

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, JULY 8, 2024

Present:

Trustees: GiGi Beach, Steve Hatfield, Will Jennison (arrived 6:42), BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Alec Jones, David Bergh, Drake Turner, Charles Flaum, Mike Dunham, Jon Gregg, Louise Von Weise, Diane Lehouiller, Lisa Crews, Lynda Hill, Margo Warden, Casey Romero, Diana Osborn, Sonja Kivela, Kim Goodell, Greg Tatro, Sue Lovering, Brian Vandorn, several other community members

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:00. He noted that tomorrow is the one year anniversary of last year's flood. We recovered fairly well but there is still a lot of recovery to do. We will move forward and hope it doesn't happen again.

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

GiGi said the Johnson Works item can be deferred to the future.

3. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

BJ moved to approve the minutes of June 10, 2024, GiGi seconded and the motion was passed.

4. President of VT State University Discusses the Future of Johnson Campus

Ken said the trustees asked Erik to contact Vermont State University president David Bergh. We had a lot of questions from residents about the future of the college and the trustees have concerns about the future for utilities.

Steve asked what the plans are to deal with the infrastructure or do something else with it. President David Bergh introduced himself. He said he spent 19 years working at the Johnson campus earlier in his career. He served on the Johnson Planning Commission for several years and represented Johnson on the Lamoille County Planning Commission board, which he chaired. He was also involved on the Laraway board. He has a very good understanding of this community. The support level from the governor and the legislature is the best he can recall. As part of that support, the state wants Vermont State to maintain its physical campuses as vibrant campuses. The Johnson campus will stay here and continue operating. Across all 5 campuses, the university has about 30% more infrastructure than is needed. The campuses were built at a different time with different demographics. There were more 18-22 year olds at that time. What they are trying to do at the Johnson campus is similar to what they want to do on all campuses – determine the core spaces they need and invest in upgrading them to meet the needs of current students and have thoughtful conversations about what to do with spaces they identify as not needed. At Johnson they know they have space beyond what they need. They are looking at ways that space can be beneficial to the community. Some buildings on other campuses are past their prime and not worthy of investment but he doesn't think there are any in that category at the Johnson campus. There are some buildings that are good candidates for repurposing.

Steve asked what enrollment is for the freshman class this year. President Bergh said overall Vermont State first year student deposits are about 7% ahead of last year. Many schools nationwide are announcing lower enrollments compared to last year due to issues with applying for federal financial aid that affected all colleges.

Steve asked, it is viable to continue the programs at Johnson? President Bergh said yes.

GiGi asked about the breakdown of on-campus vs. online students. President Bergh said he didn't have that information with him. He said there have been a couple of years in a row when student numbers have been lower. It is a 4-year cycle, so it will take time to build up the numbers.

Steve asked about numbers of full-time and part-time employees and whether the university is planning to keep them all. President Bergh said no changes are planned.

GiGi said her understanding is that passes for the SHAPE facility are available for community members. Will that facility continue to be maintained for students and the community? Is there potential for more of a partnership, such as offering swimming lessons to elementary school students or other things to engage the community? President Bergh said the university wants to explore increased partnerships whenever they can. They do plan to continue to use the SHAPE facility for students and the community and to explore more programming. GiGi said she would love to be involved in that.

BJ said there are rumors of businesses using the campus space. Is anything like that going on? President Bergh said he thinks there will be potential to have interesting conversations about creative uses of the campus. There is no specific plan in the works now with any individual or business. They want to make sure what they do is done in an integrated, thoughtful way. They need to look not only at repurposing buildings but also at investing in parts of the campus that are identified as critical. They will make an investment of probably close to \$3 million on the Johnson campus for the nursing program. Bids are out for that right now and he thinks the work is anticipated to take place next summer. Jon Gregg asked what building is being renovated with the \$3 million. President Bergh said he thinks the upper portion of the Library Learning Center is part of it. Some of the design is still in discussion.

Jon asked what age student the nursing program is for. President Bergh said they try to meet Vermonters at all stages of life. They have a lot of non-traditional students. They have programs for those coming straight out of high school and they are also partnering with hospitals to provide opportunities for people already working in healthcare to increase their credentials. They provide credentials ranging from a certificate to a master's degree. He would have to confirm whether the master's will be offered in Johnson.

BJ asked what the capacity was at the Johnson campus prior to COVID and what it is now. President Bergh said at one point the residential campus capacity was 550. It would be the same currently, but a lot of the capacity is not being used. There are entire buildings and sections of buildings that are not being used. They are launching recruitment strategies to try to get more students.

Ken said his biggest concern is utilities. Within the last 2 years the village gave the Johnson campus a \$2500 meter to help them figure out how to save money. Water usage is down about 20%, along with sewer and electric. Our sewage treatment plant was destroyed. Hopefully we are going to rebuild it. What goes on at the campus affects plans for the plant. Is the university considering what happens at GMTCC and the possibility of merging their classes with classes at the university? President Bergh said he doesn't know of any specific pursuit of a partnership with GMTCC, but that is in the category of things they are interested in exploring. The university does have apprenticeship programs. Those tend to be based at the Randolph campus. There is no reason they couldn't explore a partnership with

the tech center program. They are looking for those kinds of relationships anywhere they can find them.

Ken said his other concern is that in the past the college has given the village \$6K annually for emergency services calls. That went away. Is there any chance of it returning? President Bergh said he would be happy to look into it. He was not aware of it.

Ken said every Johnson resident's taxes just went up by over 20%. When will the university's PILOT payment be adjusted? Their taxes are going down and other residents' taxes are going up. Erik Bailey said the PILOT payment is set by the legislature, not the university. President Bergh said he can get more information on it.

Erik Bailey said he was recently talking to someone involved in college enrollment who said they were just now noticing an uptick in students wanting to be back on campus. He asked if President Bergh is seeing that as well. President Bergh said overall Vermont State enrollment is 7% above last year, but that is not the case on the Johnson campus. Enrollment there is much flatter. They are seeing that people discovered the convenience of doing things online during COVID so there is more demand for flexible online course delivery, but people also discovered the limitations of online classes and want more in-person opportunities. He has heard a lot of positive feedback from students about being able to take classes online at a different campus. He has heard that that has increased the quality of course conversations. He agrees that there is a desire to have some sense of return to normalcy. One admissions lead said this spring that it was really the first time admissions events felt like before COVID.

Erik asked if Johnson still remains the primary teacher college in Vermont. President Bergh said there are education courses at Johnson. Teacher education is part of the legacy and identity of Lyndon and Castleton as well. He thinks Johnson is especially identified with that. That is still part of the offerings.

Kim Gellatly asked what happened with the library. Did it go digital? President Bergh said it remains open. It is not all digital. They still have books. Best practice in library oversight calls for periodically updating the collection and removing items. That continues, but they continue to have print materials in addition to more robust online access.

Diane Lehouiller said she came in late and doesn't know if President Bergh talked about the vision for this campus. President Bergh said there is no plan to close this campus. There is a plan to invest in facilities deemed core to the campus while having thoughtful conversations about parts of the campus that might not be needed. There may be an intersection with community needs, for instance with local agencies that need a physical location. Maybe if they were located on campus students could have internships with them. They would like any decisions about the campus to happen in an organized fashion.

Diane said this is an art town. She asked if there are connections with the Studio Center. President Bergh said he would like there to be more. There are conversations planned. Goddard College is one of several New England schools with robust arts programs that recently closed. There are not many arts schools left in New England. There will always be interest in the arts and students who are interested need a place to go. Vermont State is talking with Goddard about ways to connect some of those students.

Diane said she thinks it would be helpful to the village and town if updates came from President Bergh stating what is going on. Many people feel the Johnson campus is going away. It is really demoralizing. If he can communicate better people would really appreciate it.

Charles Flaum said the music and media arts programs are being closed. Vermont State is now talking about bringing in nursing. Are any other programs being brought in to help counteract the loss of what has been pulled away? President Bergh said there have been some painful cuts and reductions recently across the university. There was a mandate from the state to reduce by \$25 million and maintain the 5 campuses to maintain state support. The relationship with the state is currently the strongest it has been in his memory. But for years the university has not been funded at the level they would have wanted. If they want to continue serving students they have to provide programs desired by students. They can't cut their way to success. He thinks they have cut about as much as they can. They need to be smart about where they grow and invest. They have to be smart and research-based in deciding what programs will bring more students to their campuses and intersect with the expertise of their faculty. New program exploration is a priority. They will be looking at new academic programs. Charles asked, nothing else is on the table? President Bergh said nothing for Johnson beyond nursing.

Charles asked what the target is for student participation in the nursing program for the first and second years. President Bergh said he doesn't have those numbers. They eventually want to serve 1000 students across the state. The nursing program will continue to be statewide.

Diana Osborn said she teaches in the university's paramedicine program. She is a graduate of that program. When she was at Vermont Tech she had to go to Rutland to get the clinical training time she needed. Currently paramedic students can't get into hospitals to get the training they need. She is worried that if we are going to have more nursing students there will not be enough clinical training opportunities. She wonders how many other career paths are also reliant on opportunities in the community and is concerned that those may not be built up at the pace students will need. President Bergh said she is right that there needs to be an investment in the medical sector to support this. The feedback they get is that hospitals need more students and interns. Ensuring there is appropriate clinical support is part of the assessment as those programs come online. We need more nurses and nursing instructors in Vermont so the nursing program checks a lot of boxes in terms of meeting the mission of the university. It is a positive example of partnership with private and public industry.

Diana said she wanted to put in a plug for turning as many certificate programs as possible into associate's degree programs.

Margo Warden asked what the top 3 programs are that still remain at the Johnson campus. President Bergh said to him Johnson has always been the arts college. Johnson is known for human services. Its clinical mental health program is really robust.

Margo asked, the university has reached out to try to get Goddard students here? President Bergh said yes, and instructors as well. Prescott College in Arizona is the preferred transfer partner, but many students may not want to go to Arizona. He anticipates we will see some students from those programs.

Margo asked, with Johnson no longer having music or theater, is the Dibden Center being looked at in terms of how it can benefit the community? President Bergh said to him it is a state of the art

performance center. It is not on the list of buildings they see going away. He thinks they need to find ways to get more utilization. He thinks this is a chance to look at bringing more things in to use that venue and think creatively about things that could happen there.

Lynda Hill asked about the status of McClelland Hall. President Bergh said it is empty. A community member asked if it has been sold. President Bergh said there was a news story saying there was a Bernie Sanders earmark associated with it and that Lamoille Housing Partnership was going to acquire it but there is no immediate plan for that building. That is the kind of use for it that would make sense. Lynda asked if it is on the market. President Bergh said no. The university is working in identifying buildings that could be targets for alternative uses and McClelland is on the list. But there are no ongoing conversations about plans for any building on campus.

Lynda asked about the President's House. President Bergh said the same is true of that building. Lynda asked, it is not on the market? President Bergh said no. But those two buildings would be logical targets for alternative future uses.

Peter Hammond said there was a news story that made it sound like it was a done deal that Lamoille Housing Partnership would buy McClelland Hall. He is interested in knowing what the mechanism will be for the community to have input into decisions like that before they are announced. President Bergh said he thinks most people thought what was proposed with Lamoille Housing Partnership made sense. It might be a great project for McClelland but first they want to have conversations with the campus community, then with the larger community. They want to do due diligence and consider whether the idea makes sense. He introduced Drake Turner, the Vermont State Colleges System director of external and government affairs. He said there will be a planning and information breakfast in Johnson in a couple of weeks that is an opportunity for community input. Drake said it is July 21. Erik Bailey said it is from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. They will be talking about how the Vermont State Colleges System can best support communities. Part of the discussion will be input on physical spaces. Drake said those who want to attend are being asked to RSVP. People who are interested can email her. She will follow up with the board on the best way to get the word out about the breakfast.

Alan Lehouiller said he has some major concerns about what is going on at the Johnson campus. He has heard it will be used for a prison, housing or a rehab center. He doesn't think any of that would be beneficial or integrate with students. He hopes the college can have the support of the trustees before anything is done there so the community can have input. The college is a vital part of our community. He loves the idea of the nursing program. Doing something related to the tech center would be good. He would like the university to inform the community and make sure we are part of decisions. President Bergh said a critical thing they have to consider is that the campus needs to be a desirable place for students to come to. Whatever they do, they don't want to take away from that. A lot of people don't realize that the campuses were deliberately placed where they are in order to provide opportunities in underrepresented areas of the state. It is important for them to continue to be anchors economically and otherwise. The only way to do that effectively is to communicate with the community. Alan asked if President Bergh can make sure that before anything goes on he will talk to the trustees and ask for their support. President Bergh said he and Drake can flag this for process. He thinks they would want community engagement in advance on any significant changes. Lynda Hill said she thinks the town is just as important as the village in that discussion.

Lisa Crews said at the time she graduated from Johnson State in the mid 90's it was really vibrant. She thinks the key was that it was affordable. She encourages thinking about how to make it

affordable. President Bergh said he thinks a real push in the next legislative cycle will be towards affordability. He wants the university to be as affordable as possible. But realistically they are not going to see the student populations of the 80's and 90's again.

Sonja Kivela said she has been a student at the university for 3 years. She wants to thank President Bergh for being here. She wants to let the town know that he has been the most communicative administrator. It has been really tricky watching the staff changes. There are crucial staff and departments that are not really being supported. It is really hard to see the buildings that are in use falling apart and to know that some key staff and faculty have been let go. She knows it makes sense financially to some degree. She thinks it affects enrollment when there are staff who are saying they don't care about this university. That is a problem. There are issues with specific staff that seem to be getting worse. She worries that is affecting students and their interaction with the community.

President Bergh said he came into this role in mid November soon after employee reductions were announced. He spent much of his first semester on what felt like an extended listening tour, hearing about people's angst and anger and sadness and also things people loved. We are at the point where people have to decide if they are going to get on board and move things forward. It is appropriate for people to have an opportunity to vent but there is a point where it becomes counterproductive and impacts the ability to recruit and retain students. He heard that message at the statehouse. They said they had heard enough negativity. The university needs to be a safe environment where people can raise concerns constructively but people need to work together to make the best of it going forward.

Sonja said the Johnson campus has magic. She lost two of her programs and stayed at the campus because of how fabulous the Johnson campus is and how much she has grown being part of the community. They have lost people who worked there 30 years who would have died for that campus and some newer staff don't care about it and are just there for the paycheck. There are some staffing issues they still need to work through. President Bergh said one thing that was important to him in the spring, along with giving people the opportunity to air grievances, was having people have a chance to refocus on their work and the students.

Kim Goodell said the campus needs to get back its customer service. They don't have a registrar or financial aid office. It's not vibrant. They need to figure out how to get students back on that campus. President Bergh said he agrees, but it will take some time. He doesn't think they have fully hit their stride in terms of what it means to operate at the current staffing level. There are still gaps that affect student experience. They need to address those and they need more students.

Lynda Hill asked how they recruit. President Bergh said there are fewer traditional college age students, but there are a few places where the university has a great opportunity. Vermont has a bigger gap than most states between high school graduation and college. Being Vermont State University now gives the university credibility and visibility out of state. Admissions employees have confirmed that. The Vermont name carries a lot of cachet. In the last year they have started working more collaboratively with UVM instead of seeing it as a competitor. UVM has been a very popular destination for out of state students for a long time. When there are quality students they can't take, they have agreed to refer them to Vermont State. There is a hungry, excited group of people looking at Vermont State's enrollment and marketing strategies and they are finding a lot of places for improvement. They are balancing decreases in traditional college age students with more opportunities for later in life students. The national closure rate for US colleges is one per week. Most are cutting programs, consolidating or merging. Many are seeing drop-offs this year due to the

FAFSA issues. Compared to last year it is a very challenged landscape and where Vermont State is this year is a positive indicator of where they can go.

Donna Griffiths said her daughter is a student at one of the Vermont State campuses and she has been shocked by the low quality of instruction. She asked if improving that is a goal. President Bergh said that hasn't been common feedback. He is involved in tenure review. There is a robust and rigorous review process that takes into account student feedback. The quality of instruction hasn't been a widespread concern. They pride themselves on having high quality instruction. If that is not happening it needs to get addressed.

Ken suggested maybe President Bergh can come back in the fall. Will said the trustees want more communication from the university. That will make people feel better.

Ken said the college was a wonderful, vibrant community in the 90's. He suggested passing on to legislators what an economic impact the college has on the community. Any more loss to the college could damage our community beyond repair. He could see why some people might be hesitant to go to the Johnson campus because there is not much in town, but if more people could come that could help Johnson.

The board thanked President Bergh for coming. Most meeting attendees left at this point.

5. ***Discuss and Approve Firm Selection to Complete AAI/ASTM Phase I Environmental Site Assessment***

Alec Jones from LCPC said we got 3 responses to the RFP. The 3 companies will all provide virtually the same thing. The biggest difference is cost. Stone Environmental's bid was over the allotted grant amount. KAS is currently doing a lot of projects outside of this area. Weston & Sampson's bid is in the middle pricewise. They have historical knowledge of the site. They did the area wide brownfields study. LCPC recommends Weston & Sampson. Their proposal includes questionnaires for village and town residents.

Will asked the difference in prices. Alec said KAS bid \$2,075. Stone Environmental bid more than the grant amount and Weston & Sampson bid \$3,500. The grant will cover the full amount.

Will moved to accept the \$3,500 bid from Weston & Sampson to complete the AAI/ASTM Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

Alec said this will strictly be a historical review of past studies. He believes there will be a site visit but no actual testing of the site. It will be fully paid for with MERP funding. This is being done because the garage is on a known brownfield site. The results will inform us on next steps. It shouldn't take more than a few months to do the study. If the timeline becomes an issue he is sure we can work with Weston & Sampson. A Phase 1 assessment is only good for 6 months so decisions on next steps will need to be made quickly after the report is received.

Will moved to authorize Erik to sign the contract with Weston & Sampson for the AAI/ASTM Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

6. ***Treasurer's Report: Review & Approve Bills and Warrants / Budget Status Report / Action Items***
BJ mentioned that there are some new financial reports in the packet that can be discussed more at the next meeting.

Erik said our rate case has gone to the attorney for final legal review. We are requesting a 10.895% increase.

The board discussed electric usage and sales. Rosemary said she thinks it is worth keeping an eye on expenses. She noted that the water department has had some major breaks.

Rosemary said the tax rate needed is 18 cents. Erik said that is basically the same as last year. Rosemary said it is about the same even though the grand list went down a little. Will said we will see another hit in the future with the buyouts. Rosemary said yes, if buyouts go through the town will own the property. She thinks 8 or 10 buyouts have been requested so far in the village. The valuation of the grocery store building could also have an impact. At this point the valuation has not changed.

Will moved to set the 2024 tax rate at 18 cents, allowing a 45 day grace period, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

Greg Tatro said he had stopped in because he heard something mentioned earlier in the meeting about a recovery center at the college and he wanted to clarify that Jenna's Promise has never talked about or thought about a recovery center at the college. They are pretty much done building.

Rosemary said the office has been moved back downstairs. It is still getting organized.

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

Erik read his report:

There has been much progress in the FEMA claims process of late with the majority of projects obligated and working through the federal and state systems. The focus shifts to the big, and long-term WWTF projects. On that, Wayne Elliott, Dan Copp and I met last week to walk through the project status of what it would require to rebuild in place up to current codes & standards, and above the flood elevations, this is part of the required process regardless of what decision is made about the WWTF rebuild. As much as we have been focused on a replacement elsewhere, the plan the engineers have developed is actually quite feasible, flood-resistant and may be our best bet. AS The major advantage to this process is that even if it goes over budget (which happens quite frequently), it would be a covered FEMA cost. The same cannot be said for if we move the WWTF, there is no budget flexibility there.

Travis from Stowe Builders is currently working estimates for the flood mitigation work at the Fire station and the lower storage building. Once those are in and approved by FEMA Mitigation we will get on their schedule ASAP.

Our electric rate case is finished and in final legal review before being submitted to the PUC later this week. We are requesting a 10.895% rate increase.

The offices will be closed until 1pm tomorrow as all staff will be in CPR/AED/1st Aid training that Jason sourced for free.

8. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report submitted by Dan Copp:

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 June.
- Sugarbush WWTF came and got 3 loads (12,000 gallons) of seed sludge from us to restart their plant after an upgrade.
- Mowed and trimmed all plants and pump stations and the reservoir.
- Attended an in person meeting at the Village Hall with Erik, Perry, LCPC and FEMA representatives and then gave them a tour of the WWTF.
- Pumped out the rest of the partially contaminated alum into 2 totes. We will slowly feed back into the system. We received 1500 gallons of new alum. We were able to split a 5000 gallon load with Morrisville which gave us a savings of just over \$1000.
- Qual Cal calibrated and certified all of our lab equipment.

Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- Rotated the pumps at Katy Win.
- Assisted the Village crew with a leaking water Main valve under Rt 15.
- Assisted the village with digging for a leak on Lamoille View. No leak was found.
- Luke assisted the Village crew flushing hydrants for 2 days.
- Finished the painting at the Water Plant. We are going to use the remaining paint to touch up a few pipes and the floor at Clay Hill booster station.

9. *Electric/General Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept. –

Mutual Aid for Hyde Park 6Hrs

1375 Clay Hill Rd outage for owner digging up Secondaries

Outage for Prospect Rock Rd, lighting strike

Outage 70 Katywin West, blown transformer fuse and broken cutout on pole 294
In the Gulf

249 Gould Hill Rd outage, bad breaker

Consolidated set two poles, 282 LMW and 11 School St

Talked with Consolidated about River Rd East pole attachments which brought up our Joint Ownership agreement still working that

Outage for main transformer maintaence

Trimmed trees at 1066 100C and Sinclair Road

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

Water/Sewer -

Replaces Sewer manhole base and top by the Woolin Mills that was hit by the pavement miller

Dug water leak at 65 Lamoille View Drive, no leak, still looking for it

Flushed Hydrants

Town hit the Hydrant on River Rd East with a Brush hog, waiting on parts to fix it

Located water valve and sewer manhole at the entrance to Park St for Pavers

General Dept. –

Painted Crosswalks

Hung banner for the Flood remembrance

Work at Town Clerks removing files from the Vault

Worked on the patio area at Town Clerks

Helped the Town out with a truck driver

Replaced pump in Cold Spring

Removed tree that fell in the sidewalk at 95 Railroad St

Safety –

Jeff took a welding class through the state

No NEPPA Safety meetings this month

10. Fire Department Report and Action Items

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

Johnson Fire Department Report

May 31 – June 27, 2024

JFD responded to 8 calls. 6 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 2 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 50 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 4 – vehicle crashes, 2 – automatic alarm, 1 – vehicle fire, and 1 – odor investigation

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 10

Total hours of service was: 63

Other:

We had two firefighters attend a 3 day Rescue Boat Operations class in Vergennes, achieving individual State recognized certifications.

We hosted the JES Kindergarten classes for a station tour.

In cooperation with the Green Mountain ATV Club, our Department and Northern Emergency Medical Services participated in a UTV orientation to familiarize responders with recreational vehicle construction, hazards, and possible extrication techniques. This planning exercise will lead to a hand-on UTV crash training later this fall. We are grateful to the Green Mountain ATV Club for being a partner in these efforts.

11. Treasurer's Report (continued)

Ken asked about the expense coding issues that were brought up last time. Erik said just one has not been corrected. He wasn't sure what to do about it, since it reflects what was in the budget. He will correct it in next year's budget.

BJ asked for a progress report on training in June with Susan, Rosemary and Erik. Rosemary said they haven't done any training yet. Susan has been on vacation. They will get started this coming month.

12. Discussion and Direction Concerning Sidewalk Tree Protector Project

Sue Lovering said the tree board needs to replace 12 of the cages and grates for the Main Street trees. The grates are lifting because of tree roots and becoming a hazard and the cages are too small. Nate and Jason came up with a plan. She showed the board a picture of the chain barriers the tree board would like to put around the trees in place of the cages. They got grant money to do it. The town informed them that the village needed to take charge because they are village trees.

Ken asked, aren't the grates made to be cut as the tree grows? Sue said yes, but they are lifting up. Ken asked, what will we do when the trees start lifting our sidewalk? That is already happening in some places on Pearl St. and Main St. Sue said the tree board does not have trees planted on Pearl St. Ken said according to Nate two sidewalks are lifted about an inch and a half. If the grates are cut, won't they stay down? Sue said no, because the roots push them up. Also, moving them to weed around the trees takes a lot of time.

BJ asked how big the trees are supposed to get. Sue said the Japanese tree lilacs on the south side won't get much bigger. They aren't getting enough sun to grow much. The trees on the other side of the road probably won't get much bigger because their roots are so restricted. Size is considered when deciding which trees to plant, as well as how much salt and cold they can take. Not too many trees can grow in a street pit. Last year the tree board put an amelanchier by Merchant's Bank. That is more of a shrub that only gets 10 ft. tall. When Green Mountain Landscaping put the trees in they didn't pay attention to what trees should go where. Some should have been put in different locations. The town didn't have a tree board then.

Will asked what the timeline is on the grant work. Sue said it needs to be completed by the end of next summer. The amount of money is roughly \$13K. The tree board would really like to get the work

done this summer because next year they want to plant a lot of trees by the river and in the arboretum with grant money that is available.

BJ asked if the tree board has someone to do the work. Sue said no. The town road crew wanted to do it but the town decided they couldn't do it because the trees are village property. They suggested she find someone else to do it. They want to replace 12 tree protectors. They have already spent \$1K on some parts, so they have \$12K left. They need 48 bollards.

BJ asked why the town didn't want to do it. Did they say they needed permission from the village? Sue said she can't get a straight answer on that.

Ken said his suggestion is that the tree board find a contractor. The village crew doesn't have time.

Ken asked what the maintenance plan for the tree protectors is. Will the tree board repaint them? Are there plans to make sure they don't get rusty? Sue said she doesn't see them having to be painted every year. Justin at Danger House is using some special enamel on the finials as a donation. It is possible he might do the bollards. The tree board can paint them if needed. Ken said the board has been discussing that any committee that wants to do a project needs to present a maintenance plan.

Steve said with salt involved it sounds like a fair amount of maintenance will be needed. Will said not necessarily. Fire hydrants aren't painted every year and they are right in the salt path. Maintenance is needed, but not every year.

GiGi asked, they will be black? Sue said yes.

Sue asked about using concrete as an alternative. Will said he thinks that would not last as long. Mike said if the bollards were made of COR-TEN steel there would be no issues. BJ suggested the tree board look into using that type of steel.

Will moved to authorize the tree board to remove grates around trees in the village and replace the existing tree protectors with 4-post bollard and chain protectors using their grant funds, with no funds to come from the village. BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

Ken and Erik explained that 2 estimates are needed for the village procurement policy. Will said if the tree board can't get 2 estimates they should come back and talk to the board. Sue said she has no idea who to call. Will and Ken suggested contacting a landscape company or metal fabricator.

BJ moved to authorize Erik to accept a bid for the grate removal and tree protector project, GiGi seconded and the motion was passed.

13. Town/Village Website Future Plans

Ken said the town is in favor of doing a new website. We could work with them or we could do our own website. BJ said he doesn't mind the idea of a new website as long as the price stays about the same as we are paying now. The board agreed to look at what the town finds out about pricing for a new website.

14. Joint Meeting Topics and Schedule Options Discussion

BJ suggested discussing a split in the ownership of the land by Lendway Lane.

Mike Dunham suggested there could also be discussion on the town owning the municipal building and the village paying rent. Will asked which side Mike is on. Mike said he thinks the town should own it. It would be good for the village to have a fixed rate to pay per month. The town would assume all responsibility for maintenance and the village would pay monthly rent. GiGi said she thinks that is a wonderful idea. She is finished with the village paying 50%. Ken said he thinks it is a ridiculous idea because he doesn't think the town would give us 50% of the value of the building. The only way he would vote yes on that would be if there were an agreement that the town could not hang any banners or flags on the building unless the village agrees to it. Mike said he agrees that there should not be any banners on the municipal building. Steve said he is interested in the idea but he is not sure what all the advantages and disadvantages would be. BJ said he would be concerned about issues if we decided to move the wastewater treatment plant to the municipal building property. Ken said that could not happen unless we purchased the property from the town.

Mike suggested the mill house could be part of the discussion as well.

Ken said he and Eben Patch put off scheduling a joint meeting waiting to find out about the library grant, etc.

Will said it is rarely less expensive to rent than to own. He would need a minimum 5 year lease and then a maximum percentage increase beyond that to even consider the idea of renting from the town.

Ken said the joint meeting will probably be at the end of this month or the beginning of the next.

15. Other Business

The board agreed that Dan Copp does not need to come to meetings to give his report unless there is some issue he needs to explain.

16. Johnson Works Discussion

Mike asked if Johnson Works was going to be discussed. GiGi said that item is being put off. Mike asked if the group could be under the auspices of the village. Ken said as long as it was a village committee it could. GiGi said she is talking to the Secretary of State's office about whether the finances of a private group can be handled by a municipality.

17. Executive Session – Attorney-Client Communications

BJ moved to find that premature general public knowledge of confidential attorney-client communications would put the village at a substantial disadvantage, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

Ken moved to go into executive session to discuss attorney-client communications as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1), Will seconded and the motion was passed at 8:38.

The board came out of executive session at 9:00.

18. Executive Session – Employee Evaluation

BJ moved that the trustees alone enter executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) for the evaluation of a public officer or employee, Will seconded and the motion was passed at 9:02.

The board exited executive session at 9:11.

Steve moved that the trustees award Erik Bailey an extra 40 hours vacation time that is not subject to the annual maximum CTO limit and is good for the remainder of his contract in

recognition of the above and beyond performance during the flood and ever since during the recovery. Will seconded and the motion was passed.

19. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths