

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN
MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2020

Present:

Trustees: Scott Meyer, Athena Parke, Gordon Smith

Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert, Will Jennison, Steve Hatfield, Kyle Nuse, Rick Aupperlee, Diane Lehouillier, several other community members

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order*

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:02.

2. *Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda*

Meredith added information on a bucket truck grant opportunity and a request from Johnson Works about putting up lights.

3. *Comments from Board Chair*

Gordy said he feels at last month's meeting the trustees reached a new low with the emotions and feelings and things that were said or implied. He hopes we can try to lift ourselves up and work with each other better and have better communication. In the future at trustee board meetings, unless trustees want to change this, he would like to have just trustees, village employees and consultants speaking. If the meeting starts at 6:00 he would like to try to adjourn by 10:00. At 9:30 maybe the board can check the agenda and prioritize remaining items and if a special meeting is needed one can be scheduled.

Gordy said a couple of days after the last meeting Peggy Williams called and asked to talk to him and they had a good discussion about their points of view. He was very motivated by her reaching out to him. The next day he thought maybe it was his turn to reach out to someone else so he reached out to Rick Aupperlee and they had a very good, civil discussion. The next day he called Cal Stanton and they met and talked and the discussion went well. He thinks we all need to communicate better. Differences of opinion are good if they are handled respectfully. He challenges anyone who reads the minutes to reach out to someone they may not agree with and have a discussion with respect. He thinks we have to pick ourselves up and move ahead.

4. *Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings*

Scott moved to approve the minutes of September 14, 2020, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.

5. *Treasurer's Report / Review and Approve Bills and Warrants / Budget Status*

Rosemary said currently there is about \$6,000 worth of delinquent taxes. About two thirds of that is from one person. That is close to where we usually are for this time of year on delinquent taxes.

Scott moved to authorized Gordy to sign warrants on behalf of the trustees, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.

Rosemary said the town will pay the ten cents on the grand list and the fire department payment at its next board meeting and we should get PILOT money by the end of the month. The PILOT money will be very close to what we budgeted.

Meredith said our attorney believes we have reached agreement with the Studio Center on an easement for the sidewalk project. If we buy title insurance for the two properties that will be impacted, the Studio Center will grant the easement. The cost to us will be less than \$300.

Meredith said Johnson Works is hoping to provide blue and white holiday lights to businesses on Main Street. They asked if the village would be open to putting lights on the sign between the municipal building and the fire department. There is an outlet on the sign. Gordy brought up the question of whether the lights will be on a timer or if someone will plug them in every night. That is a good question. Meredith thinks we should ask them how they will handle that. She asked Rosemary if the power for that sign is the responsibility of the village. Rosemary said she thinks it is shared by the town and village. Meredith said she thinks they will be LED lights that will not use much power. Johnson Works is also requesting similar lights on the fire station. They will provide the lights. They are just looking for permission to put them up. Athena and Scott agreed that this sounds like a good idea. Meredith said she will look into it and will talk to Arjay to make sure there are no issues from the fire department's standpoint.

Meredith reviewed the budget status report. There have been quite a few requests for line extensions. The electric department revenue for that will probably be at or over budget. We are hoping that for work we did on 100C recently we can tap into the \$45,000 that was allocated years ago for work on 100C. We think installation of the new taller poles can be billed against that.

Residential electric revenue is trending ahead of budget and revenue from small businesses and Northern Vermont University is under what it usually is, which is not surprising. Meredith is still working to fully understand the offsetting decreases in power supply costs. Purchased power is trending lower than budgeted, which is good since revenues are also low.

With the pandemic, the electric department hasn't had the opportunity to have an outside crew come in to do right of way tree trimming as usual. Our crew has done right of way cutting in-house.

With the disconnect moratorium, our crew has spent less time than expected on customer records and collection.

Water sales should be at 75% of budget at this time of year and they are at 69.26%. That is primarily due to lower use by the college. We have opted to take up the Vermont Bond Bank's offer not to make loan payments for anything due after May 1, deferring the payments to a future year. If we get closer to the end of the year and it looks like we can pay some, we may discuss that, but not having to make the payments this year gives us some flexibility.

Sewer revenue is a little under budget, primarily due to less use from the college. Sludge disposal expense will be under budget. We have been able to change some things about the process and decrease the number of trips we need to have Casella make for sludge disposal.

6. Water/Wastewater Permits for 679 VT Route 100C

Meredith said we received water and wastewater permit applications for 679 Route 100C. That is a very small vacant lot that has been for sale for a while. There is an existing state permit for this site. A prospective purchaser is hoping to close sometime this month. There used to be a home on the parcel that had connections so service line stubs exist. The new owner will use as much of the

existing infrastructure as possible. We are comfortable with his plan. Meredith thinks the board could give preliminary and final approval tonight since he already has a state permit, he has a design done, and he has submitted payment. He is building a one-bedroom home. He has paid for and requested allocations of 140 gallons per day for water and 210 gallons per day for wastewater. He has a permit from VTrans for the driveway. **Athena moved to give preliminary and final approval for wastewater permit 002-020 with an allocation of 210 gallons per day and water permit 002-020 for 140 gallons per day for 679 VT Route 100C, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

7. *Interviews with Interim Trustee Candidates*

Meredith said we received two letters of interest for the two trustee board vacancies – one from Will Jennison and one from Steve Hatfield. Both of them had applied in August the last time the board had vacancies.

Athena said she wasn't on the board when Will applied last time so she didn't get to read his letter of interest. She wondered if he could verbally explain his interest. Will said he has done the job before for a number of years. He is very familiar with the processes required. He has been a Johnson resident for 55 years. He is a volunteer firefighter. Having grown up here and been on the board previously and being familiar with the workings of the board, he thinks he can provide relevant insight to any issues that come up.

Athena said he is well known in town and has strong feelings. She asked how he plans to communicate with people and create a dialogue in a way that is appropriate for someone in elected office. What tools does he use to have those difficult conversations? Will said as a board we are responsible for doing what is best for the taxpayers of the village. Typically that is fairly black and white. For any other issues that come up it is our job to listen to all dialogue and make decisions based on what we think is best.

Athena said a lot of the emails she has received since being on the board have had to do with issues surrounding the Black Lives Matter flag and related issues. She asked how Will plans to address that when it comes up. Will said it is our job to listen to all commentary and decide what we feel is best for the taxpayers – to listen to all the concerns and make a decision from there.

Scott said it is important to let other trustees know when there may be a conflict of interest. An obvious potential one for Will is the fire department. He asked how Will would deal with the fire department budget, equipment purchases, etc. Will said if he feels there is any personal issue he would step out from any financial decisions. He will address all issues with respect to whether they are fiscally responsible. If there is any issue he feels he has a remotely personal attachment to, he will step back and decline to vote.

Scott said for any employee being hired into the village, trustees, and even volunteers, he needs to make sure anyone coming in is on board with the inclusivity statement. Will said he absolutely is. He judges people on their character and actions, nothing else.

Scott asked if Will is committed to working through the process this winter of whether to have a merger or not. We need to move that ahead and put it behind us. Will said yes. He thinks that is an issue that has been hanging over our heads for a while. He is looking forward to getting up to speed on all the data that has been gathered.

Athena asked if this would be an appropriate time to open the discussion up to the public for questions. Meredith said she and Gordy spoke earlier and his thought was that there should just be questions from the trustees.

Meredith suggested that Steve give a quick summary of his interest. Steve said he has lived here for a little over 3 years. He moved here from New York, where he was a member of the fire department and a chairman of the commission of that fire department. He envisioned that these meetings would be something like the meetings he attended in New York but probably a lot more complicated. Then the controversy with the Black Lives Matter flag came up and he was pretty intimidated by that and decided he couldn't do this job. Then he thought about it a lot more and realized that since he has an African-American son-in-law and a Black grandson he owed it to them to do whatever he could to be in on the fight for that change. He would still like to serve on this board, but he doesn't think he can be completely neutral on something like that. He is willing to listen to anyone who wants to talk reasonably and have a discussion. He and his wife love this village and he would like to help make it a better place.

Athena asked what tools and experience Steve brings into difficult conversations. Steve said he was trained and served for two or three years as a volunteer mediator. He also has worked in a few different jobs, including in the Department of Social Services with foster kids, where he had to learn to deal with difficult situations with parents and other people.

Athena asked what he thinks his outsider perspective will bring to the board. Steve said he and his wife love this town and he sees mostly the positives here. He realizes there is controversy now, but the reason he and his wife settled here and wanted to be in the village was because they wanted to participate in village life as well as being close to their kids and grandkids. He has always loved Vermont.

Scott said he wants to make sure Steve backs the town and village inclusivity statement. Steve said he absolutely does.

Scott said the trustees deal a lot with rules and regulations regarding water, wastewater, power, labor laws, etc. He wants to make sure Steve is on board with following all the rules and regulations. Steve said absolutely.

Scott brought up the merger study. He said it is stressful to village employees and the manager because there is uncertainty. We have been pushing hard to get the question answered once and for all. He is not sure if Steve is aware of the document that came out. Some issues with the report have not been resolved yet but he wants to make note that the report exists and Steve will have to get up to speed on it quickly. There has to be consensus between the village and town to move forward with a merger. If one votes it down it won't move forward. Another thing we will be dealing with is electric bills that haven't been getting paid. Steve said he is not very familiar with the merger issue but he has the time to become familiar with it. Gordy said we are going to be very busy this winter getting the merger put behind us.

Gordy said new people that can take a fresh look at things are welcome on the board and someone like Will that knows the ins and outs of the board is also welcome. He thanked both for putting their names in a second time.

Meredith noted that six people had raised their hands but the chair can determine that there will just be an interview with trustees and he is not planning a public discussion.

8. Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items

Dan said there were no callouts for the wastewater plant. The DMR and Wr-43 were submitted for review. We completed sampling for Whole Effluent Toxicity. We are waiting on results. We painted front steps, removed rust and painted all exterior doors at the wastewater plant. We also painted the stair stringers to the SBR. We re-painted trip hazards around the plant in caution yellow paint. Dan gave Athena a tour of the WWTF and the WTF. We had a hazard survey inspection with a representative of VLCT. We got the results today. There were a few minor issues, nothing that will cost much money. We had to replace stepladder. The fire alarm system hadn't been certified and Dan got that scheduled. We replaced the faucet on mop sink at the WWTF. The hot water side was dripping and could not be fixed. We pressure washed the walls and floor in the headworks influent area.

There were several alarms for the water system. They were from the scheduled power outage the morning of Oct 9. It affected the Clay Hill Booster Station and the reservoir. Everything returned to normal after power was restored. Coliform results were negative. We sampled for PFA's at both Osgood and Nadeau wells. We finished cleaning silt from the floor in Katy Win pump house #2, cleaned out the plugged floor drain, tested the red alarm light and pressure checked the system. We found a failed check valve on the primary pump. We switched to the secondary pump and ordered a new check valve. A new one was installed today. We also found the bladder on one of the two pressure tanks has failed. It is a non-replaceable bladder. Dan is finding that new tanks cost around \$1300 plus tax. He does not have a water loss number due to not having the sales numbers yet.

Meredith asked which pump house is #2. Dan said the one we rehabbed. Meredith said Tim and Lucas bought roofing material for the pump house and painted it and it looks much better now.

Athena said her tour was excellent. Dan explained everything to her in plain English.

9. Foreman Report and Action Items

Troy said on October 2 at 46 Lower Main, a contractor removed a tree and made contact with secondary wires serving that location, creating an outage. Repairs were made and power was restored within one hour. He will put together a bill for that.

The crew installed a new 100 amp secondary service at 264 Railroad Street. This was an upgrade to an existing service. They installed a new 400 amp secondary service at 24 Clay Hill Road for the Studio Center. The crew installed a new 200 amp secondary service at 953 Route 100C.

Six new poles were set on Route 100C and the primary overhead was transferred during the planned outage on October 9. The outage began at 12:01 AM and power was restored at 4:25 AM. Over the next several months, we will be working on transferring the rest of the village lines onto the new poles.

On October 6, we had to de-energize the service feeding the Nadeau well in order for a contractor using a boom truck to make repairs to the Nadeau's personal well.

The crew also completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

Sewer main cleaning by Hartigan/Wind River is scheduled to occur at the end of this week.

We had a complaint of low water pressure at 51 Lower Main West. When the crew responded, it was determined that there was sediment in the lateral between the water main and the meter, causing a restriction. The line was flushed and this resolved the issue.

Storm drain/catch basin cleaning is currently underway. Hydrant flushing has been scheduled for October 19, 20, and 21.

All winter snow removal equipment has been serviced and both dump trucks have passed VT state inspection. All vehicles have been scheduled for annual undercoating.

Troy completed an estimate for a 1,000 foot primary underground line extension on Foote Brook Road. The estimated cost is about \$6,500 and he expects we will begin working on this job within the next few weeks. He completed another estimate for a 350 foot primary underground line extension on Plot Road. He expects the work will occur in the spring.

Troy has scheduled the scrap transformer testing and recycling for October 19.

Meredith, Nate, and Troy met with a prospective landowner on Route 100C to discuss water, sewer and electric connections for a planned small home.

In late September, we received a pole attachment application from VTEL on behalf of Laraway School. Troy is meeting with a VTEL engineer on Wednesday October 14 to discuss the details of the project and their needed pole make-ready work. According to our tariff, we must provide an estimate for the cost of make-ready work within 45 days of receiving the pole attachment application.

Troy has been working with Wesco to determine the availability of a replacement panel for one of the breakers at the substation. He received a quote for \$8,800 for this panel. He is currently working with our contracted substation technician to verify it will serve our needs.

Troy met with a representative from VLCT who conducted a hazard survey of the village garage. He noted two safety items, both of which have already been corrected. There was a trip hazard that needed to be painted and where old furnace was mounted there was an aerial walkway where a board had to be put up so no one would fall.

Meredith said there is a potential grant opportunity for a new bucket truck. Volkswagen was required to pay out millions of dollars to the federal government and the money has been allocated to states. Vermont has a pool of money and most will be invested in electric vehicles. There is a grant program for converting to all-electric trucks. Bucket trucks are eligible grant recipients. She and Troy will try to decide if it will be cost effective for us to apply for this grant. The grant pays

up to 80% of the cost. An electric truck is more expensive than a regular diesel truck. There is charging infrastructure that we have to keep in mind and concerns about reliability, especially in cold temperatures. Our current bucket truck is 12 years old and they usually have a life of about 15 years so we will need to make a decision on a new truck before too long. If we can find a reliable truck and get it cost effectively, that would be great. And conversion to an electric truck would be Tier 3 eligible. We have struggled to figure out how to get Tier 3 credits. If she and Troy think the grant is worth applying for she might put it on the October 21 agenda.

Scott thanked Troy and his crew for working through the night recently to make upgrades.

10. Fire Department Air Pack Purchase

Meredith said the fire department has a small tools capital plan where they have scheduled out their purchases for future years. Air packs are due for replacement this year. The fire department invited three vendors to demo their products and based on that they want to move forward with Draeger air packs from Lake City Fire Equipment. They want to buy 14 air packs and 20 masks. They don't want a dollar figure specified because they want to preserve their negotiating position and not publicly state how much they can go up to but they won't exceed what is in the small tools capital plan.

Gordy noted that Meredith learned that with a 5-person board with 2 vacancies any vote among the remaining 3 trustees has to be unanimous.

Athena moved to approve purchasing Draeger air packs and associated accessories from Lake City Fire Equipment consistent with and not to exceed the amount in the fire department's small tools capital plan, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Black Lives Matter Flag on Village Property

Meredith said at the last meeting the vote was to fly the Black Lives Matter flag on village property. Since then Meredith has talked to Gordy and visited the village green and the cold spring site with Troy and Nate to look at where a flag could go. To them it looks like there are two options. She showed a picture of where she thinks the flag could go on the village green, towards the back of the lot. In that spot it would be kept away from utilities, it would be out of the center of the green, preserving space for other uses, and it would not be right in front of the tree that is decorated for the holidays. She also showed a picture of where the flag could go at the cold spring site, out of the state right of way. That could be a good spot if we wanted to also put up something like a plaque. It seems like there would be less conflict with other uses than at the village green.

Scott said he thought we were set on putting the flag on the village green and he was hoping to see it put up along with the American flag, either on a separate pole or on the same pole. He thinks it would add value if that happened. He worries a little about having it at the cold spring site because that spot is more unsupervised and the flag could be prone to damage. Regardless of where the flag ends up he thinks it is absolutely necessary that we have a copy of our inclusivity statement placed on or near it.

