

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2024

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Mike Miglione, Seth Jensen, Kyle Nuse, Doug Molde, Alex Nadeau, Axel Nadeau, Alexalee Nadeau

Absent: Ken Tourangeau

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

BJ called the meeting to order at 6:00.

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

BJ said he wanted to move the revolving loan item to follow the treasurer's report.

3. The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge was recited.

4. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Will moved to approve the minutes of November 6, 2024, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.

5. Public Hearing on the Draft Johnson Municipal Plan

No members of the public who wished to discuss the plan were present. (*Seth Jensen arrived at 6:02.*)

Steve moved that the Village of Johnson Board of Trustees adopt the 2024-2032 Town and Village of Johnson Municipal Development Plan, Will seconded and the motion was passed.

(*Seth Jensen left at 6:04.*)

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

Will noted that the general department is already at 117% of budget. Erik said some of that is due to a shift in where labor expense is being recorded. Will asked, so it is not so much that we are over budget as that there was a shift in where in the budget the money went? Erik said we used more labor in general than he guessed we would. He pointed out that we are at 130% of budget for revenue. He mentioned that the sunny fall reduced revenue for the electric department due to increased solar production. (*Kyle Nuse arrived at 6:09.*)

Rosemary said for many years employees have been given \$100 in holiday pay. Does the board want to give the same amount this year or increase it? Will suggested increasing it to \$150 and the rest of the board agreed.

Rosemary asked if the board wants to keep trustee pay the same or increase it. It is currently \$1500 for the chair and \$1200 for the other board members. Will said given the economic times he is okay with the current rate. Others agreed. BJ said we just raised it last year. Rosemary said it is slightly below the selectboard's pay. Steve said they have 2 meetings a month and we have one.

7. Review and Possible Acceptance of Village Community Revolving Loan Application

Mike Miglione had applied for a \$50K loan from the village revolving loan fund with a 3-year term for start-up of Johnson General Store. Erik said all the paperwork he submitted looks good. He and Rosemary suggest an interest rate of 3.8%.

Will asked if Mike is leasing or purchasing the building. Mike said he is currently leasing. After 12 months the owner is willing to apply 100% of the lease payments toward the purchase price. He has also put down \$10K towards the purchase. The owner is letting them use the upstairs as an Airbnb. She is not making any significant profit from the lease payments, just covering her mortgage, taxes and insurance.

Will asked if Mike has any other loans for the startup. Mike said no, not for the business. He already has a lot of equipment for the back end and is looking for retail equipment. Will asked if the loan will pay for primarily hard items or also stock. Mike said equipment and also inventory and he looking at having some left over for a payroll cushion, as well as \$3-4K for kitchen renovations. He learned from the Department of Health that he can't cook food in his food truck and then bring it into the store and put it in refrigerators.

BJ asked when he is thinking of opening. Mike said the end of January or early February.

Darrell asked if the business will be more like a deli or a store. Mike said they will have a lot of groceries and as much prepared food as they can put out. In the future he would like to include food made to order but groceries are the first priority initially. There will also be grab and go or take and bake foods.

Will moved and BJ seconded to approve a \$50,000 loan from the village revolving loan fund to MM Management Services LLC with an interest rate of 3.8% and a term of 36 months, with the first payment (but not interest) deferred to March 1.

Darrell asked, if the business fails, what recourse does the village have for collecting? Mike said if something happened his plan to satisfy the loan would be sell something of value, like his food truck or tractor. He also has some savings. Will said if we don't ask for collateral we have no recourse.

Will amended his motion to add that the Hangry Mike's food truck will serve as collateral for the loan. The motion was passed.

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

Erik read his report:

Boom truck replacement update: The new to us truck arrived today! Attached is the consignment contract for the old truck through JJ Kane, Altech's auctioneer. They take a 7% commission from the seller. With the rigors of selling such a piece of equipment, and the liability associated with such sale, I recommend accepting the attached auction contract, which I will sign with the consensus of the board.

Water & Light Garage Project update: The BGS MERP energy efficiency grant for \$271,377.63 has been officially awarded. The final CDS grant paperwork for approval is wrapping up tomorrow and Wednesday. That is a \$824,000.00 grant. We had a 2nd design meeting with the architect, the 2nd draft design they brought was excellent. We will walk through that layout in Consent Item 5 on the agenda. The project remains on schedule.

The Village Crew: Jeff has passed his Class A CDL written exam and has a CDL Learner's Permit. This allows him to drive our large rigs and tow a trailer behind it. He has a year

to complete DOT Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) and take his skills test to get a full CDL. I am working on a couple of possibly very low-cost options for ELDT.

FEMA Update: The State of Vermont is very interested in seeing the Johnson WWTF moved out of its current location for both flood resilience and flood storage reasons. To that end, I am putting together another meeting of the ‘Johnson Funder’s Summit’ to get the holders of state & federal purse-strings all at the same table to explain the situation with FEMA funding restrictions and the lack of ability for the Village of Johnson to move forward with that plan without a written commitment from Vermont to ensure the balance of costs will be taken care of by grants or other vehicles that do not come back on the local rate payers.

The 2006 200kW stand-by generator at the water treatment facility has an important failure that costs \$3900. This is actually a simple fix, but the obsolete part is \$3000 of that bill, indicating that any future parts replacements will also be exorbitant. It also has other maintenance issues that that are estimated at over \$5000. To that end, I contacted the Vermont Bond Bank on Friday and asked for an extension to apply for the SCRP Tier 2 grant program to pay for a new generator. They granted my request, and I will finish & file the application tomorrow. While this grant is oversubscribed, they believe our project is very competitive and stands a very good chance of being selected.

Lastly, budget season is upon us. I will be working on the 4 village budgets throughout the winter, and present the following 2025 Budget Schedule:

2025 Village Budgets Timeline

- 1) Regular February Trustee Meeting (2/10/25) – 1st Draft of Water Department and Sewer Department Budgets
- 2) Special February Trustee Meeting (week of 2/24/25) – 1st Draft of General Department and Electric Department Budgets (Wednesday Feb 26th ?)
- 3) Regular March Trustee Meeting (3/10/25) - Complete Draft Budget – all departments (extra meeting later that week only if needed)
- 4) Print & Send Village Report – Week of 3/17/25
- 5) Annual Village Meeting – 4/1/25

The board agreed to sell the old truck through JJ Kane and to schedule a special meeting for February 26.

9. ***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 40,000 gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing for the month of November
- Replaced burned out UV bulbs in both UV banks. Will need to order more bulbs after the 1st of the year.

- Pumped out the UV channels and weirs and had Manosh vacuum accumulated solids out of the channels. Ecoli #'s are under 5. Our limit is 77.
- Tim repainted the entryway floor with leftover paint that survived the flood.
- Brought our used oil to the village garage for disposal
- Removed the mower from the tractor and installed the snowblower for the winter
- Luke assisted Matt with installing Christmas lights for the Village
- Put a wrap repair on the discharge side of #1 influent pump. Vibration from the pump had cracked a welded joint.

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 #2
- Finished with the last of the distribution line re routing at Katy Win pump house.
- Pratt and Smith electrical started upgrading the electrical and heating at Katy Winn. Once they are finished, there will be just some minor painting projects to finish in the spring.
- Received quote for generator repair on the emergency generator at the water plant. It is not starting on its own. It can be manually started but takes a long time after repeated attempts.
- Water loss is 12%.

10. Electric/General Report and Action Items

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept. –

Mutual Aid for Hyde Park – 2hrs

New to us bucket truck is ready for shipment should see it next week

Transferred Pole #608 in Katywin Park That Consolidated set

Transferred Pole #385 on School St.

Installed new Service at 136 School St

Set span guy pole on river Rd East behind 369 Railroad St.

Trued-up the estimate for 136 School St.

Re-wired the meter socket from 120V to 240V at Katywin Pump house #3 for the installation of the new heater

Cut brush on 100C by Hoag Rd.

Looked at prints for the Industrial Park to make sure they are building to our Specs.

Working on getting generators serviced

Met with engineers at shop and reviewing the plans with the crew

Reviewed the plans for the e-bike charging station for the Green

Working on reports for the State

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

Water/Sewer -

Work with company for the Slip lining on Main St

Met with engineers for the River bank Stabilization on Lendway Lane to show them where the water main is

Removed water meters at 379 LMW and 186 Katywin East

Turned on Heaters at the meter house

Nate went to the annual GMWEA conference

General Dept. –

Installed Christmas lights and Banners on Main St

Installed Garlands on Main St. after some secluding difficulties

Ordered 2 new tires for the 3500

Installed lanterns on the Village Green

The replacement street light pole came in for the Village Green and being installed that was hit last year

Installed Christmas tree lights on the Village Green and Town Clerks

Removed US Flags on Main St for the season

Sand/Salt and plowing of Sidewalks

Safety –

NEPPA safety meeting was on Dec.3rd and was on Ropes and Rigging

Changed out Gloves/Sleeves and Blankets and sent out for testing

Darrell asked if all the beautification committee's lanterns got put up. Erik said there weren't as many as they thought there would be. There were about 30 and they were put up.

11. Fire Department Report and Action Items

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

Johnson Fire Department Report

Nov. 1 – Nov. 30, 2024

JFD responded to 8 calls. 3 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 5 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 83 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 1 – structure fire, 1 – vehicle crash, 3 – automatic alarm, 2 – CO alarms, 1 – odor investigation

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 10
Total hours of service was: 86

Other:

Annual service and State inspections were completed on Engine 1, Rescue 1, and Rescue 3 by Porter's Repair and Rescue 2 by Lamoille Valley Chevy. This completes our annual feel servicing.

12. E-Bike Charger Presentation by LVRT Committee

Doug Molde said the rail trail committee has an opportunity to apply for a grant that will cover an e-bike charger that costs \$25K. There is a 25% match. The committee has the money for that in their account. The grant is from the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Community Fund. The committee thinks an e-bike charger would bring people into our community. They would stay here while their bikes were charging. The committee previously got permission to put an e-bike charger in the village but they didn't get the grant that would have paid for that one. This would be a 5-unit charging station with a metal base. Installation is supposed to take 4 hours. The bike stations lock the bike in while it is being charged. The village green is a central place in our community for it.

BJ asked about the size. Kyle looked it up. It is 199.5 inches.

BJ asked if people would pay to use it. Kyle said that is an option. We can start by making it free and convert it into a pay system.

BJ asked if we have to have a membrane under the metal or if it goes right onto the ground. Kyle said she thinks it will go right onto the brick. It has to be hardwired. The grant would pay for an electrician to hardwire it into the electric box.

Steve asked what it costs to charge a bike. Kyle said almost nothing. It has 110 volt plugs. She has an e-bike she used almost daily during the summer and she didn't notice an uptick in her electricity costs from charging it.

Will asked, why would the ratepayers have to pay to charge someone else's bike? He will be opposed if it is not a pay station. Erik said the village could allow it to be placed on the green but someone other than the village could own it and be billed for the electricity usage.

Will said he is assuming the committee will want to turn it over to the village. Doug said they want to turn it over to the village or the town. Will asked, this is a one-time source of funds? Doug said yes. This is economic development to tap into the many people using the rail trail.

Will asked if smaller charging stations are available. Kyle said this is the smallest charging station from the only company in the US that sells them.

Darrell asked what is wrong with having it by the rail trail. How many requests has the committee had for this type of system? Kyle said we could potentially put it at the welcome center. However the hope is to get people off the trail to come into the village and spend money. If it takes a couple of hours to charge their bike they can buy food or shop while waiting. Yva and Jim Rose, owners of Lamoille Valley Bike Tours, have data proving there are more and more e-bike users every year. They get inquiries all the time about where people can charge bikes. We are exactly at the halfway point of the trail. People get about halfway and then need to charge.

Steve asked if Lamoille Valley Bike Tours charges bikes. Kyle said they don't charge bikes other than the ones they rent.

Darrell said he thinks this is a good idea. But he personally feels it is a problem that we are only willing to bring bicyclists into the village. Other clubs that would also bring in money have asked to come into the village and were shot down. It is good to bring people in, but he thinks it is good to bring everyone in. It is hypocritical if we always say yes to rail trail users but shoot down other clubs. Will said especially when other clubs are bringing more money. Darrell said ATV clubs would also bring in money but the town shoots it down. Kyle said an important distinction is that the rail trail committee is a town committee. The club he is talking about is a private club.

Kyle said our job as a town and village is to offer amenities to make people want to come off the trail to boost our local economy. Doug said he is on the recreation economy Reimagine Johnson task force. They are talking about ATV and snowmobile use. All forms of recreation and what they can do for economic development are on the table. We are delivering something that would be greatly beneficial to the village.

Darrell said the committee is assuming that taking up a 16 foot area on the green with a charger will bring in people. Doug said they will go to other towns or here. There is a competition. He knows of a rail trail in Minnesota. Some towns along that trail have blossomed to look like Stowe and others still look like dairy farms. This is a huge economic benefit to the town. Darrell said the rail trail committee also said bicycle racks would be beneficial to the village and bring in people. Doug said the village doesn't have a committee like this. The committee is trying to do part of the village's job and provide economic development for the community.

Will said he thinks this venture has more legitimacy than the bike rack. He agrees it will bring people into the village. He doesn't think there will be a huge benefit but he does see a benefit. He is

opposed to the ratepayers paying for anyone to charge their bike. If we can solve that issue he leans towards being in favor of this.

Darrell said he is worried about the green become a parking lot. Will said it's supposed to be a parking lot. Kyle said the charger will not be on the lawn. It will be on an area where there is already brick and a rack for regular bikes.

Will asked about maintenance. Kyle said the charger comes with a warranty. Maintenance may require an electrician. The warranty is for 12 months. Erik suggested the town could own it and the village could host it. Will said his concern is long term maintenance. The cost will add up and in 8 years we will need to buy another one. If we can get the town to take possession he would be happy to make a motion to put it on the green. Erik suggested it might be metered and the town, rather than the users, would pay for the electricity. Will said if the town owns it they can decide if they want to charge the people who use it. Will said he doesn't think the village has the resources to maintain it, but he is okay with allowing use of village space.

Will moved to allow space for a 5-unit e-bike charging station on the Audibert Green contingent on the town taking ownership of the charging station and agreeing to meter the electricity, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

13. Discussion and Possible Approval 1835 LLC Water & Sewer

Erik said Johnson Woolen Mills has requested water and wastewater allocations for their back mill building, where they want to have a 100-seat restaurant and 5 efficiency rental units on the top floor. Alexalee Nadeau said they would be short-term rentals. Erik said we have plenty of allocable water and wastewater. **Will moved to approve water and wastewater allocations of 3700 gallons per day for 1835 LLC for the Old Back Mill, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

14. EV Options, Recommendation, and Selection

Erik reviewed EV vehicle options. We have a grant for \$50K. We have to spend a minimum of \$50K and we were approved for exactly \$50K. A Ford Mustang from McGee Ford represents the most value. It outperforms the Toyota BZ4X in horsepower, battery capacity, range, charging time, legroom, headroom and cargo space. We can get it with mounted snow tires and all-season tires in the trunk for exactly \$50K. It has all-wheel drive. The other vehicles he looked at are under \$50K. We would have to buy accessories to bring the price up to \$50K.

Darrell asked about the life expectancy of the battery. Erik said it has an 8-year warranty.

Will moved to select Stock Number 21889X36 from McGee Ford as the village EV, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

15. Water & Light Garage Project Update

Erik shared the current draft floor plan for the garage, which he and the crew all see as solid. The food shelf has been using our office for storage but we will need it back from January to next fall. Most of the big equipment will be put in the lower storage building. Most of the supplies will be stored in CONEX boxes.

16. Electric Department Bad Debt Write-Offs

The board reviewed the list of outstanding debts from 2020 to be written off. Erik said this list is bigger than in most years due to COVID. We have tried collections and these are the debts that

remain. **Will moved to accept the 2020 electric account debt write-offs totaling \$4,363.03 as presented, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

17. Website Options

Will said if we agree to share the cost 50-50 with the town they may reconsider not including the village in their website plans. BJ said he reached out to our current web designer and the one the town chose to use and got cost figures. For the new website the cost in the first year is \$4,420. Fifty percent of that would be \$2,210. The cost for the current web designer to revamp the site would be about \$2500. They can include all the bells and whistles the other designer can include. For every year after that, the designer the town chose will charge \$1310 and the current designer will charge \$500. The town's web designer will charge \$130/hr for technical support and the current designer will charge \$95/hr. The current website uses WordPress. The new town website will use a proprietary system. The office employees know the current system. With the current site, we might need maintenance support about once a year. The office employees can do the rest. With the new site, any changes will have to be done by the web designer at \$130/hr. The current web designer feels she can do a complete redesign for about \$2500 if we look at other websites and tell her what we want (as opposed to having her design a site from scratch and then asking her to change a lot of things.) The more we can show her what we want, the less work it will be for her. He would like to work with her on the design.

Erik said the town is reconsidering. They might fall back to the current web designer. Will said for the first 2 years if we stick with the current company it will cost \$3000 and if we use the company the town chose it will cost \$3120. But the following year the difference will be greater. He asked Erik if he thinks there is any benefit to employees being familiar with the current system. Erik said yes. And with the new company, because their system is proprietary, if we want to do anything we have to pay them to do it.

Will said it makes him nervous that \$2500 doesn't seem like a firm price. BJ said he is confident we can cap her at \$2500 and have the website we want. That will include our domain name and everything.

Will said he doesn't think it is a bad thing to have a website in conjunction with the town. He is just thinking about what is financially best.

Will moved to use Davis Hill Designs to design a village website if the designer agrees to a cap of \$2500, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

18. Main Street Holiday Lights and Decorations Discussion

Will said GiGi Beach told him that Johnson Works' bank account is emptied out and they are not meeting anymore. Johnson Works had purchased the holiday lights that are on the poles currently. GiGi recommended that the village take possession of them and be responsible for any future maintenance. Erik said Johnson Works doesn't own all the lights. The village bought some.

Will said he thinks the lights are a benefit to the town. BJ said they are not very expensive. Kyle said the village looks really good. And when the village puts up more lights and decorations it encourages businesses to put in more effort to decorate as well. She feels people are loving it. It makes people feel good and festive. Will said if we decide to keep the lights people will expect them to be maintained in the future.

Will moved that the village accept any lights or decorations Johnson Works agrees to give and maintain them for the future, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.

BJ said some of the snowflakes need to be fixed. Kyle said they can only be replaced. We can't just replace bulbs. Will said when the crew takes them down we can get a tally of how many need to be replaced.

Kyle said Morrisville puts their holiday lights up around early November but doesn't turn them on until later. She suggested Johnson might want to do the same. Erik said that is a good idea.

BJ said the Holiday Jubilee looked great this year. Kyle thanked the village for the help and support. She said Erik helped with the parade. Nate and his crew were great to work with.

19. Executive Session

BJ moved to enter executive session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a) because premature public knowledge of contract negotiations would clearly place the village at a substantial disadvantage, Will seconded and the motion was passed at 7:51. The board came out of executive session at 8:26.

Will moved to accept Version 2 of the new Village Manager's contract for Jan 1, 2025 until July 15, 2028 as presented to the board tonight contingent upon the chairperson's review and approval, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

20. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28.