

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

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Alberto Della Torre

Absent: GiGi Beach

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 postpone the public hearing on the draft municipal plan until a representative from LCPC was there. No members of the public were present.

3. Shall All Village Trustee Meetings Open with the Pledge of Allegiance?

Ken said he asked Erik to put this on the agenda. **Will moved and BJ seconded to open all Johnson Village Trustee Board meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance.** Steve said he plans to abstain from voting. He has no problem with the Pledge but he feels sometimes symbolism like flags and the Pledge take on more importance than true service (for instance, in the military or the fire department), which is what he wants to honor. He feels that sometimes people do something symbolic like saying the Pledge and feel they have done their duty. But he doesn't feel strongly enough about it to not say the Pledge or try to stop the board from opening meetings with it. Ken said he understands what Steve is saying, but the American flag is for all American people, not just the military, which has its own flags. **The motion was passed.** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Will moved to approve the minutes of July 8 and July 22, 2024, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

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

The board reviewed current bank account balances. Rosemary said tax bills were sent out and are due September 13. Payments have started to come in. The town paid for its fire contract for the year. Waterville and Belvidere have each paid 50% of their annual fire department contract cost.

BJ commented that water department revenue is down quite a bit compared to past years. The closed grocery store was mentioned as a contributing factor. Erik said people have not needed to water their lawns and gardens as much this year.

Steve asked if there are any big water leaks currently. Erik said no. Water loss is so low that the professional leak detection service we had scheduled for August was postponed until the end of the season.

Ken asked how the training with Rosemary, Susan and Erik is going. Rosemary said she and Susan did some training. They have been working on setting up remote bank deposits. Those are going fine so far. They have a machine they can put the checks through and the information is sent to the bank.

Rosemary said electric revenue was 59% of budget for the first 7 months of the year. Power cost was 39% of budget for the first 5 months. The power bill for June was about \$70K. Water sales are at 53% of budget and sewer sales are at 56%.

6. Village Manager's Report and Action Items

Erik read his report:

The entire FT staff got Red Cross certified in 1st Aid, CPR, AED in a free program through VT Local Roads. Not only was it the most engaging CPR class I have taken, but it also saved us the \$660 for the time crew to take in through NEPPA.

The electric Rate Case has been filed with the PUC, rate notices have gone out to users, now we just wait for the rounds of questions and such before they authorize our new rate which will go into effect in December.

Hyde Park has a massive shortage in their line crew and has been leaning on us quite a bit. While it is a small income producer, it is putting us behind on Johnson projects, so I have instructed Nate to refuse any future Hyde Park jobs other than power outage help until we get caught up with summer tasks.

The sinkhole at the Town garage associated with the culvert that runs under the W&L garage's driveway and the Town garage has been rerouted by joint staff, and the old line filled with flowable concrete.

The Village has survived 2 more significant storm events. The anniversary flood on July 11, 2024 flooded to very near a level that would cause issues, but thankfully largely spared the Village. The remnants of Hurricane Debby last Friday did not cause any flooding locally, but we had some power outages associated with wind dropping trees on lines, which the crew got taken care of promptly.

I'm working with LCPC on a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program pre-application for the reclamation of the WWTF site if relocation is approved by FEMA.

Erik said he is getting quotes for propane from several suppliers. Board members suggested another supplier to check with. BJ asked if we are going to pick the propane supplier and the town is going to pick the heating fuel supplier, as was done previously. Ken said yes, but he would like to hear the fuel cost figures before we pick anything. He thinks the best way to handle it would be for the managers to get prices and present them to the boards at a joint meeting. BJ said he saw that the joint meeting was canceled. Ken said he and Eben agreed not to have a joint meeting until there are enough topics to make it worthwhile. **Will moved to authorize the chair to pick a propane supplier, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.** BJ asked if we have to vote to approve the selectboard choosing a fuel supplier. Ken said we will when we get numbers.

7. Electric/General Report and Action Items

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept.

Mutual aid for Hyde Park 28 hrs

Outage for Gould Hill Rd. – blown fuse due to solar

Brush cut/brush hogged around substation
Started brush hogging around the system
Cut brush at 1460 Clay Hill Rd.
Moved equipment from lower storage for flood and moved equipment back
Outage on the R4 due to a limb on the line behind the post office
Outage at 53 Katywin – blown fuse
176 West Settlement Rd. – tree on line
Met with VEC and Consolidated on West Settlement Rd. to discuss low lines near 96 West Settlement Rd. Consolidated is setting a pole
Did estimates for 72 LMW and 552 Railroad St.
Met with the Woolen Mills for new service for the Old Mill
Installed conduit bracket for new service at 11 School St.
Completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, substation check and dig safes

Water/Sewer

Fixed water leak at the intersection of College Hill Rd. and School St.
Fixed water leak at 65 Lamoille View Drive – found with new sewer camera
Moved the office trailer at the sewer plant, from the flood, for pick up
Town hit the hydrant on River Road East with a brush hog. Waiting on parts to fix it.
Brush hogged filter plant field
Dropped off 1” water meter and billed 93 River Rd. W.

General Dept.

Met with Jason about the River Rd. E. catch basins
Swept River Road W. and Railroad St. after flood
Work at town clerk’s moving downstairs
Dug the sinkhole with the town at the town garage
Fixed the walking path down to Beard’s Park for the town after the flood
Working with the town to install culvert and ditch to reroute the old culvert under the town garage
Changed flags on the Green and Town Clerk’s

Safety

All employees took CPR/AED/First Aid
No NEPPA safety meetings this month

Will asked what duties for the village the crew is behind on due to providing mutual aid for Hyde Park. Erik said concrete work, the big electric job on 100C and brush cutting. Ken asked if employees are still taking Friday afternoons off instead of banking CTO. Erik said they haven’t been doing that much recently. Ken suggested they should stop doing that for a while. The rest of the board agreed. (*Alberto Della Torre arrived at 6:23.*)

BJ asked how Jeff’s CDL training is coming along. Erik said the state has a low-cost CDL training program that Jason is going to give us information on. It is not Jeff’s fault that the training hasn’t happened yet.

Ken asked about the hydrant that was hit. Did it not have a flag? Erik said it had a flag but it was hit anyway. Overgrowth was as high as the flag. The town is paying for the damage.

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 20,000 gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing for the month of July.
- Mowed and trimmed all plants and pump stations and the reservoir.
- On July 9 we started prepping for potential flooding. We moved the mower and other big items to the village garage. We moved everything else that wasn't bolted to the floor to the press room where it would be high and dry. We abandoned the plant once again as the flood waters rose to the building. We had minimal seepage in the pump room. The rental trailer floated and was damaged again.
- Pratt and Smith electrical moved the transformers in the building to the break room. This has allowed us to move back into the main building and discontinue the rental office trailer. We got a couple of the used desks from the office that were flooded to use at the plant. All in all it's nice to be back in the building and be able to work without the annoying transformers.
- United Rental picked up the trailer and all damage is covered by the insurance policy we had with them.
- Participated in an interview with VT Public for how we are coping 1 year after the flood.
- Don Martin from Pump Control Solutions repaired and mitigated Highland Heights PS. He installed and raised the new control panel, installed new power leads from the meter and metal stairs with galvanized treads to reach the panel. It came out great.
- NRWA interviewed myself and Erik to put together a video for advocacy of resources for small systems.

Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- Rotated the pumps at Katy Win.
- Had another water break on School St. The repair was made by village crew and Tim drove the coliform samples to the lab and results were negative and the boil water notice was lifted.
- VRWA did a leak detection on Lamoille View and thought they had it pin pointed for the leak. Village crew dug it and it was not there. Nate located it further down the line and repaired the leak. We drove the coliform samples to the lab and results were negative and the boil water notice was lifted.
- I do not have water loss numbers yet but our water production is down drastically. We are producing 70,000 to 80,000 gallons per day. That is the lowest I have seen since taking over in 2018.

Ken asked if we ever got all repairs completed at the Katy Win pump house. Erik said no; that is something they are working on this summer. Ken suggested that should be moved higher on Dan's list of priorities.

9. Fire Department Report and Action Items

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

Johnson Fire Department Report
June 28 – July 25, 2024

JFD responded to 15 calls. 9 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 6 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 132 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 2 – vehicle crashes, 3 – automatic alarm, 1 – medical assist, 1 – CO alarm, 1 – odor investigation and 7 flood related (work detail/equip prep, haz-mat/haz-mat investigation, water rescues, and agency assist)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 11
Total hours of service was: 265

Other:

We have put the new UTV and enclosed trailer into service. We are preparing Thank You materials for our donors/supporters, and hope to have a formal presentation in September

Ken thanked the fire department for their outstanding performance, including rendering mutual aid to other towns.

10. Public Hearing on the Draft Johnson Municipal Plan

There were still no members of the public present. Alberto Della Torre of the Lamoille County Planning Commission asked if there were any comments on the draft plan.

Ken said the only recreation the plan supports is bicycling. Bringing in one ATV would have as much impact as bringing in 10 bicycles, but ATVs are not allowed. He doesn't see how we can put in a plan for economic impact or recreation when it is not inclusive. His vote will be no until that is corrected. The town has spent tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars and federal grant money on bicycles. They spent \$45-50K on a welcome center that only welcomes bicyclists and walkers. The recreation and economic impact sections only talk about bicycles.

Will said he agrees with Ken. The loss of the economic value of recreational vehicles is a great loss to this community. We get a lot of benefit from recreational vehicle clubs. Recently an ATV club donated thousands of dollars to the fire department for a UTV, which can be used for the bike path and backcountry hikers as well as the ATV community. The only issue he has heard about is noise. Some cars are much louder than ATVs. Not including ATVs in the municipal plan is a huge misstep and he will vote no on the plan. Erik said in communities that welcome ATVs the economic impact is obvious. Will said ATV riders also contribute to communities in ways other

than just spending money at businesses. Ken said no money comes to Johnson from bicyclists or hikers. Steve said they do eat at restaurants in town. Ken suggested that Alberto contact people in the Newport area, where ATV riders have a huge economic impact.

11. Website Discussion

Erik said the town and village currently pay \$443.76 per year for the website. The village's share of that is \$221.88. Ken said if the town wants an expensive new website we could have our own website for \$443.76 per year. Will asked what issues there are with the current website. BJ said the town wants more pages. Erik said for the village the current site is not bad. He noted that if the village had its own website the cost might be less than the current cost because the village needs fewer pages. **Will moved to table discussion on the website, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

12. Discussion Regarding Disposition of 180 Acres of Undeveloped Joint Property Behind W&L Garage

Ken said the chair of the selectboard is aware of the village's wishes. Ken doesn't think it is in the best interest of the village to be a realtor. The property was originally purchased for a well, correct? Rosemary said no, for garages. The town and village were originally planning to keep some land and subdivide and sell the rest. But the town went to the voters and they voted against selling it.

Erik showed an air photo of the property with a line showing where he suggests it could be split. There is apparently a mine shaft in one area and an abandoned dome water tank in another. There is a small piece of village-owned property that has a VAST building on it. Does the village want to keep owning that or have VAST own it?

BJ said the village currently owns half of 197 acres. If the town and the village each owned 98 acres, neither would have to get permission from the other to do what they wanted with the property. Ken said he would be more in favor of them buying us out. BJ said he thinks that would be fine. The whole point is to get our part sold to get some money. Ken agreed. He said he and BJ feel we should get money for the sewer plant by selling some property. But was the property bought for the general department? Rosemary said yes.

Erik said we also own property that is containment for the old water system. Selling that is also a possibility. Ken asked if it was bought through water and light or the general department. If it was bought by the general department we can't sell it and use the proceeds for water and light. Rosemary said it was probably bought for the water department. Rosemary said the village owns some land on West Settlement Road.

Will suggested putting together a list of all the properties the village owns that are not in use or needed in the future, along with which entity purchased them. He suggests we start by dividing off the part of the property needed for the garages. Then we could divide the rest either now or later. We could sell it jointly with the town or divide it. Ken said his ultimate goal is to get it back on the tax base. Houses could be built on it. Will suggested that Erik start finding out if the town administrator is on board with this idea and willing to take it to the selectboard to get it on their radar. He noted that the property is not in the village but selling it would help village taxpayers because they are town residents.

13. Executive Session

Will moved to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1) to discuss probable civil litigation, as premature public knowledge of the matter to be discussed would put the

village at a substantial disadvantage, BJ seconded and the motion was passed at 6:57. Ken said Erik and Rosemary would be included in the executive session. The board came out of executive session at 7:24. No action was taken.

14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths