

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2024

**Present:**

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Ken Nolan, Marla Emery, Adrienne Parker, Arjay West, Craig Carpenter, Gidget Dolan-Dodge

**Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.**

**1. Call to Order**

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:00.

**2. The Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge was recited.

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

Darrell added discussion of equipment pricing.

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

**Will moved to approve the minutes of October 9 and October 30, 2024, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.**

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

**Will moved to sign the documents from Union Bank necessary to borrow \$119,000 for 10 years at 5.69% interest for the bucket truck, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.**

Rosemary said we got our state PILOT money. It was about \$4K less than what we budgeted. We have received \$3500 of grant money Kyle Nuse applied for. Her only concern about budget status is the electric department.

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

Erik read his report:

**Boom truck replacement update:** Altec is almost finished prepping the truck and predicts delivery in 1 to 2 weeks.

**Water & Light Garage Project update:** With the Phase 1 ESA finished with a finding of no action necessary to proceed, the contract with AES has been executed, and design has started. They sent out a first draft of their concept, which Nate and I provided some edits on. We had a walk-through with several of their engineers on October 30<sup>th</sup> to discuss options and for them to see the conditions on the ground. Additionally, the final CDS (\$824K grant) funding application has been submitted to get the money "on deck" and ready to reimburse the invoices as they come in.

The project is forging ahead quickly with an expected finish in the 2025 construction season.

**The Village Crew** is wrapping up many projects in preparation for winter. Jeff has scheduled his CDL written exam for the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month to obtain his Learner's Permit and is actively studying in preparation. Matt Champney is going to finish his 6-months' probation in a matter of days and has been an Outstanding addition to the Team. His NEPPA schooling cycle begins in January. Nate and I will be at the Green Mountain Water Environment Association fall meeting tomorrow in Burlington, attending relevant classes towards our ongoing training requirements to maintain water (both) & wastewater (me) operators' licenses.

**FEMA Update: Finally!!!!** DR4720, the declared disaster for the July 2023 floods has been approved for 90% FEMA reimbursement. This is retroactive and puts the Village of Johnson share of payment at only 2.2% since the Vermont legislature approved covering 7.8% of the non-federal funded portion. This has been coming a long time, but most of us didn't trust it until it was officially declared. This means that if the WWTF rebuild costs \$14,000,000.00, The Village will only be on the hook for \$308,000. Phew!

**Johnson Municipal Plan:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Hearing of the Johnson Municipal Plan will be at the beginning of our Regular Village Trustees Meeting on December 9, 2024, at 6pm.

Will asked about Matt Champney's employee review. Erik said Nate will do it and he will review it.

#### 7. *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 60,000 gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing for the month of October.

##### 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 #2
- Spent most spare time at Katy Win. Sleeved and re-routed all of the waterlines. Relocated meters to the meter bank along the wall. Shoveled and tamped sand into the pump houses to raise the floor level. Prepped the floor and poured concrete floors with floor drains in both pump houses. Installed some new rafters to replace rotted ones. Installed and insulated a new lower ceiling in Pump House #1. Installed check valves on all of the meters.
- We have a few finishing touches to put on both meter houses. We are waiting for Pratt and Smith electrical to install the new heater and lighting in #3. They also will be replacing the breaker box, pump disconnects and lighting in #1. We are looking good on the \$35,000 budget that was approved for this project. We should come in under by a few thousand dollars.
- Luke assisted the Village crew in flushing hydrants
- We removed the milkhouse heaters and replaced the door lock at Nadeau well house. We gave the new key to Nate to give to Percy. We are free and clear of that building now
- Performed a full service on the chlorine injection at the water plant. Installed a new stem, pump tube, and cleaned the line. The roller head on the pump is showing a fair amount of wear so we ordered a new roller head.
- The company hired by the state to perform the valve exercising program had to cancel due to equipment breakdown. We are trying to reschedule them as soon as possible but it looks like it may be spring before they can get to us.
- Water loss was negligible.

Will asked Erik to thank the crew for their work at Katy Win and being below budget.

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

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept. –

Replaced secondary service to Katy-win pump house #3

Outage Gould Hill Rd. 18 customers out for 1hr

Village crews cut Brush on Wescom Rd., Railroad St., and School St.

Fixed Street Light on 30 LMW and a number of photo cells around the Village

Finished estimate for Woolen Mills

Did estimate for 136 School St.

Helped with finishing inventory price changing

Signed Matt up for NEPPA's Appernticeship

Working on getting generators serviced

Met with engineers at shop

Met with a moving company about the Library move

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

Water/Sewer -

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

Did hydrant flushing and fall pump downs

Inspected sewer/water connect at 136 School St

Marked out water, sewer, and catch basin lines on Library St.

Shut off water and removed meters for winter Trailhead, VSC greenhouse, VSC Old Town Hall, and Lamoille View Cemetery

General Dept. –

Cut trees at Cold Spring

Service Bobcats for winter

Had 2500, 3500, Tundra, and 5500 undercoated

Changed flags on the Village Green

Put up Winter sand at shop and Sewer Plant

Completed monthly inspections of Fire Extinguishers, Fuel Pump readings,  
Oil containments

Safety –

There were 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

*Sept. 27 – Oct. 31, 2024*

JFD responded to 10 calls. 9 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 1 call occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 104 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 3 – vehicle crashes, 3 – automatic alarm, 1 – vehicle fire, 1 – smoke condition, 1 – electrical fire, and 1 – mutual aid (structure fire)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 11  
Total hours of service was: 132

Other:

We put the new UTV and enclosed trailer on display during a thank you gathering to recognize Tim Vallee and the Green Mountain ATV Club for their generous sponsorship toward our new equipment. The truck replacement committee has received final specifications and pricing for the Engine replacement project. We intend to present a request at the next Trustee Board meeting.

**10. Status and Steps of AMI Rollout in Johnson**

Ken Nolan, General Manager of VPPSA, handed out some information on the Advanced Metering Infrastructure project, including a diagram of the system. The village could replace the water meters or continue to use the existing meters. There is a module that can go on top of them that does radio communication. The system uses the 400 MHz radio frequency. That is a licensed frequency. All the utilities statewide will use the same frequency. There will be data collection units on electric poles. Johnson needs about 6 of them. From those, the data will be sent to a cloud-based storage solution. Reads are sent from each meter every 15 minutes. Data from all VPPSA member utilities will be in one database. Each utility will be able to see its own data and VPPSA will be able to see it all.

VPPSA has chosen a meter vendor – Aclara, a national vendor based in the US. Vermont Electric Coop uses their meters now. A contract has been signed with the vendor. VPPSA got a \$5 million grant from the legislature. Each member utility has an allocated share of the grant money. Each utility will get roughly 48.5% of the funding for their project. VPPSA has hired 2 consulting firms. One will manage the project and coordinate with the vendor and one will handle integration between AMI and customer billing systems.

VPPSA chose the same meter configuration (the information we want the meter to send back) for all the utilities as a starting point. It can be changed remotely but they wanted consistency when ordering from the factory. Every 15 minutes the meters will send kW, kVAR and voltage data from each customer. There are notifications if someone tries to tamper with a meter or if something is wrong with a meter.

Will asked about the lifespan of these meters. Ken said the manufacturer suggests they will last 15 years. They are warranted for 10 years. Other utilities that use them have found they typically last at least 12 years.

Will asked what the cost per unit is. Ken said a typical residential unit costs about \$140.

Ken Nolan said if VPPSA does the financing on the village's behalf they are looking at a 10 year loan, which means about the time the village pays the loan off will be when VPPSA will be doing an RFP for new meters.

Will asked how many meters we need. Ken Nolan said he thinks we need 934 electric meters. Erik said we have about half that many for water. For water, he believes we will just get the sending units because they are apparently compatible with the existing meters. Ken N. said the amount of grant money Johnson will get was based on the assumption that the village would be replacing water meters. If that does not happen it may leave some more money to help pay for the electric meters.

Ken N. said the manufacturer will send us one test meter. Swanton will test it. They are now saying it will be sent in the first part of December. Once we test it and say it is good, they produce all the meters. There is a 26 week lead time. The first group of utilities will be looking at installing meters next May. The data collection units have a much shorter lead time. The first ones are expected in Swanton in early December. Someone will come to Johnson to confirm with the village what the locations for the DCUs will be. VPPSA is working with Johnson now to convert customer billing to El Dorado. The village will continue to use NEMRC for other financial purposes. (*Marla Emery and Adrienne Parker arrived at 6:29.*) Public outreach is a regulatory requirement of the state.

Ken T. asked, each homeowner will be able to access an app to get information on their electric usage, right? Ken N. said yes.

Rosemary asked if the new billing software can download totals into NEMRC. Ken N. said there is transfer from El Dorado but he doesn't know how automatic or manual it is. VPPSA is paying extra to get net metering included in the bill calculation in El Dorado.

Ken N. said Johnson will be in either the second or third group to get AMI meters. We will probably get the data collection units in April or May.

Marla asked who is installing the DCU's. Ken. N. said Aclara will have staff on site but will be looking for the village crew to do the installation.

Steve asked if our employees will still need to read water meters. Ken N. said even if the village stays with the existing meters, communication modules can be put on them to communicate through AMI. Steve asked, so no manual meter reading is needed? Erik said that is correct. Ken N. said most utilities end up using the saved employee time for higher level work. There will still be some issues with meters and employees will need to check them. Marla said the AMI meters will reduce the amount of time employees have to spend on move-ins and move-outs and allow them to identify problems earlier.

BJ asked about SMS alerts. Ken N. said the village will need to decide what notices get sent to the crew. They may not want to get notified about everything. (*Arjay West, Craig Carpenter and Gidget Dolan-Dodge arrived at 6:46.*)

Darrell asked if there is something that can alert us if there is a water break at someone's house before the meter. Erik said there are meters that can be put on valves, hydrants, etc. to read pressure in that zone and send an alarm if there is a pressure drop. We could probably make them compatible with this system. It's all in how much we want to spend.

Marla asked if there is a plan about how many people to bring online at once. Ken N. said they will need to talk to each utility about how they want to roll it out. That conversation will happen as we get closer to installation.

Ken N. said the estimated cost for Johnson to do the conversion is about \$520K. There is \$248K from the grant earmarked for Johnson, which brings the net cost down to about \$272K. Erik said it will be lower than that because we have a lot of water meters that can stay.

Marla asked when the meter changeouts will happen. Ken N. said if we order them in spring we will get them sometime in the fall. The timeline can be adjusted based on when the El Dorado conversion is done. He would say fall of 2025 would be the earliest we could get them.

Will asked, if installation costs us less than estimated, do we get less grant money? Ken N. said the grant funds can cover up to 50% of our cost, not more.

Ken N. said VPPSA has already locked in a \$4 million loan for this project with a 10-year term. They negotiated with the bank that if any of the members utilities want VPPSA to finance they can access these loan funds. If the village can do better than 5.28% interest it can get its own loan or it can finance through VPPSA at that rate.

***11. Re-presentation of NEPPA Carole A. Tracey Customer Service Award to Marla Emery***

Erik said the Northeast Public Power Association gives out awards every year. One of them is the Carole A. Tracey Customer Service Award, named after a long-time NEPPA employee who died of cancer and exemplified outstanding customer service. The award is given to someone who

delivers outstanding customer service. Erik sent the following when he nominated Marla for the award:

*Marla not only always goes above and beyond to help our customers with all of their concerns, but she was also crucial in our customer relations in the wake of Superstorm 2023 when a large portion of the Village of Johnson was devastated by record flood waters, causing those sections to be shut off from the grid until they dried out and the services proven safe. Her dedication to duty, organized manner and care for her customers were all called on to the Nth degree at that time, and she never faltered. Marla has also been a key player in our research of a more capable utility billing and inventory software than the utility currently used, and found a perfect match, that we are going to accept. In my 30+ years of utility management, I have never seen a more deserving admin staff member more deserving of recognition than Marla Emery. I am the General Manager of the utility and her boss. The Chair of the Village Trustees also wanted to co-sign this nomination, but the form has no allowance for that, so I am mentioning it here*

Marla was presented the award two weeks ago. Erik re-presented it to her and there was a round of applause.

#### **12. JFD Engine Selection Committee Presentation and Requests**

Arjay West said the fire department worked with Desorcie, an E-One dealer, to create truck specifications which were sent to E-One for pricing. They got a total price of \$561K - \$140K for the cab and chassis and \$420K for the rest. That is more than they can afford, so they made some design cuts and changes to try to bring the price down. They also asked Allegiance and Charlebois to give prices for the cab and chassis. They got a cab and chassis price of \$136K and a body price of \$376K. There was about a \$14K difference in price between International and Freightliner trucks. Desorcie prefers International. They were able to get Allegiance (the International dealer) to come down to \$123K. When that is added to the \$376K for the body the total cost is \$499K. The fire department can afford that. The capital plan can support it.

On October 18, E-One introduced a 5% increase to the body cost. Desorcie put an order in to E-One to save the fire department from having to pay the increased price. They are buying the truck as a spec truck, with no obligation from us. The fire department would like the village to approve the proposal to buy a cab and chassis from Allegiance for \$122,961. The cab and chassis would be shipped to Florida.

Will asked if we have the money for the cab and chassis in the equipment fund. Rosemary said yes. Arjay said we would need to pay for the cab and chassis around July 2025.

Erik said there is a very small difference in cost between International and Freightliner. Buying an International keeps the fire department stock all the same. And the General Manager of Allegiance was an Underhill fire chief for decades.

Arjay said the fire department can pay for the cab and chassis in summer 2025. In 2026 they will need a short-term plan for paying for the body. They won't have the funds to pay for it all in 2026 but they can pay the cost over 5 years. Will asked what the shortfall in 2026 will be. Arjay said after they pay for the cab and chassis they will have about \$130K in 2026. So about a \$200K shortfall, said Will.

**Will moved and Ken seconded to authorize Arjay to make a sole source purchase from Allegiance of the International truck described in the meeting packet for \$122,961. The motion was passed.**

**Ken moved to approve a sole source purchase of an E-One built body through dealer Desorcie Emergency Products for \$375,762, with anticipated delivery of July 2026, with short term local financing to be determined at a closer date, Will seconded and the motion was passed.**

***13. Beautification Committee Winter Decorating Requests***

Adrienne Parker said the Beautification Committee is asking if they can put solar powered lanterns on trees at the village green for the holidays and the Jubilee and if the village crew could help hang them if the Beautification Committee purchases them.

Will asked if they come with hangers. Adrienne said just hooks. Steve asked how many there will be. Adrienne said they will buy about 100. The Jubilee got a grant to pay for some of them. She thinks there are 3 trees. Ken asked if they will be up just for the Jubilee. Adrienne said she wants to know what the board thinks about whether they should be up for longer than that. She wonders about wind. Adrienne noted that the plan is to buy lanterns in multiple colors.

**Ken moved and Will seconded to allow the Beautification Committee to put lights on trees at the Village Green, with the number to be put up left to the village crew's discretion.**

Will said 100 seems like a lot. Is the number based on what the committee thinks will look good or on how much money they have to spend? Adrienne said it is based on the money available. They think they need a good amount to make it worthwhile. It has been dark on the Green during past Jubilees.

**Ken and Will agreed to amend the motion to include that the lights may remain on the trees through January 31.**

Will asked if there is anything else besides lights that it would be beneficial to spend the money on. Adrienne said the grant for the Jubilee is \$3500. Kyle Nuse is doing the budgeting and planning. All she knows is that the Beautification Committee approved spending \$120 for lights and if that is not enough the Jubilee will contribute the rest of what is needed.

Erik said he thinks this is a great idea. But the committee will have to be patient until the crew can find time to put up the lights. Deer season is coming and employees will be taking a lot of vacation time. Will said there is no guarantee they will be up by the Jubilee.

**The motion was passed.**

Adrienne asked what other decorations the village is planning on. Board members said lights on poles, the same as last year.

Adrienne said she appreciates the village crew cutting down trees at the Cold Spring as discussed.



**14. Appoint VOJ Representative to the LCPC Board of Directors**

Ken said GiGi Beach was the village representative to the LCPC Board of Directors. She does not want to continue in that position. Ken suggested Lynda Hill to Erik, Erik talked to her and she has agreed to do it.

**Will moved and BJ seconded to appoint Lynda Hill as the Village of Johnson representative to the Lamoille County Planning Commission Board of Directors.**

Ken asked Erik to have Lynda report to him about every other month to keep the board updated.

BJ said his only concern is that Lynda is not a village resident. Erik said he checked with LCPC and that is okay under their bylaws.

**The motion was passed with BJ opposed.**

**15. Discuss Website Options, Possible Action**

Erik said the town's first choice selection for a website would cost \$3200 the first year with an annual \$2620 hosting, maintenance and support fee every year after that. Their second choice would cost \$2910 the first year and \$1310 each year after that. The village is currently paying about \$200 per year for the website, half the total cost. The problem with keeping that site just for the village is that the domain name is townofjohnson.com.

BJ said we can change the domain name. It only costs about \$12 to get a domain name. Ken said he assumes the town will keep that domain name.

Will asked what Marla thinks of the current website. Marla said she thinks it is functional. Will asked how often we update it. Are there updates we should do? Erik and Marla said we upload documents. We update the contents on the pages.

BJ said the town has a lot of groups and they are looking for a different site to pull together content for all the groups. Our needs are more basic. The site we have now works. What is proposed will cost 7 times as much. What does it offer the village to make it worth paying 7 times what we are paying now?

Darrell said we will be putting the same information on the site that we already have on the current site and helping the town pay for additional content. BJ said he likes the idea of an upgrade if we can pay a smaller percentage of the cost, maybe \$300 a year.

Ken said the problem with our current website is how it looks. He would like to see a better, more modern looking website. It could bring people and businesses to the community. It would only cost us \$325 per year for each of our four budgets. If we are 50% vested in the site we get a say in what it looks like. There could be a page with updates on building a new garage.

BJ said if we don't like the design of our current site he doesn't see why we couldn't change it. He is sure whoever designed ours initially could add to it.

Erik said if the village keeps that site we will have to pay double what we pay now, so what the town proposes will not be 7 times our cost to stay with that site.

BJ said before moving to a new site he would like to ask our web designers if they can do little changes like adding pictures. Ken said the cost is based on what goes on the site. It costs what it costs now because it is just data and 2 or 3 photos. With a different website, people might be able to access AMI data from the site. Now would be the wrong time to change to a different domain and have to change all our email addresses because there is so much ongoing correspondence with FEMA. He doesn't think the cost is a bad deal.

Will said it is great to have pictures on the website, but who will do it? BJ said we haven't been keeping up on Facebook.

Marla asked if the new website will give people the capability to fill out applications and forms online. Ken said he doesn't know.

Will suggested a counter offer to the town that the village pay 25% of the cost since we are not using that much of the site. Marla said we do use the website a lot. BJ said we are not adding more content to it, though. Marla said we might be able to offer people the ability to fill out the electric line extension application or a new utility application and pay for it online.

Rosemary said she thinks the person doing the website now is not going to do it any longer.

**Will moved to offer to pay 25% of the cost of a new website and to agree to move forward with a new site design from the town's chosen vendor if they agree to pay 75% of the cost, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.**

***16. Discussion on Equipment Pricing***

Darrell said he would like to get from Nate and Erik the prices we charge for use of all our equipment. Ken asked Erik if he can get an updated price list for the next meeting and Erik said he can.

***17. Executive Session***

**Ken moved to go into executive session for evaluation of employees as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), with only the trustees included, Will seconded and the motion was passed at 7:44.**

The board came out of executive session at 8:37 with no action taken.

***18. Adjourn***

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:37.**