asked if we need a permit from the town. Rosemary said she thinks so.

**18. Discuss Recording Meetings and Current Best Options, Equipment & Prices**

BJ said we have two options for recording meetings so we can go back and review them without having to rely only on minutes. One option is Teams. We can record the meetings and download the recording and Erik can send it to GMATV. We could put the Teams address on our agenda. The other option is Zoom. If we shared the cost of Zoom with the town we could livestream meetings on YouTube and put the YouTube address on our agenda so people could watch live while we were recording.

Ken said we already said were not splitting the cost of Zoom with the town this year and they already purchased it. BJ said with Teams there is one more step. Erik has to send GMATV the recording. And people are not able to watch live. Zoom costs \$159.85 per year so our cost would be about \$80. Ken said we already have Teams. Erik said when it we tried to use it before it seemed to be fighting against our firewall. Starting a meeting was hard. Ken said that should be an easy enough tech fix. BJ said Teams is not as user friendly as Zoom.

Ken said if this is only to benefit BJ so he can go back and watch the meetings, why can't BJ turn on Zoom and record for himself during the meeting rather than having the taxpayers pay? The state does not require us to record, upload and share meetings. BJ said it is not just for him to go back and watch; it is for anyone to do it. If someone misses a meeting and hears about something that happened they can watch it. And Zoom provides a convenient way to watch a meeting while it is happening. To him, spending \$80 of the public's money to give the public access to meetings to watch them live or later is worth it and it is less work for Erik.

Will said the advantage of Zoom is that it makes it easier for someone to join the meeting if they are traveling. If a lawyer needs to attend the meeting it is cheaper if he can join by Zoom instead of coming in person. And people would be able to watch the videos. He doesn't think the written minutes are accurate enough. Steve said he is favor of Zoom.

Ken suggested the village buy its own Zoom account rather than share with the town. There could be conflicts if both town and village hold meetings at the same time. BJ said we can have our own address. We can have more than one address.

**Will moved to authorize spending up to \$160 for a Zoom subscription, splitting the cost with the town if the town is willing and purchasing a village subscription otherwise. Steve seconded.** Ken said he is against this. He feels if people want to know what is happening at meetings they should show up. **The motion was passed.**

**19. Town/Village Land**

BJ said we have 197.88 acres that was jointly purchased by the town and the village for \$600K. He would like the village to talk with the town about possibly splitting the property so town and village would each have full ownership of half and could sell it or do something with it. Rosemary



said the property was bought as two separate lots of 15 acres and over 100 acres. The town wanted to sell some of the land but the voters voted that down. They wanted to keep it.

Ken said there was severe uproar when the town decided to become developers and real estate agents for another property. He thinks we would get some backlash if we tried to do that. Will said he is against the village developing the land. The village or town should not get into developing properties. The property was originally bought with a promise that part of it would be sold.

Steve said we would have to pay for attorneys and surveyors. BJ suggested getting an agreement with the town to at least separate it into parcels. Ken suggested we could also ask if the town wants to buy us out. Will said he thinks it is worth presenting to the selectboard that we would like to not have joint ownership and offer to let them buy out the village or create separate parcels.

Ken asked if the money to buy the land came from the general department. Rosemary said yes. Will asked if the two parcels are joined for tax purposes. Rosemary said yes. Rosemary said she thinks the lower building was on the second larger parcel that was purchased. It was agreed that this should be put on the agenda for a joint meeting with the selectboard.

## 20. *College Communications*

Will said he has been approached by business owners and residents concerned about what is happening at the college. He would like the board to ask Erik to reach out to the college president and if he gets no response he wants that noted on next month's village manager report. If another month goes by with no response he wants the governor to know. He thinks we should at least get a heads up about what is going on there, if not participation. He has heard rumors that, if they are true, would be a detriment to the town.

The board agreed that Erik should ask the college president for an update. Ken said he doesn't think they will tell us anything until November but he agrees that we should ask and record it if we get no response. Erik said an initial draft strategic plan has come out to their planning committee. It is supposed to be ready for release in November. Ken asked Erik to draft a letter and cc him and BJ.

## 21. *Executive Session – Employee Evaluation*

**Will moved to go into executive session for appointment, employment, or evaluation of a public officer or employee as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), with Erik invited to remain, Steve seconded and the motion was passed at 7:53.** The board came out of executive session at 8:45.

**Will moved to hire Matt Champney as the new Water & Light apprentice line worker, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

**BJ moved to adopt the apprentice line worker pay scale as presented, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

## 22. *Adjourn*

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:48.**