

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025

**Present:**

Trustees: Will Jennison, Ellis O'Hear, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau, Darrell Wescom

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, William Kulakowski, Mike Dunham, Lynda Hill, Jan Gearhart, Arjay West

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

**1. *Call to Order***

BJ called the meeting to order at 6:01.

**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***

Erik said in the April 14 minutes the wording of the motion to go into executive session should be changed to make it clear that Erik was invited into the executive session but the board was not negotiating with him. **Ken moved to approve the minutes of April 14, 2025, with the recommended change, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.**

**5. *Treasurer's Report: Bills & Warrants, Budget Status Report, Action Items***

The board reviewed the budget status report. Rosemary said payroll for the crew is high now compared to budget, mostly due to snow removal, but it will probably level out later in the year. She noted that the town has already paid the village for the work related to the library move. That does not come out of the village budget. Ken asked if the crew stuck to the 4-inch policy for snow removal. Erik said yes, outside of regular hours. Rosemary said the large amount under fire department grants and reimbursements is from FEMA, Erik said other than wastewater, he believes we have all our money from the 2023 flood. BJ noted higher commercial and residential sales. Erik said sales of water and electricity are both rebounding. College water use is up 12%.

**6. *Review and Possibly Approve Food Truck Application for Smokin' Barrels BBQ***

William Kulakowski said he has a barbecue trailer he is hoping to set up on the Village Green. He has submitted an application and has some questions. He would like to be able to stay open until dinnertime, but some days of the week the requirement is to stop by 4:00 or 4:30. Would the board be willing to reconsider that? He is not looking to leave his trailer there every day unless it becomes very popular. *(Mike Dunham left at 6:11.)* He suggested that instead of charging \$18/day the board might consider a fee structure similar to what Newport has. He is thinking of being open for late lunch and dinner on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. But he is open to other days if the board thinks there would be more traffic on other days. *(Lynda Hill arrived at 6:12.)* Erik said he has suggested that there is a lack of places to eat in Johnson on Mondays. *(Will Jennison arrived at 6:13.)*

Darrell asked if the food will already be cooked or if he will have a smoker going. William said he has a small smoker in his trailer, but he would plan to smoke the meat at home and heat it up. He has a generator, running water and fire extinguishers. BJ said we don't allow generators but it will be possible for him to plug in.

Erik said he doesn't see a conflict with other restaurants in town, No one else is serving barbecue. BJ and Will explained that we try not to compete with brick and mortar restaurants because they pay

taxes. Ken said under our policy if William pulls his trailer out and someone else wants that spot he will lose it unless he pays for the spot even when the trailer is not there.

William said he would like an end time of about 6:30.

Ken said he will have to take away his wastewater and if his business fills the garbage cans he should empty them.

**Ken moved to allow the Smokin' Barrels BBQ trailer on the Village Green on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Ken moved to authorize Erik to sign the permit for Smokin' Barrels to use the Village Green once he has received the health certificate, Will seconded and the motion was passed.** (*William Kulakowski left at 6:20.*)

**7. *Members of the Public***

No members of the public wished to speak.

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

Erik read his report:

The W&L garage project is going well. As of early last week, we no longer have a building at all, just a slab. The contractor has turned to concrete and outside utilities work while they await the building kit to arrive. We secured the VT Building Permit from the Fire Marshalls after a minor upgrade to a couple interior doors and walls.

Our Water & Light crew deserve a huge pat on the back for their efforts in the Town Library move. The numerous electric utility moves required went flawlessly and safely due to their efforts and Nate's planning and coordination with the multiple GMP crews brought in to assist them.

The DR4810 utility pole protection project down behind Union Bank is moving along. Our draft RFP for A&E services is nearly complete and should go out by the middle of the week.

Working with VPPSA, I filed a Department of Public Service Grant Application for Grid resiliency work for \$192,000.00. If approved, it will buy the crew a small, tracked excavator with mulcher, wrist, thumb, and buckets. This equipment will greatly increase their ability to maintain cross country ROWs and even set poles in areas we cannot get to with a truck. It will also be handy for water breaks and allow us to sell our interest in the backhoe back to the Town. The grant will also fund expanded contract tree crew work for the next 2 years. This will provide a bit of temporary budget relief while the electric dept gets back on track financially.

I will be at the VT City & Town Manager's association Conference this Thursday & Friday. Sessions include the 'Downstream Effects of Federal Government Changes', 'Capital Planning & Budgeting, with a financial outlook for debt in the current economic climate', 'VLCT Legislative Update', 'Employee Engagement', 'Contract negotiations', and a 'Governing Board relations roundtable'.

I've attached the draft Village Manager Official Vehicle Policy for approval.

**Ken moved and Darrell seconded to approve the Village Manager's Official Vehicle Use Policy for all village employees. (Jan Gearhart arrived at 6:26.)**

The board discussed setting a limit of 25 miles off route for stops during commuting and setting an annual reimbursement amount that subtracts 4 weeks of vacation time from \$2000 instead of the weekly amount in the draft.

**BJ moved to amend the motion by calling for two changes to the draft policy: specifying that stops are to be no more than 25 miles off route instead of referring to "normal & customary stops generally enroute" and setting a yearly reimbursement amount of \$1,846.16. Will seconded and the motion was passed.**

**The amended motion was passed.**

Ken suggested that Erik show Rosemary and the office staff how to use the car.

**9. Water/Wastewater Report and Any 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 48,000 gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing for the month of April
- We had remote monitoring set up for the SCADA system. I was able to set it up for both Morrisville and Johnson at the same time for \$370 total that was split between both. It was almost \$500 if we did them individually.
- We installed a stackable washer and dryer that we had lost in the flood. It was need as you can imagine in this line of work. We bought it locally at JP's Promising Goods. FEMA reimbursable
- The free refrigerator that we picked up beside the road shortly after the flood finally died. We got a new refrigerator from JP's Promising Goods and installed it. FEMA Reimbursable
- Removed snowblower and attached the mowing deck to the tractor. We stored the snowblower at the town storage high and dry.
- Raked, picked up limbs and trimmed bushes back around the plant. Also mowed for the first time.
- Installed an American Flag at the plant.
- Had a backup at the syphon. Had Manosh come and jet both the main and the bypass. Found an accumulation of roots and rags that had come into the system from somewhere.
- Tested the emergency portable generator under load in anticipation of loss of power during the library move. We started the generator and ran the plant under generator power during the entire library move. Wastewater plants do not like power interruptions and we decided this was the best way to keep the plant running the best during this time.
- All fire extinguishers were tested and certified by G&E Fire .
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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

- Painted over the vandalism at Clay Hill Booster Station. It bled back through after a couple weeks. We bought some Bins sealer to coat it with and then will repaint the wall and the trim.
- Cleaned and vacuumed accumulated winter bugs inside the water plant.
- Don Martin fixed a communication issue we were having with MISSION at the Clay Hill Booster Station.
- Village crew set up an emergency generator to power the Clay Hill Booster station during the library move.
- Water loss was unknown at the time of the report.

BJ asked how the library move went from Erik's perspective. Erik said for a project that complex he was amazed at how it went. The sheriff's department had good control of traffic. The utility work went great. The only issue was that cable for a couple of people on Clay Hill didn't get hooked back up until the next day.

BJ asked if the building got caught. Erik said yes. It couldn't make the turn off Railroad Street. Brian Raulinaitis cut about half an inch off the roof and that freed it up. The building made it down Main Street within the VTrans window. Erik was watching from below and to the side as the building went over the bridge and there was no visible movement at all. That bridge was made to interstate weight load standards.

#### ***10. Electric/General Report and Any Action Items***

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

##### Electric Dept. –

Outage for Library move: Main St/ Railroad St 9pm - 8am  
School St/Cal Hill 4am – 10;30 am

Outage at 877 Rt15W due to customer digging up their service

Removed street lights off of the Pearl St. bridge, waiting for Town to schedule  
Blow Cote to reinstall

Turned and put back lights on Main St.

Removed and reinstalled street light on the corner of Main St and Pearl St

Disconnected and reconnected service to the Legion Field

Removed and reinstalled service to the Pearl St bridge

Re tested back-up substation transformer

Billed Myers for the service line they ripped down at 68 LMW

Sent out estimates for 31 Drag Lot, Little Barn Rd, and 555 Gould Hill Rd lot 2A

Cut 2 trees at 850 Clay Hill Rd

Met with TSI about back- Substation transformer

Attended meetings for AMI

Cut out service line to 285 Foote Brook Rd

Cut trees at 89 Railroad St and 29 Peal St – 7 trees total for the library move

Installed new meter socket for Comcast in the Gulf

Installed generator at the Clay Hill pump house for the library move

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

Water/Sewer -

Inspected sewer line capping of the library

Syphon on Main St plugged due to root balls

Removed 1” sewer riser on Clay Hill

Turned on water to 21 Park St

Fixed water meter reader at 136 School St

General Dept. –

Replaced flags at the Municipal Building

Inspected side walks after library move found broken pan  
14 - Railroad St and 2 on Main St

Removed furnace, hot water heater, and garage openers out of shop

Attended Pre construction meeting for shop

Fixed broken sign at the Old Fire station parking lot

Demo of shop started and building is gone

Cleaned lawns at Green, Cold Spring, and Municipal Building

Started Sweeping

new S450 Bobcat delivered May 6<sup>th</sup>

Sand/Salt and plowing of Sidewalks

Safety –

Changed out and shipped glove/sleeves and blankets

G&K inspected fire extinguishers

**11. Fire Department Report and Any Action Items**

Erik read the report submitted by Fire Chief Arjay West:

Johnson Fire Department Report

*Mar. 28 – Apr. 24, 2025*

JFD responded to 9 calls. 6 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 3 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 57 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 2 – hazardous materials, 4 – automatic alarms, 2 – Mutual Aid (smoke condition & structure fire), and 1 – other (agency assist: LCSD)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 13

Total hours of service was: 112

Other:

Congrats to the Town and associated crews & committees on their successful library move project. This event occurred the following day after the close of this report, but seems pertinent to include. Thank you to all the firefighters that participated to make staffing and coverage assignments complete, allowing us to execute the emergency operations plan for the project without interruption.

**12. Review and Possibly Approve Excess Sewer Use Waiver for 294 Railroad St.**

Erik said in January someone broke a window in an apartment building undergoing renovations. It was near the water line and the line froze and broke. A lot of water was lost. The owner understands he needs to pay for the water, but it didn't go into the sewer so he is asking for a waiver of sewer charges. Erik recommends reducing the sewer charge to the average of the last 3 months. **Will moved to adjust the sewer charge for 294 Railroad Street from \$1,361.61 to \$39.55 because the situation meets the requirements of the policy on excessive water usage, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.**

**13. LVRT Committee Request to Place Village Informational Kiosk**

Jan Gearhart said board members indicated at the last meeting that the kiosk proposed for the Village Green was too big and cumbersome. The Rail Trail Committee feels the Village Green is the ideal spot for a kiosk. It is not just for people using the rail trail but for other visitors coming through town. There is parking there and businesses around it. They thought a lower profile double pedestal map stand might fit better in that location. Lynda Hill said it would be waist height.

Jan said the board had previously okayed a bike charging station at the Village Green but she thinks that was rescinded at the last meeting. Ken said that was because the committee said they didn't want to put it there. Lynda said that was what they thought at the time. Ken said the board never actually

gave permission to put a bike charger on the Green. The plan was to consider it and see if it would fit. Jan said because the committee has had so many changes in membership and the chair has been sick, a lot of information has not been transferred. What the committee would like if possible is to put a map stand and 2 e-bike charging stations on the Village Green. Each charger could serve 2 e-bikes. Lynda said one reason the committee backed away from the original e-bike charger plan was that the first one presented was big and bulky and overkill. Now they are thinking of 2 smaller, narrow chargers, hopefully one on either side of the electrical panel.

BJ asked if stores will still be hosting chargers. Lynda and Jan said they don't think that is necessary. Jan said there are regular outlets available at the welcome center. Most e-bike riders carry charging cords and can plug into an outlet.

Erik said there is a really large bike rack there now. Lynda said the committee is thinking of that going away. Erik said the brick patio area where the bike rack is now would be a beautiful spot for the map stand and/or the e-bike chargers. If they are on the bricks we don't have to mow around them.

Ken said it seems like the Rail Trail Committee is stuck on using the Village Green, the smallest space the village owns. The bike racks were never supposed to go away. Lynda said at the last meeting the board said they weren't there. Darrell said he thinks the board voted to move the bike racks and put the chargers in that spot, but at the last meeting he moved to rescind permission for the chargers.

Jan said the committee thinks the Village Green is ideal. It is not just for cyclists. They are thinking of people who come through town and have no idea what is here. The map stand will catch their attention and there are parking spaces there. They are trying to get people off the rail trail to spend money in town. Lynda said there would be a map and a legend listing all the businesses.

Darrell said he thinks if people are coming off the rail trail it would be better to have the map where people are leaving the trailhead. Lynda said committee members looked at the map at the trailhead and found it confusing to figure out where things were in relation to where they were. It would be easier for people to understand which direction to go once they are already in town. Jan said there will be a map at the trailhead as well. She thinks there could be a sign at the trailhead pointing the way to village services and information.

Will asked, if the map at the trailhead is confusing, would a street sign help that? Is there a sign that says Railroad Street? Jan said there is a sign that says Johnson with an arrow. The committee is envisioning signs pointing to village services and information with arrows where the trail crosses Railroad Street and at the end of Railroad Street, bringing people to the Village Green.

Ellis said it sounds like more signage is needed at the trailhead as well as in the village. He doesn't think there is good signage there. Jan and Lynda said they are changing it.

Jan and Lynda said once people get to Main Street, it is hard to tell which way to go unless there is a sign. If someone is at Butternut Mountain Farm and they see an informational sign they will go and look at it. It could show things like the arboretum, Beard Park or the Powerhouse Bridge.

BJ asked what made the committee decide to put the kiosk at another location and not at the end of Railroad Street. Lynda said when they initially talked about it, they were thinking about the larger

kiosk and they got worried about whether the state would say it was blocking drivers' vision. BJ said having a sign at the end of Railroad Street is important for people coming off the rail trail.

Will suggested better mapping at the trailhead. He thinks the Railroad St./Main St. intersection is the perfect place for a sign. Lynda said the village will have to mow around it. BJ said our contractor won't charge us more to mow around two poles.

Lynda said she thinks it is important to bring people into town and let them know what we have besides what is on Main St. if we put the map on the corner of Railroad St. and Main St., people in cars won't be able to stop and read the sign. Will asked if the committee has thought about the option of using the properties the town will be acquiring through buyouts. Lynda said they are all pretty much on Railroad St. or to the west. BJ said the committee had talked about moving kiosks in the future if we needed to. Jan said the old library site might be an option.

Darrell questioned whether people in cars would even notice a kiosk or map stand. He thinks for people coming off the rail trail, a location at the corner is better.

Jan said the Rail Trail Committee can discuss this and see if they like the idea of using the corner. Will said he won't vote for a sign at the Village Green.

Lynda asked if the village is going to leave the bike racks on the Village Green. Ken said he would like the committee to come to the board with a plan. He thinks a map pedestal on the corner of Railroad and Main would serve the purpose of assisting people coming from the rail trail. He doesn't think it should go on the Village Green. BJ said he likes the idea of a map pedestal at the Village Green and a kiosk at the corner of Railroad and Main. The kiosk would be a smaller version, not as big as originally discussed. (*Arjay West arrived at 7:12.*)

Darrell asked, if the board agreed to a pedestal, then could it take the place of the bike racks so we wouldn't lose any more territory? BJ asked if there is room for electric chargers by the brick area where the bike racks are now. Erik said there is room, but there would be challenges with getting power to them.

Ken asked the committee to find out what the power requirements are for the chargers and let the village know that, as well as their size and how many are desired. Erik said the billing for the power is another question. Ken said the village is not paying for it. That is a given. Will said maintenance is also a question. Lynda asked who takes care of the current bike racks. Ken said the village. Lynda said the ones at the Village Green are rusted. Ken said at the village annual meeting, village residents told the board not to spend more money. And the crew is still way behind due to the library move, still catching up after the flood and involved in the village garage project.

Jan said she and Lynda will present what was discussed to the committee.

Darrell asked, if the board allowed a map pedestal on the Village Green, is the committee set on having the e-bike chargers at the same spot? Jan said no; they just think that would be a convenient place for people to charge.



**14. Possible Approval of Reimbursement to Village Manager for Personal Mapping App Annual Charge**

Darrell said he asked for this to be on the agenda. He doesn't suggest that we pay the full annual charge, because it is also a hunting app, but Erik does use it for work. Darrell considers it a tool. Erik said he uses it far more for work than for personal use, but the annual fee is only \$30. Darrell said he doesn't think we make any other village employees buy their tools.

**Darrell moved to pay half the cost of the paid mapping app Erik uses and to pay half the cost for the fire chief, assistant chief and Nate Brigham if they wish to use the app. Ken seconded.**

BJ said they already have access to boundary information online. Darrell said nowadays people tend to do everything on their phones.

Will said mechanics typically buy their own tools. The fire department recently had a drill and everyone used the GPS on their own phones. It is not just the chief and assistant chief who would use this. Firefighters use their own devices to be paged out to a call. There is no reimbursement for them using their private devices. They are also village employees and there are 22 of them, so now we are talking about 26 subscriptions. He thinks Darrell is a nice person for coming up with this idea but he is not in favor of it.

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

Darrell said he didn't realize that there is more than one assistant chief. Ken suggested Arjay could create a single fire department account they could all share. Erik said he will look into whether a single account can be shared among multiple people.

**15. Discuss EOC Cell Phone Bill Splitting**

Erik and Ken said the selectboard hasn't discussed this yet. Eben Patch will bring it up at their next meeting. **Will moved to table discussion on EOC cell phone bill splitting until the next meeting, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.**

**16. Executive Sessions – Contract Negotiations**

**Ken moved to enter executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1) because the village trustees have made a specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the contract negotiations would clearly place the village at a substantial disadvantage, with all trustees, Erik and the fire chief invited to remain. The motion was seconded and passed at 7:30.**

The board came out of executive session at 8:09.

**It was moved and seconded to enter executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1) because the village trustees have made a specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the contract negotiations would clearly place the village at a substantial disadvantage, with all trustees and Erik remaining. The motion was passed at 8:10.**

The board came out of executive session at 8:15.

**17. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15.