

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Present:

Trustees: GiGi Beach, Lynda Hill, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Rene Audet, Cheryl Audet

Absent: Steve Hatfield

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order*

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:00.

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

BJ asked to add an update on manager training.

3. *Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings*

BJ moved to approve the minutes of June 12, July 17 and October 16, 2023.

GiGi said she did not notice until after the June 12 meeting that we already have a bike path on Railroad Street so the discussion about that never needed to happen. Ken said they are looking for a dedicated bike lane. What is there now just shows that bikes can also use the road.

GiGi said she had asked about moving a speed limit sign from behind a tree but that hasn't happened. Ken said he thinks branches were trimmed. GiGi said the ideal spot for it would be before the green bridge. Ken suggested that Eric let Tom Galinat know a different location for the sign was requested.

The motion was passed.

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

Ken asked if there is anything out of the ordinary in the budget status report. Rosemary said not for the general department. The fire department will be sending in final payroll probably next week. It was noted that some buildings and grounds expenses are over budget due to the flood.

Linda asked if there is a reconnect fee for power. Eric and Rosemary said only if the power is shut off for non-payment.

Ken asked where we are with using loan funds. Rosemary said she has used all the electric funds and \$691,000 for sewer.

Linda asked who submits for reimbursement to FEMA. Erik said we send the information to Harry and he submits. He and Tim recently sent emails encouraging Harry to push harder on getting our reimbursements. Harry will be here all day Tuesday.

BJ asked why we were over budget for health insurance. Erik said he doesn't know. Ken asked him to look into that. (*Rene and Cheryl Audet arrived at 6:14.*)

Rosemary thanked the trustees for the village green dedication last Thursday. She was very surprised. Ken apologized for not telling Lynda that the date was moved. He said the dedication was well deserved by Rosemary.

5. Review and Act on Village Community Revolving Loan Fund Application

Erik explained that Rene and Cheryl Audet are applying for a loan from the village community revolving loan fund. They were on village water. Their line used to run under the Gihon. This is the second time it has been wiped out. A well seemed like a better idea. They are asking for a loan to help pay for putting in a well. Our interest rate is usually 2% under prime, which would make it 6.5%.

Ken said he would like to adjust the interest rate if possible. The purpose of the loan is not to make any money for the village. Lowering the interest rate will not affect us. Rosemary said the bank charges us an administrative fee of \$3 per month. The board discussed with Rene and Cheryl what the term of the loan should be.

BJ moved to loan Rene and Cheryl Audet \$20, 442.94 from the village community revolving loan fund for a term of 10 years with an interest rate of 4%, GiGi seconded and the motion was passed. (Rene and Cheryl left at 6:26.)

6. Village Manager's Report and Action Items

Erik read his report:

It has been a very very busy month, including a great deal of pushing Johnson's fiscal needs with state & federal authorities.

I convened the 3rd meeting of the Johnson Funders Summit. Highlights were:

The "10% for Vermont" project, where our flood related commercial loans will be assumed by the VT Bond Bank for nominal interest is nearly finalized. Following up on it this week, I learned the interest rate will be 1.3%, and it will be ready for applications shortly after our next Johnson Summit on December 4th.

Also being looked at by ANR is the shifting of some of the state's ARPA funds to assist the worst impacted water & wastewater treatment systems in the state. This will likely look like a low to no interest loan that won't require payment for 5 years, or whenever we get our final funds from FEMA. This will be a great assist in gap funding if they can make it work.

USDA RD has pulled strings to increase the ceiling of their planning grant from \$30k to \$100-\$150k.

All the above programs are a direct result of Johnson Village relentlessly pursuing funding with those agencies, the Governor, both state & federal lawmakers, as well as many news media clips to keep the attention here so we don't fall out of the news cycle. A bonus of this tireless effort is that other small municipalities that have been hit hard will also benefit from these programs.

I had multiple meetings regarding the Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP). First with Doug Farnham, the state's Chief Recovery Officer, who pledged that if our needs out match LCPCs ability to serve, the state will augment by hiring outside contractors.

Then I met with VLCT & LCPC. I briefed them on our desire to use MTAP to fund LCPC for project Management of the Water & Light Garage rehab project. This will take that expense out of the project budget, giving us more available for actual construction and possibly saving our former ARPA funds for a different use after project completion.

I expressed that we also want LCPC to seek out and write grants for us under MTAP, and most importantly, to project manage the WWTF relocation project. MTAP takes all that expense out of a reimbursement status to a direct pay from the state. We also discussed the future of the VTRANS Sidewalk Scoping Study Grant. The major question was if the Trustees wish to go forward at this time or ask VTRANS if we can put it on ice for 6 months to a year without losing our grant money.

The board agreed that if we can pause without losing the funds we should do so; otherwise we should go ahead with it.

I attended the VTCMA Fall Conference which was filled with excellent networking with my peers and great, pertinent seminars. Our Flag Policy got great accolades from the president of the Diversity & Inclusion firm that VLCT contracts, and it will be used as a model for other municipalities.

In VPPSA news, the AMI project is plowing forward with the 50% grant funds secured. Johnson is in the 3rd wave to change over, which is expected to be 2 ½ years out.

I checked with the supplier of our water meters, and he confirmed that the ACLARA AMI transmitters are fully compatible with the water meters we currently have.

DPS still hasn't finalized our rate case, but that is expected any day, and will reflect a 7.23% rate increase.

The effort to achieve the FEMA Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) that is required to move forward with moving the WWTF is plowing ahead. I hired Aldrich & Elliott Engineering to do a structural assessment of the control building. The structural engineer has done much of the site work, only coring walls and that analysis is needed before his final report.

Linda asked, we figure this out before figuring out if there is a possible place to move the WWTF? Erik said he thinks the industrial park is the only possible place.

Pratt & Smith Commercial Electricians are also coming to do an estimate of the cost to fully rewire and re-PLC the WWTF.

Finally in this effort, I asked Aldrich & Elliott to provide an Engineering Service Agreement to conduct a FEMA required feasibility study that weighs the costs & benefits of moving the WWTF vs flood-hardening it where it sits. All this work is EMA reimbursable, however, VT CWSRF has a

100% forgivable planning loan that can be used for the feasibility study. Due to both the invoice-by-invoice speed of reimbursement, and 100% vs partial reimbursement, we are going that route.

Diane Lehouiller & I met with the VT Rivers Conservancy (VRC) & LCPC about the Powerhouse bridge site. VRC May be interested in buying the property for a buck to rehab in and turn it into a park, probably with river access, using VT BRELLA funds if LCPC & the Village help with the administration of the grant. They would be more interested if the Village or Town agreed to buy it back after completion for the same buck, as they do not have the resources to maintain it.

Ken said he would say that the village would be more than happy to purchase it back for a dollar.

GiGi asked if we can look into adding more lighting near the bridge. Ken suggested that Erik look into it.

The Johnson Fire Station work is nearing completion, and the contractor says it will be finished by mid-December.

Ken said he met with the fire department last Tuesday. They are looking to sell the four-wheeler they have now because they are buying the new ATV and they asked if it can be bid in-house or has to be offered to the public. Ken suggested that Erik look into that and then we can let them know if they can offer it to village employees and fire department members first. They don't want to keep it because they don't have the space.

Erik noted that he will be taking Monday off.

7. Fire Department Report and Action Items

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

Johnson Fire Department Report

Sept. 29-Oct. 26, 2023

JFD responded to 11 calls. 8 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 3 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 88 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 1 – medical assist, 6 - automatic alarms, 1- vehicle crash, and 3- other (station work detail flood related, FEMA reports)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 10
Total hours of service was: 93

Other:

The UTV committee has made a replacement recommendation based on scope of work and response requirements, which includes current pricing and availability. This will be presented to the trustee chair in the near future.

The Fire Prevention Committee distributed 102 bags of fire prevention educational materials to Johnson students grades Pre-K to 2nd.

We completed some unexpected mechanical repairs to Engine 1 during its annual service and state inspection. The work was performed by Collinsville Repair, LLC. The remaining apparatus have completed service and inspections, with only minor repairs.

Arrangements are being made for installation of the radio repeater equipment and strategy for reprogramming is being discussed.

8. *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
- Alliance started working on the heating and hot water system. Furnace and hot water heater are installed and running. Waiting on a couple Modine heaters and some thermostats to come in for them finish up the job.
- We got the influent flow meter installed and both auto samplers up and running on flow pacing. We should be able to resume proper monthly sampling this month for the first time since the flood.
- We got the sludge return pumps up and running so we can now return sludge to help with our biological nutrient removal. We started adding alum again for Phosphorus removal.
- Wayne Graham from VRWA and Manosh pumped out and hauled away the remaining sludge that was in the bottom of the process water tank that we are no longer using.
- We had a high float alarm at the syphon. A large chunk of grease blocked the main and wastewater was flowing into the bypass pipe. Nate assisted in removing it and resetting the high level float.
- Pratt electrical was here multiple times replacing essential outlets and getting blower room air handlers wired.
- Pratt checked the heat tape controls at the Railroad St Bridge for the water line and everything tested good. We are waiting for Manosh to schedule the line blockage removal and then the Railroad St Bridge project will be wrapped up and can be finished for FEMA reimbursement.
- Erik & I attended a Zoom with Perry and Destiny to go over invoices submitted so they are properly identified for each project. We will be meeting every 2 weeks to stay on top of them.
- Erik & I attended a zoom with the State of VT flood task force. They are trying to maximize the amount of money FEMA is responsible for reimbursement and possible plant relocation. We will be meeting every 2 weeks.
- We got the permanent control panel, mission alarm panel and new pump leads installed at River Road pump station. Once we receive final invoices this FEMA job will be wrapped up and submitted for reimbursement to the village. We still will have mitigation to perform in the spring.

2. Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- We removed the roof on the Katy Win pump house #1 to find a lot of rot. The joists will all need to be replaced. We screwed new sheathing and metal roof on it for the winter and will make needed repairs in the spring.
- We scraped and stained Katy Win pump house #3. We brought in an employee from a NH project to assist in these projects as we were getting short on time before winter. His time will be extra billed to the village under the Katy Win project which we had budgeted for.
- Pratt Electrical is getting together a quote to start on the emergency transfer switch installation at Katy Win pump houses #1 and #2 that are required to be completed by the end of December as part of the sanitary survey.
- We had a water leak on an 1 ¼" pipe in Katy Win pump house #1. We had County Plumbing and Heating fix the leak.
- Luke assisted Jeff with pumping the hydrants dry for the winter.
- We had a meeting with VTUMS for the start of the EPA mandated lead and copper service line identification program. This is 100% funded by the state through a grant.
- We sampled Osgood well for PFOA's. This is mandated testing every 3 years as long as we continue to have non detectable results.

9. *Electric/General Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham and Anne Crockett:

Electric Dept

Installed pole and temp. service for 11 School St. A new service is anticipated in the spring when they complete renovations.

Upgraded transformer and service for 31 Library St. This was as a result of the flood. Some increased load may be expected due to conversion to electric heat.

Installed new transformer and service for 224 Upper French Hill Rd.

Installed new 4/0 service for 853 Rt 15 west. This is the former Buggyman property, which is now a marijuana growing facility. We can expect a significant load increase.

Removed service for 187 River Road West. This was due to the flood.

Disco/Reco at 657 Rt 100C.

Installed new lights in the Powerhouse Bridge.

Fixed street light on the Pearl St. Bridge.

Trimmed and raised service at 147 River Rd. West.

Removed cover-up at the Waterman Lodge and 147 River Rd. West.

FEMA meetings and meetings with VLCT. We spent a significant amount of time gathering and compiling information and invoices for claims for both organizations.

Worked on logging Flood hours work by employees and equipment.

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

Met with Consolidated regarding the poles across the street from the office. Consolidated will set a new pole and three decrepit poles will be removed. The pole presently set in the ledge will be removed, making its replacement unnecessary. The services will be transferred at the double pole and the transformer retired.

Water/Sewer

Pumped and flushed hydrants

Turned off service to 203 River Rd East

Fixed outside readers at 59 RR St, 60 RR St, and 285 Clay Hill Rd.

Nate took the Water Distribution test

Made up new Meter Horns for 144 River Rd. West and 11 North Highland Dr.

Worked with Town crew to remove the meter and splice water line at the Legion Field

General Dept

Brought up snow plows

Changed oil in the S595 Bobcat

Checked out all winter Equipment

1 employee out for arm surgery 6-27 to 11-6

Meeting for the Xmas lights on Main St with Johnson Works

Safety

Safety meeting with NEPPA on Oct. 18th was on Chainsaw/Chipper safety

Changed out Gloves and Sleeves for testing

Erik said Jeff and Chan have completed the hours of line work required to become first class lineman. Jeff officially topped out as of the Thursday before last and he is now being paid as a first class lineman. Chan will be bumped up January 1. Ken said he authorized the change in pay. Erik said this gives us more flexibility with on-call rotation.

10. Officially Rename the Village Green as The Rosemary Audibert Village Green

Lynda moved to change all applications and documents that refer to the village green to use its new name, The Rosemary Audibert Village Green, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Tentatively Set 2024 Employee COLA Rate to be the Same as the 2023 November Northeast 12-month CPIU

Erik said the September 2023 Northeast CPIU was 3.0. The board agreed to wait until the next meeting when the November Northeast CPIU figures should be available before setting the cost of living increase.

12. Executive Session for Disciplinary Action

BJ moved to go into executive session as authorized by 1. V.S.A. § 313(a)(4) for a disciplinary action against an employee, with just the board and Erik to remain, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed at 6:59. The board came out of executive session at 8:11 with no action taken.

13. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths