

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2024

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Doug Molde, Meghan Rodier

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Ken called the meeting to order at 5:58.

2. The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge was recited.

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

No changes to the agenda were needed.

4. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Will moved to approve the minutes of September 9 and September 25, 2024, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.

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

Will noted that commercial electric use seems to be down. Erik pointed out that Jolley was recently closed for 3 weeks. Ken said the sewer plant is not running at full wattage. Erik said the grocery store is closed.

Rosemary said we got a million dollar ERAF advance today – the state's share of our FEMA reimbursement. Erik said the state is giving advances to Johnson and other communities that were hit the hardest by flooding. There are 3 levels of ERAF, based on how much planning and preparedness we have. Our community gets 12.5% ERAF reimbursement. Rosemary said she will apply the money to the sewer department. Erik said we will put it in CDs to earn more interest until we need to spend it.

Ken asked Rosemary to explain what was discussed at the last selectboard meeting about the ten cents on the grand list. Rosemary said there were some errors and omissions to the grand list involving three properties in the village. A Vermont Transco property was the biggest. Two other properties were missed on the grand list. The positive and negative changes almost balance out, resulting in about a \$2K difference. Once the grand list is fixed she will print out a report and the town will pay ten cents on the grand list based on the corrected amount. The selectboard will pay it at their next meeting.

Will asked what is happening with the properties in FEMA buyouts. Rosemary said we are taxing them. In a previous FEMA buyout the owner had to pay any back taxes for the buyout to go through.

Will asked if the town will receive the deeds to the properties after the buyout even if the property is in the village. Ken asked if FEMA would allow a buyout property to be used as a picnic or rest area. Erik said buildings can't be put up but park structures are allowed. There could be a playground. Ken said there can be no future development involving water, sewer or power.

Doug Molde said he thinks the properties will belong to the town. The rail trail committee is interested in parking, green space, and river access, especially bringing parking into the village, which is safer for long term parking. He has asked for a list of the buyout properties. The rail trail committee would like to keep an eye on them.

Rosemary said the auditors started last week. They came for a couple of days and will come for a couple more. They are telling her they will have all years done by the end of November. They gave a quote of \$15K for a 2024 audit. A single audit, which we may need, would cost an extra \$5K.

Will moved to authorize the chair to sign the letter of understanding to engage the auditors for a 2024 audit, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.

Rosemary said she has been doing training with the employees on employee maintenance for payroll. Today there was a notary public training.

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

Erik read his report:

Boom truck replacement update: Altec and the village have a P&S agreement for \$119K, a great bonus is they are going to ship it for no extra charge! Rosemary is securing a 10-year bond from the bank for the purchase. The wheels are the same size as the truck we are replacing, which has fairly new traction tires on it, so we will be swapping tires before we send the old one off to auction.

Water & Light Garage Project update: Weston and Sampson, the Ph1 ESA contractor is finishing up the ESA report, hopefully to me by Friday morning. Unofficial comments suggest there will be nothing in it to hold up our project.

AES, the architecture & engineering firm awarded the project has drafted a schedule that has this fully built in 2025, a scope of work, and an engineering agreement for \$149K, which is quite reasonable for the scope of work. I am ready to sign that contract as soon as we get the "green light" of the ESA coming back without complications. Alec Jones at LCP has Ken's cell number for him to sign it if the schedule does not line up before I go on vacation. Alec and I will be hosting a public information meeting regarding the CDS grant on Monday the 28th at 1pm, which is the earliest date possible considering the advertisement requirements. All parts of this project still are currently going forward at a very rapid pace.

The Village Crew is wrapping up many projects in preparation for winter. Jeff has worked with DMV on steps to schedule a CDL written exam to obtain his Learner's Permit and is actively studying in preparation for a soon to be scheduled exam. Last month I was amazed when our system water loss was at 10%. I am in awe this month as we are at 2%. That means we aren't even losing any to older meters being a tad slow. This is truly an unprecedented low for any municipality water department. Much credit to both Nate's and Dan's crews!

The Point of Sale/Inventory tracking software search is narrowing. It looks like QuickBooks Plus Online is the best blend of features, ease of use, and cost. Staff are going to check with the auditors on how they would like items costed, and we will wait to purchase the software until after an upgrade to the Water & Light garage internet service, which is currently almost

unusable. Nate and Jason are working on the internet project together as they share that service between garages.

The November Trustees Meeting will be on Wednesday November 6th, as the normal 2nd Monday is Veteran's Day.

He noted that the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the garage will hopefully be done by Friday. Unofficial comments indicate nothing was found to hold up the project.

Ken asked why we need high speed internet at the village garage. Erik said the point of sale software system is online. Ken asked, why not just get improved DSL? Erik said low bandwidth service from Fidium won't cost more than that. Ken said we will have high speed internet at the municipal building. Employees can come here to watch training videos. Erik said Nate has been doing a lot of office work. Ken said there are two spare desks for that purpose downstairs. Erik said he is not saying we need Fidium at the garage, just better service than they have. He feels Nate's office should be where his crew is, so he can get a feel for what they are doing. Ken said Nate is at the municipal building more than he is at the garage. Erik said yes, because the internet at the garage is bad. Nate would rather be there. Will suggested Nate should determine what he needs and explain to the board why he needs it.

7. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report submitted by Dan Copp:

1. Operational Status of Wastewater Plant and Callouts

- E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted to the State
- We hauled 44,000 gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing for the month of September.
- Mowed and trimmed all plants and pump stations and the reservoir.
- Don Martin completed the repair and mitigation work at the syphon. He raised the entire backboard and control panel and installed metal stairs to reach all of the components. He also turned the controls to the Rt 15 side so we are not standing on the cement abutment to access the panel. Much safer for everyone. All repair work and mitigation are now complete at Highland Heights PS, River Road PS and the Syphon. We sent 4000 gallons of seed sludge to Stowe to re seed their plant.
- Luke worked with VTUMS and the Village crew pumping out and jetting catch basins

2. Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- Rotated the pumps at Katy Win pump house #1.
- We spent the majority of our time on the Katy Win pump house rehab. In #3 we installed a floor drain and compacted about 2 ft of sand to raise the floor level up. We sleeved a few of the service lines that were not already sleeved. Concrete floor will be poured either this week or next week.

The majority of the work has been in #1 pump house. We re routed all of the service lines and installed a new main line header pipe that all of the meters will attach to. While doing this we had to interrupt water service and go on a boil water notice for the entire trailer park. We did this 2 days and both times the coliform samples came back absent and we were able to lift the boil water within 24 hours. We removed all of the old piping and sleeved all of the service lines in preparation for the concrete floor to be poured. We will have Pratt electrical put in a new electric panel, outlets and lighting once the floor is poured. Still shooting for the end of the month to have everything wrapped up.

We will be below budget and are going to install an electric heater in #3 as it is only heated with an unreliable milkhouse heater now.

- Water loss is 2%.

Ken asked how many people called about the boil water notice. Erik said he believes 4 people outside Katy Win called to ask about it. Two or three of the affected people also called. The entire park was affected. Rosemary said there are probably about 40 people in the park. Erik said he would say the notification system we have been using works pretty well.

BJ asked why the affected people called. Erik said they may not have seen the note. Maybe one person in the family saw it but the others didn't. It was only posted door to door, not on Front Porch Forum or Facebook. Ken asked, should we also post notices on Front Porch Forum, or just give notices to affected parties? Will said he thinks a notice on the door will create less problems than putting a notice out to the public. BJ said he thinks there should be something besides the physical notice, like a Facebook or Front Porch Forum post. Darrell said he thinks it is good to use both. Will said the problem it creates is that someone who sees the notice may not read it carefully and wonder if it includes them, so then we get more calls. Erik said he has done it both ways in his career and for a small area he prefers only giving notice to the affected people. It doesn't matter how clearly you put it, people wonder how it affects them and call.

BJ said we had a boil water notice by the school and we were getting calls from people who didn't get a physical notice or see any digital notice and wondered if it included them. If people who do not get a physical notice can go to the town website and see a notice, then they can see that it only relates to certain people. Erik said because that notice affected the school he would agree. People chat at school while dropping off their kids. In retrospect, he thinks if there is a break that involves the school or the downtown business district it would be a good idea to have a notice for unaffected people.

Ken asked Erik to keep track of the calls we get for the next boil water notice. Erik said we had multiple boil water notices for Lamoille View with just local notification and no one called.

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

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept. –

Mutual Aid for Hyde Park 3hrs

Outage Footebrook Rd and Rt15W, 40 customers out for 1 ½ hours

Tree crews cut out lines on Footebrook Rd and also Plot Rd

Village crews cut Brush on Hoag Rd and also Wescom Rd

Installed new service at the Arboretum

Fixed Street Light on the Preal St Bridge also 415 LMW

Working on estimate for Woolen Mills

Re-installed service to the Skate Park

Worked on Transformer inventory

Working on getting Matt's Apprenticeship set up

Working on getting generators serviced

Meeting at the shop for phase 1

Worked on replacing the little Bucket truck with a new model

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

Water/Sewer -

Raised valve boxes and Sewer manholes for the Main St paving project

Dropped off meter and horn for 715 100C

Prep and paved water leak digs on College Hill Rd and also Lamoille View Dr

Installed new fire hydrant at the Naduea Well, with the help of Percy's, so the Village is not responsible for the electric/heat for the building.

Replaced fire hydrant on River Rd East that the Town hit with a brush hog

Worked with Vtums for sewer line jetting and Catch Basin cleaning

General Dept. –

Replaced the floor at Cold Spring

Replaced a section of sidewalk on Railroad St

Changed flags on the Green and Town Clerks

Safety –

There was not any Safety meetings this month

9. Fire Department Report and Action Items

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

Johnson Fire Department Report

Aug 30 – Sept. 26, 2024

JFD responded to 10 calls. 5 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 5 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 75 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 2 – vehicle crashes, 2 – automatic alarm, 1 – CO alarm, 1 – medical assist, 3 – smoke condition, and 1 – hazardous material (propane leak)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 10

Total hours of service was: 105

Other:

We had three firefighters attend classes at the Franklin-Lamoille School held at Lamoille Union High School.

Will said the fire department had a training with the ATV club to simulate an ATV crash. They worked with EMS and did a mock extrication. It was very useful. As a result they are adding some tools.

10. Rail Trail Committee Request

Doug Molde said the rail trail committee would like to put a bike rack at the Cold Spring. It would be a 5-bike rack, 43 inches long and 39 inches high. The selectboard is holding money that was given to the town for the rail trail committee and the committee has every reason to think they will agree to allocate money for this. Doug distributed information on the bike rack and a list of the rail trail committee's recent activities. He said the committee is basically an economic development committee for the village. He thinks the rail trail will be a significant resource for the village.

Will asked him to define "significant." Doug said there is a rail trail just north of us in Canada that has a million people on it each year. He is familiar with a rail trail in Minnesota that goes to Lanesboro, a much smaller community. Lanesboro has summer theater. The rail trail is a huge potential benefit. We are in the middle of the trail, which we thought would be good. But people are typically starting in Swanton and stopping in Jeffersonville and Hardwick. (*Meghan Rodier arrived at 6:44.*) However, not everyone wants to do that. Some younger people want to divide the trip in half. The committee is trying to set up camping. They are talking to Vermont Huts about setting up a hostel. They are putting one in Hardwick. The committee is trying to figure out how to get as many people as possible to get off the rail trail and spend money in Johnson.

BJ said the committee's main goal is economic. They are trying to advertise the fact that we are at the halfway point. (*Steve arrived at 6:45.*) The idea is to pull people off the rail trail and into the village to spend money and enjoy Johnson.

Doug said he went to 27 businesses to tell them about the Trail Friendly Business program, a free program that advertises businesses to rail trail users. He sees a lot of people riding bikes. Gravel roads are a big attraction. People ride on them and use the rail trail to go back. The committee has a grant to look at a safe way to get people into the village. Railroad Street doesn't feel safe to a lot of people. The grant will look at access options, including property involved in buyouts. Behind the library there is a property that runs from Pomerleau's almost to the bridge. It is in the buyout program. People who stay overnight spend 6 times more than people just here for the day.

Doug said the Cold Spring is an attraction. The committee has money to put a small bike rack there. They are hoping the village crew would put cement in the ground for it. Would the village allow it to be placed and find time to put it in? He assumes that would be done in spring. He thinks the best location would be on the opposite side of the Cold Spring from the benches. That looks the most level.

BJ asked if the grant will cover the cost of the concrete and if the bike rack will end up being the village's to maintain. Darrell asked, what if something happened to it? Would the village be responsible for replacing it? Doug said it would be the village's property. He would assume the village would think it was useful to put something like that back in if something happened to it. He asked if people have seen the number of bicycles outside Jenna's Café in recent days.

Ken said people are not using the bike racks that are already there, like the one at the end of Railroad Street. So the committee wants to install more? Doug said people like to have their bikes where they can watch them.

Will asked if the money the committee has will cover the labor and concrete. Doug said the committee would hope the village would do the work for free. They are a committee of the town but are working for the village. The village doesn't have a group to do this.

Darrell asked what the cost is. Doug said under \$400.

Steve asked if there is a bike rack that doesn't have to be in concrete but could be bolted to the concrete or freestanding. Ken said the proposed rack is made to be bolted to concrete. Erik said the cheapest way to install it would be to bolt it to a small cement area, but putting it on a larger concrete pad eliminates extra lawn care around it.

Darrell asked if it will be out of the way for snow clearing. Doug said he thinks so. The location would be the village's decision. BJ said Erik and the crew would decide.

Will said we should consider weed whacker maintenance around it and appearance. If people use it there will be a worn path to it with dirt or mud. Erik said he is picturing two sidewalk panels with this in the middle.

Will said he is not sure there is huge use for a bike rack at that location but he is not opposed to it. He is opposed to village tax dollars going toward it. He is willing to have the village provide labor. He is in favor of it as long as all materials are paid for through the grant.

Erik suggested that if the village is going to do the work there should be an understanding that the work will be done at the same time as sidewalk repairs, for economy of labor and concrete. That tends to be toward the end of summer. Will said if the committee wants to pay for the concrete he is okay with doing it sooner if Nate's schedule allows.

Darrell said he thinks the concrete is way cheaper than the labor. He doesn't have a problem with this if the committee can help with the cost. When the village crew is working on this it is taking them away from other projects. Will said there are times when they are not as busy and they are still getting paid no matter what. They may be able to fit it into a gap when they are not working on other things.

Steve said he is good with doing it next summer along with other village projects. Darrell said he would like Nate to go out with Doug or Erik and pick the best location. BJ said he likes the idea of having it there. He is fine with the village crew doing the labor.

Ken asked how many more bike racks the committee plans on. Doug said they will put some between the Studio Center and Jenna's Café. In spring they will talk about the feasibility of moving some of the ones that are not being used to better locations and fixing some of the benches. Ken said the benches are on the village's radar. They plan on getting to them at some point.

Ken said he is concerned about putting bike racks all around the village without rhyme or reason. Let's not clutter up the village to put bike racks where we see people laying bikes down. They won't use them.

Will moved to authorize the rail trail committee to install a bike rack at the Cold Spring, contingent upon Nate and Erik's choice of location and the committee covering the cost of the concrete, with the village providing the labor to pour the pad and set the bike rack, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

11. ATV Amendment in Draft Johnson Municipal Plan

Meghan Rodier of the Lamoille County Planning Commission handed out proposed new wording for the Municipal Plan. Language was added regarding ATVs and there was some wordsmithing in response to the first selectboard hearing. The Johnson Planning Commission met and proposed new language in response to comments from the first public hearing.

Ken said Alberto Della Torre had sent out a draft that included language about Airbnb rentals and other economic impacts. Some of that language is not included. Several sentences were removed.

Will said he would not approve the current wording if information on potential economic gains from ATVs has been cut. All he hears about is bicycles, not ATVs. ATVs bring in money. Ken said snowmobiles do also.

Meghan asked if Ken has suggested wording to add. Ken said he liked what Alberto sent originally. His point was that the plan had a lot about bicycles and nothing about other outdoor recreation such

as snowmobiles or cross country skiing. The ATV community could have twice as much impact as the bike community.

BJ asked, why not just refer to all recreation?

Will said he is favor of tabling action on the plan. Meghan said the current plan is expired.

Meghan asked if the board would be okay with the original language suggested by Alberto. Ken said yes. Darrell and Will said they want to see it in writing. Ken said he would also like to see snowmobiles included more.

Ken suggested there could be a special meeting to approve the plan. Erik asked how late November 6 would be for approval. Meghan said she was hoping to warn a public hearing for later in November.

Will asked what the detriment is to having an expired plan. Meghan said it means Johnson temporarily loses planning confirmation and eligibility for particular grants like Municipal Planning Grants. Will asked, do we get eligibility back right away as soon as the plan is adopted? Meghan said yes.

Ken said this could have been resolved long ago if the village had been involved in developing the plan.

Ken suggested approval could be done at the joint selectboard-trustee meeting tentatively scheduled for October 30. Meghan said that could work.

12. Members of the Public

No members of the public were present.

13. Other Business

BJ asked where we are with digitizing. Rosemary said we have been digitizing new documents but the board will have to budget for digitizing old documents.

14. Executive Session

BJ moved to find that premature general public knowledge of probable civil litigation to which the village is or may be a party would clearly place the village at a substantial disadvantage and to go into executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a), Steve seconded and the motion was passed at 7:27. Ken said the executive session would include Erik and the trustees. The board came out of executive session at 7:43 with no action taken.

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths