

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert

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*

No changes to the agenda were needed.

4. *Approve Articles for Village Meeting*

Erik read the proposed warning for the annual village meeting. **Will moved to approve the warning for the 2025 annual village meeting as read, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.**

5. *Discuss and Possibly Approve Reducing Town Bill for Ice Rink Mishap*

Ken said Erik is suggesting reducing the bill for the ice rink mishap from \$1709.80 to \$825.22. Erik said the selectboard agreed with paying for the time of the employees called out but thought the water charge should be just \$100. In the spirit of cooperation, Erik had suggested cutting the water charge down to a ballpark estimate of the cost of chemicals and electricity, \$300. Ken said the number Erik suggested would mean no expense to our ratepayers.

Will asked, if this incident had not happened and the rink had continued to be flooded for the next month to create ice, would the same amount of water have been used in that time? Erik said no. The rink gets completely flooded once and then a minimal amount of water is used for maintenance. The rink holds 30,000 gallons. Maybe another 10,000 would be added for maintenance. Will asked how many gallons were lost in the incident. Erik said between 70,000 and 90,000. He noted that the frost free hydrant they were supposed to use for rink maintenance was installed incorrectly and is frozen solid.

Will said under our agreement with the town they would have had enough water for the rest of the year for \$100. If they had filled the rink a dozen more times they would only have been charged \$100. Since the rink hasn't been used further since the incident, he thinks it is within reason for them to pay \$100 plus the actual labor cost.

Ken said the understanding was not that they would use 70,000 gallons for \$100. BJ said they would typically pay \$100 for 40,000 gallons and that is a good deal. Will said to his knowledge there was no limit to the amount they could use. We can revisit that deal at a future meeting.

Will moved to accept the \$625.22 the selectboard has offered to pay for the ice rink mishap with the understanding that the town knows we will revisit the price for ice rink water usage in the future. The motion died for lack of a second.

BJ asked if the \$100 charge the village offered was just for the skating rink or for use of the spigot all year. Will said his understanding is that it was \$100 for the year.

Darrell moved to charge the town \$725 for the ice rink mishap and the motion was seconded.

Steve asked, there will be no additional expense to the ratepayers if we pass the motion? Ken said there would be about \$100 cost to ratepayers. Steve asked how that works with budget we have already put in place. Erik indicated the money could be found within the budget. Will said Steve's concern is legitimate but those costs would have been incurred anyway if the incident hadn't happened. To ensure no cost to the ratepayers we need to consider a different charge for the water in the future.

Steve asked if measures have been put in place to ensure this couldn't happen again. Erik said yes. Ken said rules were already in place and the town has been enlightened about them. The next budget includes time for a village crew member to work with the town to fill the rink.

The motion was passed with Steve, Ken, and Darrell in favor and BJ and Will opposed.

6. Discuss and Select Village Report Dedication Recipient

The board discussed possible dedications for the village report. BJ moved to dedicate the 2025 village report to Steve Hatfield, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed with Steve abstaining.

7. Presentation and Possible Approval of Draft General Dept. 2025 Budget

Erik reviewed the draft general department budget. It is a 3.9% increase. Erik said that is less than a dollar a month for a typical house. Ken said we could have gone lower, but we need to fill some reserve funds.

Erik reviewed the grant funds that will be used for the garage project. He suggests using \$38,500 of the BAA Local Economic Impact Grant to purchase a Bobcat with a snow blower.

Darrell asked if the Bobcat needs a new snow blower. Erik said it may not. Ken said we have only had a snow blower for one of our Bobcats. The one we have is a high flow blower and the one we would get would be low flow.

BJ asked about keeping the old Bobcat as a backup. Erik said it is starting to need more maintenance. Ken said if we take the \$15K anticipated trade-in amount out of the budget, our budget will go up.

Ken said we have never had a low flow snow blower. We can get one for \$6200. Darrell said he would be concerned about throwing capacity with a low flow blower.

Ken said an extra snow blower is a want, not a need. Should we remove it from the budget? Will suggested budgeting for half the cost of the snow blower this year and planning to do the same next year. Then we won't have to increase taxes next year if we decide to buy it.

Erik said a new snow blower will improve operations but the crew can get by without it. We don't have a low flow snow blower now so we can only blow snow with the big Bobcat. Ken said we are replacing the smaller Bobcat. Erik said having a second snow blower adds flexibility. We would have a backup if the big one goes down and if there is a big snowfall we can have two blowers out at once.

BJ said he likes the idea of both machines having a snow blower attachment. Will said he hates to have us spend money we don't need to spend. We will be doing two big projects and we may end up having funding shortfalls.

Darrell asked if the crew has tried out a low flow snow blower. Ken said no. Darrell said he has concerns that it may not work well. Erik suggested the board could approve the purchase with the caveat that the crew test it before buying it.

Ken moved to authorize purchasing a new skidsteer without a snow blower using BAA Local Economic Impact Grant funds and the motion was seconded and passed.

Board members suggested that Erik should come back to the board to discuss purchase of a snow blower attachment if the crew tries it out and likes it.

Erik reviewed expenses in the budget. Insurance costs went up. He did not budget anything for the Tree Board because they didn't ask to spend any of what was budgeted last year. Ten percent of the village's 50% share of the cost for municipal building repairs is budgeted under the general department. Erik only budgeted \$3K for street, sidewalk and storm drain maintenance because we don't have the time to do a sidewalk project this year. This year we will be focusing on electrical projects.

Darrell asked, didn't we promise to put in some concrete this year? Erik said we said we could do the concrete for the bike rack at the Cold Spring at the same time we did other sidewalk work. Ken said the rail trail committee's grant funds will pay for the concrete work.

Will asked about the library moving project. Erik said we realized that project is beyond our scope. Nate will be in charge of it, but the town will contract out the work, probably to Green Mountain Power.

Erik budgeted to put \$10,000 into the sidewalk reserve fund and \$5,000 in a maintenance equipment reserve fund.

Erik noted that \$1.36 million of the general department budget is expense for the garage project that is offset by grant funds.

Will moved to approve a 2025 general department budget of \$1,839,382, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

8. Presentation and Possible Approval of Draft General Dept. 2025 Budget

Will moved to approve a 2025 electric department budget of \$2,706,797, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

9. Website Update

BJ showed draft website pages. He said the vendor has spent about 20 hours so far and we had approved paying for up to 25 hours. We could choose to pay for more than 25 hours at their normal rate or we could just have them do 25 hours of work, leaving design placeholders on some pages, and have our staff fill in the information. He thinks we should just have our staff do it. They would need to fill the latest news, upcoming events, etc. The board agreed that we should not spend more than what was originally approved. BJ and staff should do some of the work.

BJ said he wants to show the final website at the March 10 meeting and get approval at that point. Then it will go live for staff, but not the public, and staff can start adding information. His goal is to go live for the public April 1.

BJ said he was approached about having information on the village website about the library move. The town's new website won't be ready in time and the move will be in the village. Including that information can push traffic to our site. There is a 501(c)(3) that will provide information for that part of the site and will publicize the link. Being able to put out that information before the library move is the reason he wants to go live with the site April 1.

Ken moved to direct BJ to take care of web page updates beyond what staff can accomplish in the next month, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

10. Other Business

Will said he got a request about the electric car that is parked at the charger all day every day. Can it be moved after it is charged? Erik said we can probably work with the town to get the other side of the charger working. In winter it takes a good part of the day to charge the car and it can get extra miles if it is on the charger before it leaves because it warms up the battery.

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths