

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2024

**Present:**

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Arjay West, 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**

It was agreed to add designation of a village liaison to the State Ethics Commission.

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

GiGi said a conversation should be added to the minutes of the last meeting. She asked about the tax payment owed from the village to the town that was due last month and Rosemary said she would investigate. **GiGi moved to approve the minutes of May 13, 2024 with that addition and the motion was seconded and passed.**

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

Rosemary said we received an insurance reimbursement of about \$87K for the lower storage building.

BJ said Susan told him that in the past the board used to get some reports every month about where we are with finances. He has a list of different reports. GiGi and BJ said they thought it would be helpful to get that information. Ken suggested that BJ talk to Susan and Rosemary about the reports.

Will asked about sick, vacation and holiday pay that was budgeted at zero but has actual expense of \$43K. Erik said to keep the budget simple he put the paid leave time together with salary. Rosemary said there are multiple areas the time can be coded to on the timesheets. Will brought up a similar issue with truck maintenance. Zero was budgeted but there is actual expense. Erik said he needs to talk to Nate about how things are coded. Rosemary suggested they discuss how timesheets relate to the budget line items. Will pointed out some other areas where zero was budgeted. Ken and Will talked about the need to see where we are compared to budget. Erik and Rosemary will work on clarifying expenditures vs. budget.

Rosemary said the town has reimbursed the village a little over \$11K for diesel fuel, the amount she calculated we were owed.

**5. Emergency Funds Received and Advice on How to Manage Them**

Rosemary handed out and discussed information on emergency funds the village has received, including an \$825K Economic Impact Grant, as well as current CD interest rates at Lamoille County banks.

Ken said we could put money into CDs and collect some interest, but why would we do that if it means we have to take out a bond? Will asked what the bond interest rate is. Rosemary said it is a little over 5%. Erik said the only positive he sees to bonding for a bucket truck is that borrowing for capital expenses supports our rate case. He suggested banking as much as we can until the wastewater plant is done and FEMA is gone. Ken said it could take more than 5 years to get all the FEMA reimbursement.

Erik said after the trade-in we will need to pay about \$140K for a small bucket truck. Will said the rate case is very relevant. We know we will have to go for one. We would save only about \$1400 a year by using the money we have to buy the truck instead of borrowing. Why make the rate case worse for \$1400? It is to our advantage at this point to have debt. And we have the option to pay off a loan if we want. He thinks the CD rates will drop, possibly just weeks from now. The interest rates for borrowing will not drop. He recommends at least putting the \$825K into a 6-month CD. We could put some into a 9-month CD and some into a 6-month CD. Ken asked about the timeframe for the rate case. Erik said he is guessing we probably won't get new rates until February or March. Will said he would be comfortable putting \$200K into a 6 month CD and putting the balance into a 9-month CD.

Ken said he knows some bills weren't getting paid because we were broke. Is that still happening? Rosemary said the electric department needs a couple hundred thousand dollars. The other departments are carrying the electric department. Ken asked, we are able to pay bills for the general and sewer departments? Rosemary said yes. Dan said tonight he will be asking for about \$200K.

It was agreed to table this discussion until after hearing the water/wastewater report.

Will asked if it will be a problem that Union Bank is closing its Johnson location. Rosemary said we can use remote deposit for checks and take cash to Morrisville once a week. Some board members brought up the other bank in Johnson and asked if there is any advantage to switching banks. Ken said he would say there is none. Most things can be done remotely these days. There is no need to go to the bank in person unless there is a cash deposit. Rosemary said she prefers to stick with Union Bank. Our direct deposit for payroll is with them. It would be a lot of trouble to switch. (*Arjay West and Gidget Dolan-Dodge arrived at 6:32.*)

Rosemary said today we got \$15K from Efficiency Vermont. Dan said it was for a lighting upgrade at the plant.

Erik read the last 2 paragraphs of his report:

We recently received the \$825,000.00 Local Economic Impact Grant from the state and should soon see the \$1,548,193.50 ERAF advance from the state.

The Vermont Bond Bank (VBB) just received \$6.8 Million to fund the Small System Capacity and Resiliency Program which is using left-over state ARPA funds to help the 4 communities with the most impacted water/wastewater systems. This program is still being set up with input from me and other managers but will likely be formatted to provide no-interest, possibly partially forgivable, loans to help us with cash flow during the FEMA rebuild process. More to come on this as it progresses.

6. **Treasurer's Report: Review & Approve Bills and Warrants / Budget Status Report / Action Items**  
BJ asked if the village crew came to help with clearing out the vault. Rosemary said yes. Town employees also helped. Ken said he feels the floor needs to be sanitized and Eben Patch agrees. The vault should be emptied and cleaned by a company that does flood sanitation rather than by Rosemary and staff. BJ asked what we did with the things that were taken out and saved. Rosemary said they are in Morrisville in storage. Ken said any materials that are going to be kept should be professionally cleaned or digitized. Since the town is taking the lead on municipal building work, he suggested that Erik talk to Tom Galinat about getting quotes for cleaning or digitizing. Rosemary said the tile needs to be sealed. Ken said that should have been done by the installer.

**7. Clerk/Treasurer Succession Plan & Training Schedule**

Rosemary handed out a list of topics she would like to teach Susan about. She would like to write a synopsis of each. Ken suggested that Rosemary sit down with Susan for about 4 hours every two weeks. BJ said it would be good to write up standard operating procedures. He suggested Susan could write them up as she is learning and then they would be on record if anything ever happened to her.

**8. Emergency Funds Received and Advice on How to Manage Them**

Rosemary asked if the \$825K should be considered general department income. Ken asked, if we put it under the general department, can we use it for the electric department? Rosemary said the general department can loan the electric department money. Will said he would put it in the general department.

Rosemary asked if the board would be okay with depositing it with credit unions. They are insured by an insurance company, not by the federal government, but they offer higher interest rates on CDs.

**9. 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 for the month of April.
- We installed a new alum pump after the flooded one failed. The other pump is starting to make a lot of noise and I will be ordering another one shortly. These will be covered by FEMA but will not be funded until the entire project with mitigation is finalized.
- Pratt Electrical ran the electric for the radars in the sludge holding tanks
- Mowed and trimmed both plants and all pump stations weekly
- Pumped 250 gallons of alum into a tote. The strength of the alum is degrading due to the below grade tank being flooded. We will be ordering new alum and will slowly feed the degraded alum into the system over the next month or two as the price to dispose of it is cost prohibitive. I am able to combine a load with Morrisville and save about \$0.64 per gallon on the 1500 gallons we will need.

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 have everything painted at the water plant but the floor. That will be finished up shortly. It came out great and should preserve the piping for many years to come.
- As soon as the floor is painted we will start on the rehab of Katy Win booster stations #1 & #3.
- Sampled coliform after the Water line break on College Hill and drove them to the lab in Williston so we could get timely result. Coliforms passed and we were able to lift the boil water notice the next day.
- Assisted with the water line repair under Rt 15. After the repair we sampled for coliform and drove the samples to the lab and were able to lift the boil water notice the next day.

- Troubleshooting a random high pressure alarm at Clay Hill Booster station. Raising the alarm set point will hopefully fix it.
- Water loss was 49%

Dan said flood-related repairs are needed to the Highland Heights pump station, the siphon and the River Road pump station. We can get FEMA money to repair to pre-flood conditions and an additional equal amount to elevate equipment above the flood zone. Only one contractor has given us a quote for the work on the Highland Heights pump station, the siphon and the River Road pump station. Dan is looking for board permission to go with that sole source. He trusts the contractor. Erik knows him.

FEMA has approved moving the transformers to the other side of the wall, which will allow us to get rid of the rented trailer. The cost for that work will be \$12,100.

FEMA approved purchasing a new generator and hooking it up at the existing plant. It will continue to be used at the new location if the WWTF is moved. It will be on an elevated platform. The cost is \$109,988.

The total for all of this work is about \$197K. The River Road pump station, siphon and Highland Heights work would all be done by the same contractor, Pump Control Solutions.

**Will moved to authorize a sole source contract with Pump Control Solutions for work at the Highland Heights pump station, the siphon and the River Road pump station totaling \$73,931.22, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Will moved to authorize a sole source contract with Pratt & Smith Electrical for moving transformers and installing a generator at a total cost of \$122,088, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

Will asked if reimbursement has been approved for these expenses. Erik said we will file for reimbursement immediately after the work is done. FEMA is paying in about 8 months nowadays. Dan said he expects the first 3 projects will be completed in a couple of months. Erik said the ERAF advance from the state will be here in a couple of months. Will asked if we need to reserve a portion of the \$825K grant for the work we just talked about. Dan said it will be at least 6 months before the generator is installed. Rosemary said we can cover these expenses.

Ken asked if we have gotten reimbursement for sludge disposal yet. Erik said he believes we got some.

***10. Emergency Funds Received and Advice on How to Manage Them***

**Will moved to put \$200,000 into a 6-month certificate of deposit and \$625,000 into a 9-month certificate of deposit, Ken seconded and the motion was passed.** The board agreed it would be all right to use a non-FDIC insured credit union. *(Dan left at 7:08.)*

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

Arjay West said the new UTV is basically ready to go into service. It will probably go into service as early as next week. The fire department would like to sell the older unit. Erik has advised that it can be offered to village employees to bid on. They would like to take sealed bids on the ATV and trailer. They would like permission for fire department officers to open bids and select one. They would like

to request that any proceeds go into the capital truck reserve. They have researched market prices so they can make an informed decision on price.

BJ asked, do we think will get more through sealed bids than from a raffle? Ken said a municipality cannot hold a raffle. Will said few people would want to buy tickets for a 2005 ATV.

**Ken moved to allow the fire department chief and assistant chief to develop a sealed bid process for offering the fire department ATV, trailer and tracks for sale to all village employees, to authorize fire department officers to open bids and select a bidder, and to put any proceeds into the capital truck replacement reserve. Will seconded.**

Will asked how employees will be notified. Arjay said there will be an ad posted. He will take care of notifying the fire department and Erik will take care of notifying other employees.

**The motion was passed.**

Arjay said the fire department plans to invite donors to an event at the fire station to thank them, maybe in August.

***12. Sole Source Requests for Mitigation Work on JFD and Lower Storage Building***

Erik said it has been hard to get contractors to come look at our projects. DBI has done wonderful work for us. He would like the board's permission to authorize a sole source contract with DBI for mitigation work at the lower storage building (raising the boiler and strapping down fuel tanks) and at the fire station (elevating items including the compressor for the air tank, bunker gear, washer and dryer, circuit breaker panel and radios.)

**Will moved to authorize a sole source contract with Donald Blake Inc. for mitigation work on the Johnson Fire Department building and the lower storage building, Ken seconded and the motion was passed.** (Arjay and Gidget left at 7:23.)

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

Erik read his report:

On May 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> I attended the VT City & Town Managers Association Spring Meeting and Conference, attending several sessions that will enhance my abilities to lead the Village recovery, and networking with my peers from across the state. I was also elected as a member of the Board of Directors.

Matt Champney started as the new apprentice line worker and is doing a great job and fitting in well with the crew and staff. He has been baptized by fire, as we have had 2 water breaks since his arrival.

We have been assigned a new FEMA PDMG, our 3<sup>rd</sup> since the flood. As much turmoil as it can be changing FEMA contacts, this one is a very positive change. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> one was not getting anything done, even though Perry has been outstanding in feeding them everything they need in a most timely manner. This new one appears Very organized, focused, and motivated to obligate projects. Finally!

On that note, I added LCPC staff to our weekly FEMA PDMG meetings as Seth in particular has a long history with dealing with FEMA and is good at digging in and forcing answers from FEMA on stuff they like to pass the buck on.

We sourced a new bulletin board for outside the municipal building, and I negotiated with Tom to have the highway crew do the install as the Water & Light crew has done the last 2 siding cleanings alone and they are just way overtasked already this summer with the addition of moving water & sewer structures for the VTRANS project on top of the aggressive priority list I have given them.

I sent the entire crew to a Confined Space Entry/Trenching and Excavation Safety class on Matt's second day. This low-cost training was very timely, as they used it at 1am that Friday when the College Hill line leak appeared. The class also counts towards education hours on Nate's water operator's license.

On Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, Nate called me at 1:15am to inform me of a significant water break at the intersection of School St and College Hill. While I was scheduled to have that day off and normally do not respond personally to those jobs, due to the location likely effecting the elementary school schedule, as well possibly the college, and the likelihood of a boil water order on a major holiday weekend, I put on my Carhart's and responded to the dig site. Along with assisting with the repair, I stayed in constant contact with both the Superintendent of schools and the elementary school principal as we assessed their options of cancelling school or a late arrival. I was able to guide principal to draft his late arrival statement and sit on it until 5:40am. This worked out great as the crew had the water repaired in time for me to tell him not to send it out. They had a normal school day with the exception of bottled water & bag lunches. The superintendent and principal both expressed their gratitude for the level of communication, cooperation, and the speed of repair. I then helped Luke (Dan & Tim were both on vacation) collect coliform samples that he rushed to the lab to ensure the boil notice was as short as possible. Nate's crew hand delivered boil notices to every address effected while I sent the certification to the state. I had the lab call me as soon as their final report was published on Saturday, and deployed Nate to issue notices to the affected addresses that the boil was lifted. This all happened before noon. This being an immediate emergency break, there was no prior notice for those affected, and we weren't knocking on doors at 2am. Also, in my 30+ years' experience of doing utility repairs & boil notices, I have found it is far less confusing to the general public to keep the boil notice notification local to only those effected, as no matter how clearly you stress that it only effects these certain addresses, you get a multitude of calls from all over the system asking what they should do about their water. This is an unnecessary public worry, and a major waste of staff time.

The last week of May, we coordinated with the VTRANS project staff for a date of Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup> to dig the known water leak in front of 261 Lower Main East. On Thursday May 30<sup>th</sup> we distributed notices to the addresses that may have a water interruption during the leak. On Friday May 31st, I sent out a FPF detailing the work, who may lose water service, and the one-way traffic work zone on Main Street. Two very different circumstances and locations called for different levels of public notice. If we had a large area effected, I'd send out a VT-Alert as well, as I did twice for the planned power outage tomorrow and Wednesday.

BJ said a lot of people were wondering if the school had a boil notice if that meant they also had one. It might be helpful to put out a notice to all customers saying which area was affected. GiGi said residents were texting her. She was thinking there might be a better way to let people know the situation. Does it cost us money to put out a Vermont Alert notice? Erik said no. GiGi asked if it would have been appropriate to do that. Will said he thinks Erik's explanation is that if we did that we would get a lot more calls from people asking if they were affected. Erik only contacted those who were affected. He suggested that in the future board members can ask people to call the village if they wonder whether they are affected.

BJ asked if we have good testing equipment for confined spaces and keep up on calibrations. Erik said our policy is that employees do not go into confined spaces. The part of the Confined Space Entry/Trenching and Excavation Safety class they used was the trenching and excavation part. If someone needs to go into a confined space we contact a company that can do it properly. The training is so employees know what not to do and so they can learn trenching and excavation safety.

**14. Other Business**

GiGi said the Lamoille County Planning Commission Marvin Awards are tomorrow night. Two lifetime achievement awards will be given out to Johnson residents – one to Allen and Darlene Lamos and one to Alice Whiting. The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and VTrans will get a project design award. GiGi will represent the village. *(Rosemary left at 7:36.)*

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

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept. –

35 Railroad St disco/reco for new double meter socket

25 VtRt15W Outage was the main breaker in the store

203 River Rd East removed service

67 Lamoille View Dr blinking lights caused by a tree that brushed the line at the Sub

59 Railroad St Outage was unknown customer had power

Cut trees at 698 Clay Hill Rd

Cut trees at 11 Sinclair Rd

111 Sinclair Rd called out for no power cause was a blown transformer

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

Water/Sewer

Lowered Valve box at 80 Pearl St

Water Leak on the 8” main at intersection of College Hill Rd and School St

Water Leak at 261 LME on the 4” main

Main Valve leaking by at the intersection of 100C and 15 re closed the valve and leak stopped

Lowered Valve Boxes by 267 LME, intersection of 100C and 15, and Woolen Mills for States paving project

Cold Spring drain was plugged

Cleaned up trucks and equipment after both Main Breaks

General Dept. –

Completed street sweeping

Hung/removed Banner for the College

Hung US flags around the Village

Helped removed boxes from the Vault with the Town Crew

Safety –

Safety meeting with NEPPA in June was on Pole Top/ Bucket Rescue

Nate, Jeff, Chan, and Matt took Confined space/ Trenching Safety class at VRWA

Ken asked about the town permit for banners on Pearl St. Erik said he asked Tom for it and we are waiting for it. Ken said no banners should fly on Pearl St. until we have that permit.

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

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

Johnson Fire Department Report

*Apr. 26 – May 30, 2024*

JFD responded to 13 calls. 11 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 2 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 93 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 2 – vehicle crashes, 4 – automatic alarms, 1 – CO alarm, 1 – medical assist, 1 – odor investigation, 2 mutual aid (structure fires in Morrisville & Stowe) and 2 – other (public assist & lines down in roadway)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 10

Total hours of service was: 199



Other:

We had a firefighter attend a Surface Water Rescue Technician training course in Saranac, NY

We received and put into service a back ordered portable ventilation fan (from flood damaged inventory).

We put into service two new LED lit stop/slow paddles as a safety upgrade for traffic flagging duties.

**17. Other Business**

Ken said the village has never had a right of way permit for the wires used to hang banners on Pearl St. The town agreed to give us a blanket permit at no charge. They also talked about giving us a blanket permit to cover repairs on town road rights of way.

**18. Pre-submissions of FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Projects**

Erik said the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is part of the FEMA process that is now 100% funded, with no match. He would like to put in pre-applications for projects such as alum chemical pump replacements, relocation of the WWTF and development of flood benching at the WWTF site. Pre-application costs us nothing and gets us in line for money. The board agreed Erik should submit pre-applications.

**19. Tatro Water & Wastewater Allocation Applications for Railroad St. and River Road East**

Erik said Tatro got preliminary approval in 2022 for allocations for two 8-unit apartment buildings but no one signed the approval. He has already paid his fees. He would normally be at the point of asking for an extension but because the original approval was never signed Erik suggests just signing it now.

**Will moved to approve and sign water and wastewater allocations for the Tatro buildings on Railroad St. and River Road East, Ken seconded and the motion was passed.**

**20. Communications During Utility Issues**

GiGi said what she wanted to discuss was already covered under the village manager's report.

**21. Discuss Point of Sale (POS) System for Village Accounts**

BJ said Jeff would like to put in a POS system at the garage for parts. He has used one at a previous job and says it is a lot more efficient. Jeff is willing to take on the computer work if Nate doesn't want to do it and he is willing to look into what products are available that would be suitable.

Will asked what the rough cost would be. BJ said it could be a few thousand. He would guess it would be \$5K or less. Will said we are underfunded and looking for a rate increase. We can't afford the system now and any numbers Jeff finds won't be relevant when we are able to purchase the system. BJ said the cost could be a lot less than \$5K and it will be more efficient so it will save staff time. Will said he would like to cap how much time Jeff spends on this. Ken suggested Jeff spend up to 4 hours to come up with a proposal for the next meeting. Erik said he is talking about doing research on his computer at home. He said VPPSA thinks they have found a good candidate for billing software for smaller utilities. Maybe we can see if it has a POS element.

The board agreed Jeff can look into a POS system.

**22. Review and Possibly Approve Revised Discharge Ordinance**

Erik said he was asked to revisit the firearm discharge ordinance and bring it up to date with Vermont law and the state constitution. He added a sentence stating "This ordinance shall not prevent the discharge of firearms during the legal taking of game while hunting or trapping as guaranteed by 24

V.S.A. § 2295 and § 67 of the Vermont Constitution.” Ken said if the board approves this change then it has be warned for 60 days before it takes effect.

**Ken moved and Will seconded to approve the revised Village of Johnson Firearm Discharge Ordinance.**

GiGi asked if people can fish with firearms. Erik said it is legal to shoot pike. Will said it is legal to shoot carp. There is a season and these species do not occur in the Lamoille River. GiGi asked, are we allowing people to shoot in a residential area? Will and Ken said within legal limits for taking of game. Erik said people can’t shoot within 100 ft. of a building. Will said it is against the Vermont constitution to prohibit the taking of game. Erik said the ordinance doesn’t nullify other laws like reckless endangerment. Will said people can legally shoot pests even with this ordinance in place.

**The motion was passed.**

**23. Designation of Liaison to State Ethics Commission**

Erik said the state legislature voted for and the governor allowed to pass a new municipal ethics law. Most of its provisions go into effect next January. Training requirements go into effect next September. Within 30 days of passage of the law we have to designate an ethics liaison to be a contact person with the State Ethics Commission. **Ken moved to designate Erik Bailey as liaison to the State Ethics Commission, GiGi seconded and the motion was passed.**

**24. Other Business**

Erik said Perry sent an update of what has been going on with FEMA reimbursement. Ken suggested that Erik summarize it in an email. Erik said so far we have spent just over \$50K on MRI’s services. That is all reimbursable in the end. They are doing our FEMA filings.

**25. Executive Session – Employee Evaluation**

**Ken 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), Will seconded and the motion was passed at 8:03.** Ken said the executive session would include the trustees and Erik. The board came out of executive session at 8:44. No action was taken.

**26. Adjourn**

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:44.**