Athena said she agrees it is important for the American flag to be flown alongside the Black Lives Matter flag at either location. She sees Scott's point about the unsupervised nature of the cold spring site. When she first saw the pictures she was leaning toward the village green because it is so central in the village. But the spot at the village green that Meredith suggested is about 50 to 100 ft. from the road. That is what has her torn. It would be very visible at the cold spring but she can

see more things going wrong in that location. She wonders with the Maplefields there if the open business would be a deterrent.

Scott said those are good points about the Maplefields in close proximity and about the flag being more visible. He is open to either location as long as the American flag is flown with the Black Lives Matter flag and a copy of the inclusivity statement is also there.

Gordy said he thinks each site has its merits period. His hope is that we all listen to what village residents have to say and then vote and hopefully we can get a unanimous decision and can get this done.

Meredith said when we talked about this before she mentioned that she has seen a lot of examples of an American flag and a Black Lives Matter flag on the same pole. She didn't see anything in the flag code preventing that. In most cases the American flag is bigger than the Black Lives Matter flag. Most of the American flags we have are 3x5 and she believes there are 2x3 Black Lives Matter flags available, so if they could go on the same pole that would be doable. She asked if the board is okay with getting the flag up and then figuring out how best to display the inclusivity statement. She thinks figuring out how to display it in a weatherproof way would add more time. Scott said he doesn't want to hold up putting up the flag for that, but he wants it included as quickly and efficiently as we can get it done.

Meredith said aesthetically she thinks a flagpole would be better than a utility pole. The cost for either type of poles would be similar, about \$350. Her recommendation would be to use a commercial grade flagpole and to put two flags on it.

Gordy suggested using unspent money from Holiday Jubilee and similar budget categories.

The discussion was opened up to public comment from village residence.

Rick Aupperlee thanked the board for appointing him to the Racial Justice Committee. He said he thinks the board should be willing to take a recommendation from the committee and maybe not just limit itself to the two options discussed so far. He has concerns about those options. The cold spring site is not lit well. It is close to the sidewalk and the road. The other option is to put the flag on the village green. He is concerned about making a statement about racial equity and supporting Black Lives Matter and putting it behind a hot dog truck. He originally felt it was significant for the flag to be raised at the municipal building because that is the seat of our government. It is a well-lit area. The flags there are lit 24 hours a day. We all know now that even if a private resident were to put up a flag it could be subject to vandalism. The flag at the Whittemore properties has been confiscated maybe a couple of times and that is at a busy intersection in a well-lit area. He would like the board to pause and consider that there may be other reasonable options. He agrees that the inclusivity statement should be included. The Racial Justice Committee may be able to do outreach with the fire department and reach consensus and do something democratic that represents all parties and not just the fire department saying no to the flag, as was stated in the newspaper and broadly circulated throughout the county.

Athena said she really appreciated the point about light, which is increasingly important this time of year. She wonders if it would be terribly expensive to buy lights for the flag at the village green

or the cold spring. Meredith said she doesn't think the lights themselves would be costly but the infrastructure to run lighting might. There are solar powered spotlights. She doesn't know how good quality they are but that may be an easy solution, at least in the short term. Athena said she does think it is important for the inclusivity statement to be presented with the flag.

Kyle Nuse said she wants to emphasize the importance of public comment throughout this meeting. The trustees serve the people. It is of the utmost importance that residents are heard and not silenced. She agrees with Rick. She is hearing that we are going to spend a lot of money on a pole, lights and an American flag when all this infrastructure already exists on the village-owned municipal property. If the only reason we are not putting the flag there is because of the fire department, that is an issue that needs to be addressed. She very much wants the Black Lives Matter flag up but these are options don't feel like compromise, but like a yielding that she is not comfortable with. She thinks there is a huge elephant in the room regarding where we are with this conversation and why we are still having it. She feels that needs to be addressed on the board level immediately. It was stated that this discussion is for village residents only, but the only reason we are talking about this subject is that Be-longing for Justice brought it to the trustee board. She feels they deserve to be able to speak. She would encourage the board to open the discussion up to comments from town residents as well.

Diane Lehouillier said she thinks it is too bad that the Black Lives Matter flag is not flying at the municipal building. Flying it there would have said a lot about the Town of Johnson. Putting it on the village green is like hiding it. No one will see it. Near the cold spring it would be a bit more visible, but she agrees with Rick. She thinks the committee that is going to be doing racial justice discussion and talks would make a difference with how people see the flag and then we can reconsider where to put it. She knows it feels like the trustees want to get this issue over and done with, but we need to do it right. We need to be on the right side of history on this issue. To push it aside and not deal with it is not okay.

Scott said he was at the village green with extended family the other week. They spent time there and the entire time he was there he was looking over the village green thinking about where the flag would be. The village green is a place to hang out, eat and reflect. That is what he has been pushing for. Regarding the hot stand dog comment he thinks wording is important. He thinks the food truck, which is not a hot dog truck, is a draw. The green is a good place for people to sit and reflect. Regarding the perspective that the trustees are just trying to get this over and done with and out of the way, he finds that comment a little harsh. It depowers everyone on the trustee board for trying to do the right thing. He won't let that power be taken from him by any comments. At the last meeting people were saying the board is kicking the can down the road. If the trustees wait and digest and hope the Racial Justice Committee comes up with a better plan there will be a lot of people saying the trustees are kicking the can. And now what he is getting from the same community is that the trustees are trying to get it done and behind us. We are trying to do our best in getting the flag respected and put up. If town residents outside the village really want the flag to be flown outside the town offices they should bring that to the selectboard and say they want a flagpole put up outside the municipal building. He didn't see that happen with the selectboard. He doesn't think it even got a second. The trustee board is doing the best it can.

Athena said she understands that having the flag outside the municipal government building makes a strong statement, but she thinks the green could be more centralized. When she lived on campus

she only came down Clay Hill and turned left and didn't know where the municipal building was for a long time. For the wider public – people passing through town who don't live here – she thinks the green could potentially be a stronger visual because it is right in the middle of everything. But she agrees with Scott that she is left confused. At her first meeting she felt a real sense of urgency to get the flag up. She still feels that urgency and now she is hearing something contrary to that.

Gordy said he will support whatever motion the other two board members come up with to make this work and not put it off further. We can always build on this. We can make the site look really nice next year. We could have benches around it. It may not be the perfect solution for everyone but he feels it is a compromise and the village is not saying no to the project.

Athena moved to fly a Black Lives Matter flag along with the American flag at the village green with the inclusivity statement to be added as quickly as possible, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.

12. Interim Trustee Appointment and Administer Oath of Office

Athena moved and Scott seconded to appoint Will Jennison and Steve Hatfield to the two vacant trustee positions as interim trustees to serve until the April annual village meeting.

Rick Aupperlee said on July 13 the village trustees met to appoint two trustees to the board. There were several applicants and Jena and Athena were both appointed. Will and Ellis were not. Rick read what the minutes of the July 13 meeting said regarding Will's statement: "He is interested in service to the community, not power. He is familiar with the time it takes to be on the trustee board. Obviously, following statutes and rules is paramount. If there were a conflict of interest he would recuse himself. He doesn't think he is likely to have any conflict of interest other than the fire department." On August 10, Jena, Brian and Athena voted in favor of raising a Black Lives Matter flag at the municipal building. Will Jennison published on Facebook an attack on those board members. He is currently a fireman and a former trustee. On September 14 Jena announced her resignation as of October 12. He has heard that Will Jennison, who is asking to be appointed to the board, went to Jena's house and harassed her and that is the reason why she resigned from the board. He asked the trustees to speak to this matter once and he will ask them again to speak to it. He feels the trustees should not condone Will's behavior with this appointment because it will give him municipal power to make decisions. If the trustees allow a member of the community to bully a board member into resigning and appoint that person, it makes a statement that this community may not want to live with. He is asking one trustee to have the courage to stand up and do the right thing and not appoint Will.

Will was invited to speak. He said he did go and talk to Jena. When you are a trustee, people come to your house and talk to you. We are a small community and people can talk to each other. He has known Jena maybe 20 years. It wasn't out of the realm of normalcy to have a conversation with her. They aren't strangers. If she felt attacked, she didn't relay that to him. He asked her before the conversation started if she respected him enough to talk to him. She said yes and she came outside and they had a socially distanced conversation. He told her that he had been a board member for a long time and suggested to her that she should understand all topics in their entirety before she voted on them. He thinks it is very responsible and respectable to give a new board member advice like that. If she felt threatened there was no indication during their conversation. He would have

welcomed the opportunity for Rick to have a conversation with him about this before blindsiding him with it at this meeting. He doesn't know why Rick would attack him like this at this time.

Scott said he has had the same kind of drop-in conversations with quite a few people, including Will. He likes getting those conversations. He knows not all people receive things the same way but he appreciates comments that he may not agree with.

Athena said she thinks this is one of those situations that is really unfortunate. Jena seemed like a great asset to the board. This seems like an area where people can hopefully learn to communicate better in the future.

The motion was passed.

Rosemary administered the oath of office to Will and Steve.

13. COVID-19 Response Check-In and Utility Update

Meredith said the Public Utility Commission has voted to allow the moratorium on utility disconnections to expire on October 15, so we can disconnect customers for non-payment. They have implemented additional consumer protections. The number of doctor notes we have to accept have been increased and we have to be willing to enter into longer payment plans, but if people are not willing to work with us after October 15 we have the ability to disconnect customers. We sent out disconnect notices late last week with disconnect dates later this month. We are hoping that facing disconnection will encourage more people to reach out and set up payment agreements or take advantage of the state Arrearages Assistance Program. She thinks we have gotten about \$7,500 for customers participating in that program but we were allocated \$25,000 so there is money still available. We are trying to direct customers to this program. In 2019 we had \$2800 in balances over 60 days past due and in 2020 there is nearly \$17,000. Water and sewer balances over 60 days past due are \$6,500 in 2020 compared to about \$2,600 in 2019.

Athena asked if Meredith is planning on making another Facebook or Front Porch Forum post about the assistance program. Meredith said she can do that. She believes office staff have called every person directly trying to encourage them to participate, but there is no harm in doing more postings.

14. AMI Project Update

Meredith said the advanced metering infrastructure project through VPPSA has to do with smart meters. Smart meters usually provide usage data every 15 minutes. They would allow us to have rates based on time of day and give us more information on how customers are using power. The state is putting pressure on smaller municipal utilities to advance smart meters. VPPSA has been working on behalf of members to look into smart metering. They put out an RFP and have identified a preferred vendor. They will negotiate prices with that vendor. This will allow the village to develop a business case to see if smart meters make financial sense. We will be looking at smart meters that will work with electric and water. Hopefully in the next few months we will get pricing and be able to develop a business case for smart meters. We will be able to show the state that at least we have done the analysis.

15. Crosswalk Request

Meredith said a few weeks ago she got a request from a Johnson resident interested in a new crosswalk across Route 15 near Subway. The sidewalk ends on one side of the street and continues further on the other side and the resident suggested a crosswalk so people can continue on the

sidewalk on the other side. VTrans gave the resident the impression that if the village wants the crosswalk it can happen, but it would have to be approved by the state. Lamoille County Planning Commission will do a count of pedestrian activity at that location tomorrow for a few hours. VTrans will want to know if the crosswalk is warranted. Once we have the data, Meredith can invite the transportation planner from LCPC to talk to the board and we can decide if we want to formally request this crosswalk from VTrans. There have been other locations on Main Street where we thought more crosswalks would make sense and we were not able to convince VTrans to put them in. She is a little skeptical that VTrans would support this.

Gordy said a few years ago we had more crosswalks and AOT told us that we had to remove some and since then we have applied for another one they did not approve. AOT doesn't like to disrupt the flow of traffic. A traffic study is the first step. Will said Walter Pomroy asked for a crosswalk there during the Main Street project and it was denied, but he is not saying it is not worth asking again. Athena asked, was that request for a crosswalk in the exact same spot? Will said yes. Scott said he thinks having the continuity of the sidewalk is more of a selling point right now than the number of users. If a crosswalk will save one life he thinks it will be worth it. He thinks relying on data on injury and death rates is a terrible way for VTrans to make decisions.

Gordy mentioned for the new board members that when Route 15 is repaved we want to use impregnated concrete or a colored pavement to really identify the major crosswalks. We will talk about that more during budget season. Meredith said she should reach out to VTrans and check on their schedule for paving and bring up the topic of our interest in a different treatment to make the crosswalks on Route 15 more durable.

16. Executive Session to Discuss a Personnel Matter

Will moved to go into executive session for a personnel matter pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(3), with Meredith and the trustees remaining Athena seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:29. The board came out of executive session at 8:50. No action was taken.

17. Adjourn

Will moved to adjourn at 8:52, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths