

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2013

Present:

Trustees: Gordon Smith, George Pearlman, Walter Pomroy, Chris Parker

Others: Duncan Hastings (Manager), Arjay West

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Gordy called the meeting to order at 4:10.

2. Insurance Costs

Duncan distributed a list of coverage on all town and village buildings. For jointly owed buildings, the village pays 50% of the cost. The experience modification reflecting actual claims against the village's insurance increased this year. It reflects the fire department loss and flood damage to the sewer plant. That is part of the reason for the \$10K increase in village-wide insurance costs. Also, worker's comp went up 14%. Insurance rates stayed the same. It appears the fire department's insurance cost will be \$22,451. Arjay said that is a more than the figure he has in his budget. Duncan said he wants to review it more carefully to verify the number.

3. Fire Department Budget Discussion

Arjay explained that since last week's meeting about \$4500 for bunker gear purchases had been added to the small tools fund, while about \$3800 was cut from the operating budget. The current proposed budget is \$1500 more than what was presented last week.

Gordy asked if Arjay is comfortable with the cuts he made. Arjay said yes. He said trying to get miscellaneous income up is one of the most important things. He thinks that is one of the things helping to smooth out the bumps. Duncan asked if that is mainly accident billings. Arjay said yes, and also billing for extended services beyond mitigating an emergency, such as traffic control. He thinks we can increase that next year.

Arjay said the total fire department budget is \$165,000. The department is looking to raise \$10,500 in revenue to fund the program. Last week they suggested asking the college for a \$500 increase to \$6000. If the rest is spread out to the towns and the village, the village increase would be \$3120 based on current figures. It will need to be increased a bit to reflect the actual insurance figure.

Walter said village residents pay a disproportionate share of the fire department's funding. They pay both as village residents and town residents, but he feels they should only be paying once. He suggested perhaps the budget could be reduced. Should we look at how often we replace tools and equipment? Duncan said the turnaround times on trucks are already long. He said Walter is right; village residents are paying twice, although the town has the largest tax base. But addressing that might take a fundamental change in the way we fund the fire department. That is probably a different, broader discussion.

Gordy said Johnson is getting a good deal for what it is being assessed for fire protection. Other towns are paying more. Arjay said he had looked at Cambridge and Hyde Park for comparison. Cambridge's fire chief is proposing a \$131K budget without any truck payments or station loan

payments. The Hyde Park fire chief gave a figure of \$65K without any truck payments and only covering half of the township (because North Hyde Park has its own department.) But Arjay thinks there must be something missing from that figure because it doesn't seem like enough. We had 130 calls in the last year, while Cambridge approached 200. If you take our budget and remove amounts for truck and station loan payments, it is more in line with Cambridge's budget. But Johnson is paying less than Cambridge.

Walter said he would prefer that the village absorb no more increases so that slowly, over time, the village share of the fire department budget is reduced on a percentage basis. Gordy agreed. Walter said he would like the village's contribution to stay at \$41K, where it is now. Walter asked how the current allocation was arrived at. Gordy said he thought it was based on several things, including the grand list and number of calls. George said he would think it would just be based on the grand list. Duncan said the central dispatch budget is based 50% on the grand list and 50% on population. They have compared call volumes to percentages and they come out quite close.

Duncan said he thinks the fire department could bill insurance for every call instead of only for what Arjay considers extended service. Arjay said he has a written policy to back up bills he sends. He got input from Terri O'Hear. Most insurance policies carry a statement that if the person involved is a resident of a town that receives a tax appropriation the insurance company doesn't have to pay any bill.

Walter said he would like the village's contribution to be \$41,309, the same as last year. Gordy agreed.

George moved and Chris seconded to approve the fire department's budget as presented (allowing for possible changes to the insurance cost), with the contribution requested from the village reduced to \$41,309, and contributions from the towns of Johnson, Waterville, and Belvidere increased proportionally to make up the required total. Walter said he would rather give Arjay leeway to adjust the budget instead of specifying that the reduction in the village contribution will be passed on to the towns. **The motion was passed 3-1.**

4. *Town Use of Village Tractor*

Duncan said the town's capital budget calls for purchase of a tractor and mower this year. The consensus last year was that the tractor probably wouldn't be replaced. The village has a good tractor which is used only for mowing, brush hogging under right of way lines, and sometimes chipping. Would the village be willing to negotiate a rental rate for the town to use the tractor? The town could then buy a ditchbank mower which could be used by the village. Both Steves think this would be a good idea. Town use wouldn't contribute much to wear on the tractor. George said he would suggest charging based on use, the same as for the backhoe. Gordy said it might generate some revenue for the village. Board members agreed they would be interested in pursuing this.

5. *Wi-Fi Zone Signs*

Duncan said Lea believes the wi-fi grant will cover purchase of a couple of wi-fi zone signs. Board members agreed the signs could be added to existing signposts at either end of the wi-fi zone. Walter said he would eventually like to have a wi-fi sign at the rail trail trailhead also.

6. *Adjourn*

It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 5:10 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths