

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2021

Present:

Trustees: Steve Hatfield, Will Jennison, Scott Meyer, Athena Parke

Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Jasmine Yuris, Kyle Nuse, Cal Stanton, Jackie Stanton, Jefferson Tolman, Diane Lehouiller, Susan Tinker, Sophia Berard, Margo Warden, Marla Emery, Eric Hutchins, Walter Pomroy, Kim Dunkley

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order*

Scott called the meeting to order at 604.

2. *Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda*

Scott said an Open Meeting Law blunder took place at the last meeting and the board is going to take some public feedback on that blunder. He is chair so he was responsible for the mistake.

3. *Open Meeting Law Complaint and Response*

Meredith read the complaint that had been received, dated February 1:

To Meredith Dolan and the Village Trustees of Johnson,

We the undersigned believe that a violation of Open Meeting Law occurred on January 19th, 2020. Please see the excerpt below:

“No formal or binding action shall be taken in executive session except for actions relating to the securing of real estate options under subdivision (2) of this subsection.”<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/01/005/00313>

As the Village Trustees were preparing to go into executive session, Village Manager Meredith Dolan said “Everybody who’s not a trustee, please leave the meeting and I will let folks know tomorrow if a decision has been made.” Members of the public were asked to leave the meeting prior to the conclusion of the meeting.

“An executive session is a closed portion of a public meeting and is allowed only in certain limited situations. Those that apply to municipal bodies are as follows: a. Negotiating or securing real estate purchase or lease options. 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2) b. The appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee (but the public body must make a final decision to hire or appoint in an open meeting and it must explain the reasons for its final decision). 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)”

Due to Open Meeting Law being violated, we the undersigned claim that all actions taken by the board at the improperly conducted meeting on January 19th, 2021 are ultimately and effectively invalid.

Further, we suggest a special meeting be held so the final decision of appointments be done in a public meeting in compliance with Open Meeting Law, as well as a cure of all Village Trustees

and the Village Manager attend the Municipal Assistance Center Onsite and Digital Training, (<https://www.vlct.org/mac-onsite-training>) since there appears to be a pattern of violations.

Respectfully,

Diane Lehouiller, Rick Aupperlee, Pam Aupperlee, Jane Nuse, Kyle Nuse, Lynda Hill, Sophia Berard, Jackie Stanton, Cal Stanton, Jasmine Yuris, Margo Warden

She read the response she sent on behalf of the village, in which she restated the complaint and responded:

At the January 19, Trustee meeting, the Board interviewed two candidates for an interim Trustee position in open session. The Board had included a possible executive session on the warned meeting agenda for the purpose of discussing the appointment of a public officer as allowed by VSA § 313(a)(3). At the conclusion of all other agenda items, the Board moved to go into Executive Session, which required all those who were not Trustees or the Village Manager to exit the meeting. Prior to the motion to go into Executive Session, the Board Chair inquired whether any members of the public had any further comments and gave the public the opportunity to comment further. Several members of the public took the opportunity to offer additional comments. It was only after all members of the public in attendance had been given an opportunity to comment that the Board moved to enter Executive Session. Asking members of the public to leave the meeting before the Board entered Executive Session had no actual impact on the public's ability to offer comment.

As the meeting minutes reflect, the Board came out of Executive Session and then a motion was made regarding the appointment of an interim Trustee. The minutes include the specific motion as well as the breakdown of how each Trustee voted on the motion.

7. *Executive Session for Appointment of a Public Officer*

Will moved to go into executive session for appointment of a public officer pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(3), Athena seconded, the motion was passed and the board went into executive session at 7:04. The board came out of executive session at 7:25.

8. *Vote to Appoint Interim Trustee*

Will move to appoint BJ Putvain as interim trustee, Athena seconded and the motion was passed in a roll call vote with Will, Athena, and Scott voting in favor and Steve opposed.

9. *Adjourn*

Will moved to adjourn at 7:29, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

The use of zoom to conduct virtual meetings makes it challenging to enter Executive Session, where the public has to disconnect from the virtual meeting, and then effectively the meeting organizer must invite the public back to an open session. In a previous Village Trustee meeting in 2020, when it was anticipated that there would be further discussion after the Executive Session, the public was told to rejoin the meeting after a certain amount of time. However, in the instance of the January 19, 2021 meeting, no additional discussion in open session was anticipated, nor did it occur. The only action that occurred after the Board came out of

Executive Session was the motion and vote on the appointment of an interim Trustee, a topic on which the public had already had the opportunity to comment on.

I acknowledge that the Open Meeting Law requires that actions must occur in open session. Therefore, going forward, I expect the Board will always set a time for members of the public to rejoin a meeting after Executive Session unless the only action that will be taken after Executive Session is a motion to adjourn the meeting. Additionally, while public comment was not limited due to requesting the public to disconnect from the meeting prior to entering Executive Session and while all actions taken by the Board were done in open session and accurately recorded in the meeting minutes, I anticipate the Board will take another vote on the appointment of the interim Trustee at the beginning of their February 8, 2021 meeting.

Regarding your request for a special meeting, I do not believe that is necessary as the vote on the appointment of the interim Trustee can be easily accomplished at the regular Trustee meeting on February 8, 2021. Regarding your suggestion of Open Meeting Law training, I anticipate that is something the Board will discuss at an upcoming Trustee meeting.

Scott said the board is willing to hear public comments on this. He is trying to avoid comments on the worthiness of each candidate because that has been thoroughly discussed.

Jackie Stanton thanked Scott for acknowledging this violation. She said if the board is going to do a do-over, she would ask that it be done according to the letter of the law: the board would come out of executive session into a public meeting with the public present, then someone would make a nomination, the board would discuss and explain why they want to make the nomination, then it would be open for public comment. The board would hear the public out, then make the vote on the appointment.

Scott said he thinks that is pretty close to what our lawyer told us and what is planned. He does want to caution that it puts trustees in a bind to have to explain what happened in the conversation in executive session. What is the point of having an executive session if you have to tell people what was said? But the board can discuss the merits of each candidate.

Jackie said that sounds good to her.

Kyle asked why the board asked members of the public to leave rather than wait in a waiting room. The selectboard asks people to wait in a waiting room and then they are let back in after executive session. And after the board came out of executive session, why was there no recording of the public session? How did Donna get that information for the minutes?

Meredith said she has never used the waiting room function. Going forward if we need to have people rejoin the meeting she will try to use it, but she wasn't familiar with it. And after the executive session she just fell into her old pre-Covid habit of taking notes. Normally Donna would leave and Meredith would take notes and send them to her the next day. She didn't even think of restarting the recording. In the future she will restart the recording after an executive session. That night she wrote down the motion and sent it to Donna the next morning.

Kyle asked if Meredith gave Donna the explanation as to why BJ was chosen over Diane, as Open Meeting Law asks. Meredith said the motion did not include reasoning. It was just a motion to select BJ. When the board has appointed members of the Racial Justice Committee or made other appointments they haven't said anything specific about the reasoning behind the appointments. Our lawyer said he has heard that brought up and feels that an explanation is more called for when dismissing someone. The reason for appointing someone could be as simple as that the board felt that was the best candidate. The lawyer's advice was that there is no requirement for in-depth discussion of pluses and minuses of each person.

4. *Vote to Appoint Interim Trustee*

Will moved and Athena seconded to appoint BJ Putvain to the interim trustee position.

Athena said she understands the desire to know why certain things happen, especially with a public office. That is very important. From the perspective of a trustee, she would be uncomfortable getting into the details of why a particular person was or was not nominated. As someone who was recently appointed, she doesn't think she would want to hear that.

Steve said he thinks Diane's record speaks for itself, which is why he is supporting her. She has a long history in the village of working in a lot of different capacities for the best of the people in the village.

Scott said he felt both candidates were very strong but some comments made by BJ hit home for him. He always looks for a diverse board. He thinks it is important for the community that no one gets left out.

Diane said she remembers BJ mentioning the food shelf in his interview. She was wondering if he had ever contacted the Johnson food shelf in the year he has lived here. BJ said no. When he and his wife came to Johnson they started a business which has taken up a lot of his time. They were looking for avenues to get into helping the town. Now they are in their second year with their business and they have a little more free time to help out. They were going to do things like sponsoring sports but that has been restricted by Covid.

Diane said she remembers him saying he offered a discount to customers that contributed to the food shelf. Does his business send a check to the food shelf? BJ said no. There is an honor system. If people say they donated to the food shelf he gives them a discount. Diane asked, there is no check sent from him? BJ said no. Diane said she was curious because she volunteers at the food shelf.

Jackie welcomed BJ to Johnson. She said she doesn't know him and she doesn't think any of the trustee board members knew him. BJ agreed they did not. Jackie said Diane was a known quantity. She has done a lot of work and service for the town. She participates in meetings and volunteers at the food shelf. Jackie said BJ had mentioned working for Homeland Security. She asked if he actually does. BJ said yes; he works for Paragon Systems, a contractor for Homeland Security. Jackie asked where BJ worked in corrections. BJ said at Chittenden Regional when it was a male correctional facility, probably in the early 2000's.

Kyle said she thinks it is great that BJ wants to get involved. It is hard for her to understand the trustees choosing someone very new to the community. There is real value in having worked your

way up the ranks. BJ had talked about recreation and the food shelf. We have a Rec Committee and a food shelf that he could volunteer at. When she moved back to Johnson she started volunteering on committees and worked her way up. She would ask the trustees to think about that. This would not be a rejection of BJ but she feels the board needs people who have been committed to the work and have been showing up to meetings.

BJ said Jackie is right that he doesn't know as much as the other candidate, but a lot of the board has that knowledge. He is hoping to bring outside knowledge, fresh eyes and a fresh outlook on things that are going on. He feels like the rest of the board has knowledge of the town.

Kim Dunkley said the Planning Commission has been having a hard time finding people to serve on it. This is an interim position. She hopes there continues to be interest in being on the trustee board. It is better than having vacancies.

Cal Stanton said Scott had mentioned diversity. He is curious what type of diversity he thinks either candidate brings, BJ in particular. In his opinion Diane is a tremendous individual who has a lot of background. She has local roots and has really done her homework on a lot of things. He encourages her as a candidate.

Scott said when he moved here 30-some years ago he was shut down pretty quickly when he went to town or village meetings because he was new to town. It was a gut punch. He had moved around in a lot of towns in the Adirondacks and never had that experience there. That has made him very aware. When people come to this community and reach out and offer, he is all ears because he was not given the same platform. The town and village are struggling to get people to move here, stay here and open up businesses. He wants newcomers to be received with open arms. That is very important to him. As far as diversity, when he hears security, law enforcement and Homeland Security, that makes him nervous. That is diversity for him. He wants to understand that aspect of things. It helps him grow as an individual.

Cal said he doesn't know if that is diverse. To him, that is dominant culture. Diversity to him is going with someone who might be cut from different cloth than that, especially in light of what is going on.

Sophia Berard said she supports Diane Lehouiller for the trustee position. She thinks being a woman provides diversity.

The motion was passed in a roll call vote, with Will, Athena and Scott voting in favor and Steve opposed.

Rosemary swore in BJ.

5. ***Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings***

Will moved to approve the minutes of January 11, 2021, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.

Will moved to approve the minutes of January 19, 2021, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.

Will moved to approve the minutes of January 25, 2021, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.

6. Treasurer's Report / Review and Approve Bills and Warrants / Budget Status / Action Items

The board reviewed the budget status report. Meredith asked if there were any big changes from last month. Rosemary said no.

Meredith said she and Rosemary have been trying to figure out why administrative salaries in the general department was over budget. It looks like Meredith allocated more of her time to the general department than was budgeted and she thinks her time allocation actually was accurate. She spent more time than anticipated on the general department. And she thinks she failed to include Donna's pay in that line item. That will have to be adjusted for next year.

There was a question last time about permit fees for the wastewater department. It didn't look like we paid any in 2020. Meredith asked the Department of Environmental Conservation if we missed a bill to please resend it. She is waiting to get a bill from them.

Meredith said she got word from NVU that they will make the \$6K contribution again this year. That will be helpful for the 2021 general department budget.

Kyle asked if Meredith said NVU contributes \$6K to the fire department. Meredith said yes, they make an annual \$6K contribution to the general department in support of the fire department. That contribution was started long before she worked here in recognition of the call volume the college generates, which makes extra work for the fire department.

Athena asked if Meredith knows whether NVU pays a similar amount to the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department. Meredith said she doesn't know.

Electric, water and sewer sales revenue were all under budget. Will asked how much we are under due to unpaid bills. Meredith said she needs to tally the latest figures and can include them with updated budget figures Rosemary is going to send out. January 2021 actually looked a little better than January 2020. She thinks part of that is that we are still seeing the benefit of the state program that has been paying past due balances. She thinks the past due amount will start increasing.

7. Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items

Dan gave his report. The E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted for review. There were no callouts for the wastewater plant. Dan has applied for the Village of Johnson Wastewater Plant to be included in the second round of the Wastewater Surveillance Program for Covid-19 being performed by Aquavitas Laboratory. This is a federally funded nationwide program. There would be no increased cost to the village to be included. We should hear by the end of the month if we are selected.

We had an air valve on the belt press fail. We replaced it with the one spare that we have. We will take that one apart and see if it can be repaired. If not, we will have to source a new one so we have a spare.

We have noticed a 30% increase in our influent BOD at the plant over the last 6 months. We are getting a higher strength waste from somewhere. This has created more sludge and we are running the press more often than we were. We are monitoring it at this time, but if it continues to increase,

we may need to increase our sampling to determine where this higher strength waste is coming from.

A lot of time was spent shoveling, sanding and salting at the plants and pump stations.

Coliform results were negative. There was 1 callout for the water plant. Jeff noticed the red light was on at the Nadeau well and called Tim. One of the milkhouse heaters had failed. We replaced it with a spare we had on hand. We purchased another milk house heater to have as a spare.

Dan hasn't received the sales numbers yet to compute the water loss percentage.

Meredith said our contract with H2O Innovations, formerly Utility Partners, ends May 31 and she wanted to start discussion about moving forward with a new contract. Meredith explained to the new trustees that prior to the village contracting with H2O Innovations we had two employees that were operators. About 3 years ago the chief operator took another position and the village needed to decide whether to try to replace that position and have another person in house or contract out the service. We considered both options, got multiple proposals from contractors and decided to go with a contracted service. H2O Innovations operates other systems in Vermont. By contracting with a bigger firm with more employees we have more people to call on if someone gets sick or injured. We also found we could have a greater knowledge of future cost increases. Health insurance can fluctuate year to year but we have a flat increase in our contract cost every year. That gave us knowledge and stability about the cost each year with fewer ups and downs for benefit costs.

Dan Copp and his supervisor Jefferson Coleman introduced themselves. Jefferson explained that Utility Partners is the company they worked for when they started the contract with the Village of Johnson. Utility Partners was acquired by H2O Innovations. On December 1, 2020 they officially became H2O Innovations. The original contract with the village was for three years. The contract provides for 2% increase every year on June 1 and it provides for an additional 2-year extension if the village chooses. They would love to secure a longer term contract. If the village chooses to go with the existing 2-year extension they are looking at using the exact same contract. They would just adjust the term length. And for the first year they are willing to forgo any increase. The fee would be the same as now. If it would make life easier for the village to get the contract on the village's fiscal year, which is the calendar year, they could do that. He thinks our relationship has been great. It has been nice working with Meredith. It works well having Morrisville and Johnson side by side. At times an employee has been pulled from one to help at the other facility at no additional cost.

Scott said they have done an amazing job. Our plant was in a bad state of affairs. He was amazed that Dan was able to easily give us a rundown of what needed to be taken care of quickly. It has been a pleasure working with him. Will said Dan seems to take the approach of trying to fix things in the most economical way possible. That speaks volumes for him and his company. Athena agreed. Dan is wonderful. When she toured the facility he was good at explaining everything to her.

Athena said Jefferson had mentioned that H2O Innovations wanted a longer-term contract. How long? Jefferson said their standard contracts are 5 years. That provides stability for the village and

their employees. One client wanted to get onto their fiscal year and they did a contract of 5 years and 9 months for that client. They can accommodate our needs in a variety of ways.

Steve asked, our contract would expire in May and then they would prepare one with the same monthly expense until December 31? Jefferson said it could work a variety of ways. There could be zero increase from June 1 to December 31 and then maybe a prorated increase of, say, 1% and after that increases would be 2% per year.

Meredith said she wants to make sure people know that her stepson works for H2O Innovations. He was hired about a year and a half after the village signed the contract.

Athena moved and Steve seconded to authorize Meredith to work up a 5-year contract with H2O Innovations that will work in accordance with the village's fiscal calendar. The motion was passed.

Meredith said she had sent the board a draft agreement between the village and RCAP Solutions for sewer rate analysis. We heard from the Vermont Bond Bank that they believe it would be wise for us to complete rate analysis for our sewer system. We have been talking about that for close to 2 years. She agrees we are due to look at our rates and understand whether they are sufficient to meet our needs. We have an aging plant and we want to set ourselves up with reserves to meet future needs. The bond bank suggested RCAP Solutions and Meredith talked to one of their representatives. They do this work free of charge. The agreement between RCAP Solutions and the village is really an agreement that we will provide the data they need to do the analysis.

Will moved and Athena seconded to approve the agreement with RCAP Solutions for sewer rate analysis. Steve asked who pays them. Meredith said she doesn't know. **The motion was passed.**

8. Foreman Report and Action Items

Meredith read Troy's report. On January 29, there was a car-pole accident near 1627 Clay Hill Road which resulted in a broken pole that needed to be changed. The outage affected eight customers. Power was restored in about 2.5 hours. In the early morning hours of January 25, the on-call crew responded to a reported outage at 27 Still Road, which turned out to be a problem on the customer's end. The crew repaired three street lights on Main Street. The crew retired a 200 amp overhead service at the former Parker & Stearns location. The crew also completed monthly meter reading, high/low checks, and Dig Safes.

We had two water call-outs for no water, one at Katy Win park and one on Log Cabin Lane. In both instances, it was frozen pipes and the problem occurred inside the customer's building and was not a village issue.

A good portion of time this month has been spent on sidewalk maintenance and snow plowing. Snow was picked up three times from Main Street, School Street, Pearl Street, and Railroad Street during the last month. This is done after heavy snow to open up the area between the road and the sidewalk. The crew removed the holiday snowflake decorations in mid-January.

The annual truck and tool di-electric testing was that had been postponed because of Covid-19 was finally completed. All trucks, tools, and equipment passed except the hydraulic chainsaw that is

used from the bucket. We placed an order for a new hydraulic chainsaw and have sent the old one out for repair.

Troy met with Servpro to evaluate the village garage so they could create an estimate to clean the building. The testing and recycling for failed transformers was completed. We are scheduling a meeting with Lion Electric, the electric bucket truck vendor, to begin the process of ordering the new all-electric truck.

Scott thanked Meredith for getting the grant for the electric bucket truck.

Kyle said she is wondering if Troy has time scheduled to remove snow from Clark Avenue snow banks as has been done in the past. Meredith said she is not familiar with the crew doing Clark Avenue but she can ask them about that. Kyle said in the past they have removed snow from banks on Clark Ave. because they get so high there is no place to put more snow. She noted that there is a fire hydrant almost completely covered across from her house. Meredith said she knows the village crew was talking about uncovering fire hydrants.

Meredith said she and Troy have talked about the best process to move forward with the water and light building garage. They have had three companies give estimates to clean mold from the building. The estimates range from about \$40K to \$80K for mold cleaning, tearing out the old insulation and disposing of it. That does not include any rebuilding costs. Each of the companies has noted that in addition to the mold there is a high amount of soot on the walls, presumably from the diesel vehicles. That is also an air quality problem. People who came out also said we needed to think about the structure of the building and other work that might need to be done. Meredith and Troy don't feel they have the expertise to say what we need to do to make sure this problem doesn't happen again. They feel they need to understand the scope of what the building needs to be built back so this doesn't happen again. They are proposing hiring a professional to identify what is wrong, what needs to happen and how the building needs to be built back. Then we can go to contractors and ask their price to do that work. They need someone who doesn't have skin in the game for future work to give an opinion on what we need.

Meredith said we know it won't be a quick project and she and Troy don't feel that the building is a great place for employees to spend time. In the interim it might be wise to look into a mobile building that could be brought onto the site to serve as a meeting place and break room. There may be a recommendation longer term to separate out mechanical and administrative functions.

Scott said he thinks that sounds like a good road map. He wants to air on the side of caution regarding ventilation systems. The best type of ventilation is point source ventilation. He said it is hard for a structural engineer to determine what problems a building may have when everything is covered with sheetrock. We may have to expose the building for someone to say whether it is usable.

Will asked if the village crew could meet upstairs in the town offices for now to get them out of that building immediately. Meredith said there isn't an immediate need for a meeting place. As the weather gets warmer and they start doing more projects that they need to discuss, meeting space will be needed more. Currently we are staffing in such a way that minimal in-person meetings are needed. Using the town office may be an option if a need arises in the next few months.

Scott said the emergency management team can discuss that use of the building. He would want to come up with a mutual agreement with everyone on the team. The safety and health plan for employees may need to be modified. He can bring it up with Eric Osgood. Since it is a shared building we would want to make sure the town was in on the decision as well.

Athena asked if Meredith has a general timeline for when we will start feeling the impact of the cost. Meredith said she has been struggling with that and wondering if she should budget for it. At this point she has not put it into the water and wastewater budgets. At a minimum she thinks we should budget for assistance from a consultant. She expects that will cost \$15-20K. She doesn't know what the timeline will be. When we met with the first company they said April would be the soonest they could come out to do cleaning. The timeline is really an unknown to her.

Will said the third building on the property has an upstairs meeting room. Meredith had mentioned issues with that building. Do the issues include the meeting room upstairs? Meredith said she believes that is where the Rec Committee stores things now, so the space is full

Kyle asked if the village garage is a jointly owned building. Meredith said the whole parcel is jointly owned. Historically the village has made all decisions and paid all costs for the village garage and the town has done the same for the town garage. Technically she thinks all the buildings are jointly owned but actual practice for the last 20 years has been for each municipality to make its own decisions for the building it uses.

Kyle said she thinks this might be an interesting opportunity to refer back to the area-wide Brownfields plan that pinpointed this property as good for redevelopment for economic purposes. Maybe this could be a prime opportunity to reimagine this land that is right on the rail trail. Maybe as part of our long-term vision we should start to think about potentially relocating the village and town garages so we could open up the property for something more useful for economic development. The outside consulting company put together a whole vision for that space. Maybe this is the time to look at that again.

Meredith said if there was an opportunity that was cost-effective and worked for the village she doesn't think the village is wedded to having operations based at that site. If we get a recommendation that putting more money into the existing building is a folly then the next discussion will be whether we should look at other sites. She is trying to do it in a cost-effective way for rate payers and taxpayers.

Scott said he would like to have things on that property that are more appealing to the eye. But we have a situation that involves occupational health issues. It is frustrating that we don't have another place to go. And it is a joint decision since the buildings are jointly owned between town and village. He would love to see a beautiful new facility for the town and village but he doesn't know where that could be.

Kyle said the town owns the industrial park now. Maybe that could be a location.

Meredith said we have the easements we needed for the Pearl Street/Clay Hill sidewalk project. A consultant is developing bid documents for review by VTrans. She submitted a permit application to the town for work in the town right of way.

Meredith said in November the village applied for a grant for a share of the Volkswagen settlement funds that came to the state for electrification of heavy duty vehicles. Bucket trucks were eligible. We applied for funds for an all-electric bucket truck and got a full award. Our contribution will be \$130K, less than half of the cost of a brand new diesel bucket truck. This new technology will require us to have new thought processes when it comes to outages. We currently have one large bucket truck, which this one would replace. The grant requires us to dispose of a diesel vehicle. So we will have to get rid of the large bucket truck. We also have a smaller bucket truck. The electric truck has a range of about 100 miles, which is not an issue for our service territory, but we have to keep in mind that the vehicle runs the whole time it is being used and understand the amount of hours we will need to use it in a major outage situation. We think with our other bucket truck we will still have the ability to respond to outages effectively. There will have to be charging infrastructure. It will take at least a year to 18 months to get the truck.

Will asked if we have to destroy the truck or just no longer have it in our possession. Meredith said the diesel engine has to be destroyed.

BJ asked if charging infrastructure is part of what is covered by the grant. Meredith said it is included in the grant amount so the grant will pay for 80% of it.

BJ asked how the technology has stood up to the test of time. Meredith said the company we would get the truck from is called Lion Electric. The bucket truck is new but they have been making all-electric buses for close to 10 years. She thinks the fundamentals of the vehicles have been around for a while.

Scott suggested a short break and the meeting was recessed from 8:09 to 8:16.

9. *Determine Plan for Requested Special Meeting*

Meredith said the board has talked about having a special meeting and getting a moderator for it. She has been unable to find a moderator who doesn't have close ties to Johnson. The people she has reached out to haven't been interested. She thinks we have two options. One is for the board to authorize paying to hire a moderator rather than trying to find a volunteer. She and Scott have also talked about getting Eric Osgood, who moderates our annual meeting and as selectboard chair has a history of moderating meetings, but he has close ties to many who would be participating in the meeting.

Scott said he and Kim know someone they think would do a wonderful job, who lives in Burlington, and if she is not able to do it her wife is also talented. However, they are long-term friends of his wife's, which gives him pause. He doesn't want to have any kind of conflict of interest. But they could reach out to others in their circle who do this kind of work.

Jackie said, this desire for a moderator came from the trustee board, is that right? Why is a moderator required? Why is this holding up the meeting? It has been almost 3 months. She doesn't see the need for a moderator.

Scott said his opinion is that it would be healthy for the entire community to have a non-biased moderator work us through this. People have strong opinions.

Jackie asked if he is talking about a moderator or a mediator. Scott said both. Someone who can walk us through the issue with full respect even though we have strong differences of opinion.

Jackie said she thinks we have had full respect in the past and have gotten through some hard times. She is proud of this community. She has faith in this community and doesn't see the need for a moderator, especially if it is holding up the special meeting.

Kyle said she agrees. She doesn't know what the fear is. The people requesting the special meeting are here tonight. They have continued to act respectfully. They are just here to participate and uphold democracy. She doesn't see the need for a moderator. She has faith that we can all have respectful discussion. She feels more damage is done when we wait and the frustration builds. She would advocate moving forward with the meeting and trusting that we will all be adults.

Cal Stanton agreed. He thinks everyone has been respectful. There are differences of opinion. He sees Scott trying to heal and mend things. He wants to make sure we are not putting unity before accountability. He thinks we can all be accountable in a respectful way without a moderator.

Diane said when she was being interviewed for the trustee position one of the questions was how she would deal with a difficult issue. One of the things she said is that you want to bring honesty and the truth and you discuss things. That is all community members want from this special meeting. She thinks we can listen to each other and come to the truth. All community members want is to hear answers to the questions that were posed to the board. She doesn't think we need someone to direct us. Community members pose the questions, the board enters honestly, then we move forward.

Sophia Berard said she also wants to advocate going ahead without a moderator. Three months is quite a long time to wait. The questions are very clear. A list of questions could probably be pulled from the meeting minutes. It could be that simple. She advocates for getting something planned as soon as possible.

Scott said he believes he made a motion to have the fire chief and a moderator at the special meeting. He felt it was really necessary. He remembers at one meeting there were comments made to him where people said they felt like he slapped them in the face and spit on them. We can agree not to agree with each other but when he hears vocabulary like that it gives him concern. It is not healthy when people are called out. People don't listen well under those circumstances. He has huge concerns about that. We will try to get a moderator as quickly as we can. The board has had a full plate. He apologizes for having this drawn out so long.

Kyle said she was the one who said it felt like she was being spit on and that was in response to the actions that were taken at that meeting, not to Scott personally. She asked him please not to take that personally. It was not personally directed to him or to anyone. It was a response to actions taken after public comment asking the board to do something different. It felt like members of the public were not being heard. She implores the board to move forward with this meeting. She doesn't know who the board will find to serve as moderator that they haven't found already.

Jackie agreed with Kyle. The slap in the face comment was in response to the board's actions after the board listened to people speak and did the opposite. Those responses were not directed personally to Scott or to any board members. Scott may have felt that way, but that is not what happened. She would like to hear the rest of the board's feelings about moving forward with the meeting. Kyle made a good point that the longer this festers the more feelings harden and the harder it gets to navigate this.

Athena said she agrees with the last point about how without resolution things tend to fester. The speed of small government is her biggest frustration with it. She believes in our ability to communicate our feelings, but she would love to have a different person in the room. She feels we need someone else there in order not to have a repeat of history. Accountability needs to happen and she thinks a good mediator would help that accountability to happen because they would be coming from outside.

Kim said the people who have spoken about having questions that need to be answered come across as feeling that they are all correct. They seem to be saying that everyone who didn't feel comfortable with the Black Lives Matter flags was in the wrong if they didn't feel comfortable with that symbol being raised. Anyone who would like to feel understood would be coming into a Zoom meeting with multiple opinions that are righteous. She agrees with those opinions but she is putting herself in the shoes of people who may not be comfortable. If they are not feeling listened to or understood they won't be able to come to the table. Her thought was that if there is someone who is able to moderate they can listen to that person vs. expressing that they are wrong.

Will ask if Scott would be willing to set a time limit for scheduling the meeting. Scott said he likes that idea. He is hoping we can hear back from the people he knows in Burlington within the next three or four days about their network. The board agreed that at the next regular meeting Scott should present a proposed date with or without a moderator.

Kyle said the board is planning to set the special meeting date at its next meeting. The annual village meeting is in April. After that this entire board could be the same or different. The special meeting is for an issue that happened during an Open Meeting Law violation with this board, which has had a few changes since then. She would hope this meeting would happen before the elections, since the board could be completely different after that. She noted that Open Meeting Law allows board members to discuss scheduling outside of a public meeting. Perhaps the board would like to do that. Scott said he would want to check with the village attorney about that to be sure it is acceptable.

Jackie said the first Open Meeting Law violation occurred on October 13. If we are talking five or six months later before the board addresses it, that is too much. The board just had four or five different community members saying the same thing, but the board is saying no, we know better. She wishes the board would just set a meeting date tonight and then work to find a moderator for that date.

Margo Warden said she was going to say the same thing. It hadn't occurred to her that if the meeting is pushed out beyond the election it adds absurdity to it. She thinks the window to hold the meeting is in February or March. It would be great if the board could set a date tonight. She is

committed to helping the board find a mediator. She is not sure if the village has looked at the Restorative Center in Hyde Park. We could probably find a volunteer through them. She would like to help look for a mediator if the board feels that would be helpful. Scott thanked her and suggested she can follow up with Meredith and then the board can schedule a date. Margo asked if Scott doesn't think the board can schedule a date this evening. Scott said he is not ready to name a specific date. As soon as we get information about a moderator we can schedule a meeting. Margo said she thinks the community could navigate a meeting without a mediator but it sounds like that is what needs to happen.

10. Determine Plan to Fill Racial Justice Committee Vacancy

Scott said Meredith talked to our village attorney about how to fill the Racial Justice Committee vacancy. He would like to get it filled as soon as possible. Because it is an ad hoc committee our attorney said we can appoint a new member. He asked the committee if they felt the board should open it back up to applicants, which would lead to a delay in filling the position. He didn't really get a firm yes or no. If we open it back up we would have to do an interview process, which would take a little while. He would love opinions from the trustee board.

Meredith said the lawyer told her that because the committee was not created by statute the board has the freedom to use whatever process it likes to appoint members. The board could select among people who previously indicated an interest. She did get one completely unsolicited letter of interest from someone last week. That was not someone who applied before.

Steve said however the board wants to do it is fine with him. He suggested we could look at any new applications as well as previous ones. BJ agreed the board should look at whoever applied recent previously and also at new applications. Will agreed the board should look at all the options.

Kyle said based on her experience on the selectboard the board has to first accept the resignation of the person who resigned. A very qualified person did apply and was not appointed and keeps getting denied positions by this board. She has attended and participated in every Racial Justice Committee meeting. She is doing the work. Her track record is stellar. She would ask that the trustees accept the resignation of Brynn Nuse and that a trustee make a motion to appoint Diane Lehouiller to the Racial Justice Committee.

Cal said he echoes that. He is curious how the unsolicited person found out there was a vacancy on the committee. Athena said she told the person. She was trying to get more young people involved. Cal asked how Athena knew there was an opening. Athena said she read the minutes and Meredith informed the board of Brynn's resignation. She thinks the board accepted it at a special meeting. Meredith said she can't remember if it was accepted or not. There is no harm in accepting it again. Athena said by suggesting that someone apply for the open position she was just trying to make a connection between a young person who is interested in government and the town.

Steve asked if Diane is still interested in serving on the committee. She said yes.

Scott asked if Brynn is out of the village. Eric Hutchins said yes, she moved to Morrisville. She submitted a letter of resignation and the Racial Justice Committee accepted it. He believes the village did as well but he is not certain. Diane has been involved in all the Racial Justice Committee meetings and in the community. He echoes the comments about her qualifications. He added that he believes a mistake has been made regarding this committee. It is an ad hoc committee

and he does not think Open Meeting Law applies because the committee does not have any power and does not make binding decisions. The worst that can happen if they do not comply with Open Meeting Law is that they have to cure what has gone wrong and since no binding decisions are made that doesn't really apply. The trustees can appoint someone to the committee now and that would be great. It would allow the committee to move forward with a quorum.

Athena moved to accept Brynn Nuse's resignation from the Racial Justice Committee Will seconded and the motion was passed.

Scott moved and Athena seconded to appoint Diane Lehouiller to represent the Village of Johnson on the Racial Justice Committee.

Will said he has no doubt about Diane's enthusiasm and ability to be on the committee. He is just concerned about fairness to others who may not have heard about the opening. Scott said we have the blessing from our attorney to appoint someone without violating Open Meeting Law. Will said he is not saying it is a legal issue; it is just not fair to others who might want to be on the committee.

Eric Hutchins said that is a good point, but people who applied to be on the committee and were not selected show up at meetings and make as many contributions as anyone who is on the committee. Anyone who wants to get involved can show up at meetings and make valuable contributions. The votes have mostly been unanimous. Someone who wants to participate is not missing an opportunity by not being appointed. They can participate on a near equal level without being appointed.

The motion was passed.

11. Requested Village Actions by the Racial Justice Committee

One request was to adopt the anti-racism statement adopted by the selectboard. Scott said he has read through it and is in favor of it. He thinks it is needed. Athena agreed. **Will moved and Athena seconded to adopt the anti-racism statement previously adopted by the selectboard for the Village of Johnson.** Steve said he is proud that we have this statement. **The motion was passed.**

Meredith said the request to fly a Black Lives Matter flag within 2 months has been completed.

The other request to add the inclusivity statement permanently to the website, communications, publications, etc. Meredith said the inclusivity statement is currently on the municipal website but you have to go look for it; it doesn't jump out at you. Our website is a joint venture between the town and village so any decisions about changing how the statement is displayed need to be agreed upon between town and village. If the trustee board and selectboard both directed staff to work on figuring out how to more prominently display it, they could do that.

Scott said he would like to see the inclusivity statement and anti-racism statement in the village annual report. He thinks we also need to survey all our publications and consider how those statements could be incorporated. Some of the things we put out have limited space so we need to figure out where the statements can fit in.

Will moved and Athena seconded to direct Meredith and Scott to work with Brian Story and Eric Osgood, if the selectboard chooses, to find a more prominent place to put the inclusivity statement on the town website and to add the anti-racism and inclusivity statements to the printed and online versions of the annual village report this year.

Athena said she thinks we need to put the statement prominently on the website. She thinks it is an accomplishment we can show. Maybe it could be on the Facebook page too. Steve agreed. Will asked Athena what she hopes to gain from putting the statement prominently on the website or publications.

Athena said, as someone who did research on the town before moving here, she would have made her decision to move here faster if she had seen that prominently on the website. People have a fear when they move into a small community where everyone knows everyone else that they will stick out as an outsider. She thinks it is beneficial to have a statement that we are inclusive. BJ said it is also a pride thing.

Will said he doesn't believe we will change the hearts and minds of people by having words printed. But what Athena said makes sense and validates the motion.

Eric Hutchins said the village and town have a flyer about attractions of Johnson and one about attracting businesses that mentions tax benefits, etc. Those would be wonderful places to have the inclusivity and anti-racism statements. Regarding the purpose of including those statements, the website is a point of first contact for someone considering opening a business here, moving here, or going to college here. For a person of color considering moving here he thinks the anti-racism statement is important. Over the last 10 years the white population in Vermont decreased by 1% and the population of people of color increased by 90%. If we want the town to grow and thrive it will be people of color moving here that will do that. Displaying these statements is morally the right thing but also smart for the growth of the town.

Jackie said she agrees with Eric. Will had stated that he didn't think the statements would change hearts and minds. She wonders what he thinks would change hearts and minds. Will said conversation might. It works better when both sides are heard. If he had solutions he would be a much richer man. He wishes he did.

Cal said he has heard people refer to the inclusivity statement to suggest that groups like ATV riders are not being included. He feels it is important to clarify that the inclusivity statement applies to oppressed populations – people who have been oppressed because of their gender, skin color, race, etc. Kyle said that is a good point. It is not about dominant culture having their voices heard yet again. Responding to Will saying that he is not sure what the solutions are, she thinks one solution is for people who are in positions of power or leadership roles to defend the anti-racism and inclusivity statements and speak to people who might be feeling differently. She thinks Will is in a position to do that. She would implore him to use his platform for the good of our most vulnerable populations and the people we are trying to attract to this town.

The motion was passed.

Scott asked if the same requests are being made to the selectboard. Meredith said she believes an email was sent to Eric Osgood and Brian Story at the same time it was sent to the village, with the same requests. Eric Hutchins agreed that is the case.

12. Request for Staff and Trustee Open Meeting Law Training

Scott said he is willing to attend training as requested. He has been reading and learning a lot about the laws. One thing that is not completely transparent to him is legal opinion based on those laws. He thinks training is a good idea. He will ask the board to put the cost into the budget. The board could change completely after the annual meeting so he is asking the community for patience. He feels we can't spend \$875 per board member for just a few months worth of training. He will get information he has found out to the trustees and he hopes that fills the void for now. When we have a full slate of trustees we will move forward with formal training.

Meredith said she thinks the \$875 fee is not per person, but she will confirm that. We are a PACIF member and so we get a reduced rate. She thinks the fee is around \$450. But she does think it is wise to wait and do it with the people who are going to be on the board long term.

Athena said she thinks the training is a fabulous idea.

Meredith said the village has never adopted Robert's Rules of Order. We are not bound to follow Robert's Rules. But our attorney thinks it would be helpful for us to adopt our own rules of procedure for meetings. He would help us draft those.

Scott asked if the selectboard has their own rules of procedure. Kyle said they follow Robert's Rules. Eric Osgood has always encouraged selectboard members to attend the VLCT trainings that are held each year right after town meeting and Eric goes to them every year.

Scott asked if the selectboard has adopted Robert's Rules. Kyle said if they did it would have been decades ago. Until she heard this discussion she didn't even know it was an option not to operate under Robert's Rules. It would not be a big financial burden to send trustee board members to the VLCT trainings.

Jackie noted that following Open Meeting Law is not a choice. That is state statute. The first time this board violated Open Meeting Law, members of the public knew they were violating it and they attempted to cue the board by holding up signs saying, "This is a public meeting. Let the public speak." They were ignored and following the meeting they were mocked by Mike Dunham. Had the board listened to that cue from the public, we wouldn't be where we are right now.

Scott said he believes the previous chair's reasoning was based on attending years of annual village meetings and town meetings where people from outside the town or village have to have permission to speak. He thinks it was a misstep for him to say that only village residents were able to give their opinions and ask questions. We have tried to the best of our ability to move forward. He is trying his best to make sure people feel heard. Jackie said village residents were also denied the opportunity to speak that night.

13. Discussion and Approval of Village Green Easements

Meredith said years ago an easement was offered to the property owner of the parcel just south of the village green. The easement was on the east side of the village green property with through the village green to Route 15. Then the village constructed a retaining wall that made it impossible to

use that easement. Now the parcel is up for sale and there is a person who would like to buy it but there is a concern that the easement is useless. There was a request to move the easement from the east side to the west side of the village green so it could provide access to Route 15. Meredith worked with our attorney to have the easement redone. There is a draft easement and the involved property owners are reviewing it. It will cancel the easement on the east side and move it to the west side. There are two easements, but only one that the villages involved in. There is another one on an adjacent parcel and we are not party to that.

Will moved and Athena seconded to authorize Meredith to sign the revised village green easement on behalf of the village if the other involved entities agree to it.

Kyle asked what this means in practical terms. What does it mean for developing that area in any way? Meredith said on the western edge of the village green property by Kyle's store there will be a 12 ft. wide easement allowing access from the parcel south of the village green to the driveway of the village green. It will be about 50 ft. long. It also involves the owner of the building where Kyle's store is, because the driveway is on George Pearlman's property. People using the easement would have to use the village green driveway so an easement for George Pearlman's land is needed as well. The easement is a 12-ft. swath that runs the length of the village green property.

Kyle asked, the village would still own the retaining wall and the land behind it? Meredith said whatever the current property limits are would remain the same. There would just be 12 ft. on the western section where we could not put any impediment.

Kyle asked, if the trustees vote to give that easement, the adjoining landowner could potentially develop that back wooded lot and have traffic use the village green parking lot as a driveway? Meredith said we retained the language from the existing easement. We were really just trying to transfer the easement from one part of the lot to the other. The language does not put limitations on future use. We did not seek to add further limitations because the existing easement did not have them. The person planning to buy the property has said he intends to use it as a way for his grandchildren get from his house to Route 15. There are no plans for development currently. We won't be able to put in anything that would interfere with his ability to use the easement.

Steve said it would seem that if we don't change the location of the easement the person holding it could tear the wall down and put an access road on the east side of the property. Meredith said she thinks if they wanted to push the issue we would have a legal problem on our hands, which is why we agreed to pay our attorney to draft this revised easement to solve the problem. The reality is that the potential has always existed for use of the easement, but we put up a wall that created a problem. This is not creating a new access point; it is moving it. Will said it is not an issue of something new. We need to either tear down the wall or try to find an easier solution on the other side. Scott said the wall was put up as part of the Main Street project under a previous administrator and a previous board

Walter Pomroy said what the village is agreeing to now was actually all in writing previously and was agreed to with all the existing landowners at the time of the Main Street project. It just never got executed.

Kyle asked if Meredith can disclose the names of the landowners involved. Meredith said the current owner is Chan Parker and Alex Nadeau is looking to purchase the property

The motion was passed.

14. Discussion and Approval of Ballot Question about Merger Next Steps

Meredith said at the last joint meeting there was a stated desire to have the same question regarding merger next steps on both town and village ballots with wording flipped. The town has already put a question on their ballot that reads, "Shall the Selectboard enter into discussions with the Village of Johnson Trustees with regard to a possible merger of the Town and Village?" She proposes using the same wording on the village ballot with references to town and village flipped.

Scott said he thinks we need to use the same language so we are not influencing votes.

Steve moved and Athena seconded to put the following question on the annual village meeting ballot: Shall the Village of Johnson Trustees enter into discussions with the Selectboard with regard to a possible merger of the Town and Village?

Will said his understanding is that the village and town had agreed on using the same verbiage. Was there any consultation with Scott or Gordy about the wording the town came up with? Scott said he was on board with their wording and he may have commented on it during a selectboard meeting. He can't remember. Will said the verbiage should have been discussed with both boards before the town adopted it, but if Scott was at a selectboard meeting and was okay with the wording he is okay with it. Meredith said there was an earlier version of the language that she and Scott both took issue with. They communicated to Brian and Eric about that and they were told the language would be changed. So there was communication with the town.

Meredith said the town put the merger study report in the town report. She anticipates we will put it in the village annual report. We had talked about putting in a companion piece to provide more depth and things not included in the consultant report. She asked our attorney about that. He thought there would be no problem providing factual statements but that we should not go too far in terms of offering opinions. If the board wants a companion piece with more information she could draft one, share it with our attorney and bring it back to the board to make sure the attorney thinks we are not going too far and advocating for any position.

Will said he is all for presenting facts, not opinions. He feels if we have relevant additional facts we should include them.

Kyle said she would really hope that the village would not add any opinion but let the voters decide based on the report.

The motion was passed.

15. Review Annual Meeting Deadlines for Officers and Ballot Questions

Meredith asked when people need to turn in their paperwork if they want to run for trustee and what they need to file. Rosemary said they need to file a consent form by March 1. She will send consent forms to current board members. Meredith asked if Rosemary wants to do a Front Porch Forum post about that Rosemary said she can.

Meredith asked the date ballot questions need to be submitted by. Rosemary said 45 days before the meeting. Meredith said we will put that date in the Front Porch Forum post as well.

Rosemary asked if the board will allow petitions for ballot questions without signatures. Meredith said she believes we discussed that at the last meeting and the thought was that unless it was something we really questioned the legality of we were going to accept petitions without signatures. But we can talk about that now. We haven't received any yet.

Scott said he listened to selectboard meetings where a lot of people were unhappy that questions were reworded. He heard comments from people saying that was illegal. He is trying to learn the best he can how to move through this fairly. He is interested to know from the selectboard perspective whether selectboard members feel there is something better the village can do. Should we be wordsmithing people's requests for ballot articles? He is not clear how we go forward.

Kyle said, speaking for herself and not on behalf of the selectboard, that the selectboard voted to accept any petitions that were not outlandish or filled with hate but had a hard time sticking to that. She was disappointed. It was revealed that unless you have been part of the dominant culture that understands how to legally write a petition, which mostly has been white older males, you don't really have a chance. She felt it really showed the disparities for a layperson trying with good intentions to put a petition forward. She would say the trustee board should set parameters but should do as good a job as possible with education. Maybe Meredith could put something together about what a proper petition looks like. She suggests educating people as much as possible so people are set up for success, not failure.

Scott suggested maybe we can ask our attorney about proper wording to get something on the ballot and if it is okay to critique the wording. Meredith said she will do that. She noted that people only have about another week to get their ballot questions in. We won't have a regular meeting between now and the deadline. If we are going to change our minds about how we accept ballot questions we need to decide tonight.

Scott asked if we can use our anti-racism statement and inclusivity statement to be our guiding principles in case we get something that is hate-filled. Will said he thinks that falls under the category of unreasonable.

Scott said he heard a comment during the selectboard meeting that it was illegal to change the submitted question. He would like clarity from our attorney that we have legal authority to change wording of a question without changing the intent.

Athena said she thinks the legal advice the selectboard got was not to touch it even if it was bad language. Meredith said in a normal year if someone managed to get the required number of signatures we would have to accept the question even if it was somewhat outlandish. Steve said his thought is to wait to see what people want to put on the ballot and then deal with it, but he hasn't dealt with this before. Will said by doing it this way, that means the board has to decide what is outlandish or not. Meredith said if submitted questions aren't really the business of the village our attorney would say they would be non-binding questions. Even the merger question is non-binding. There are limits on questions that would actually force us to do something.

Kyle said the advice the selectboard got from their attorney was that it was okay to change some language, but not the intent. She thinks it is important for the board to define what is outlandish. That would be a good, proactive thing to do.

Will said he thinks it is not feasible to list all the things we consider outlandish. We need to take it up at the time something is submitted. Scott agreed. He feels we will know it when we see it.

Scott said only village residents can vote, but can someone from outside the village submit a question for the ballot? Meredith said she doesn't believe so. Will said only a village resident would be able to sign the petition if signatures were required. Scott said he wants to find out for sure.

Meredith said the deadline for submitting ballot questions is February 18.

Kyle said she wonders if Rosemary can spell out which trustee board positions are open and who has what term. If you want to run, how do you know which position to run for, or do you just run for any position? Meredith said she created something that she can have Rosemary double check for correctness so the trustees who want to run again will know which seat to run for.

Scott said some people don't use Front Porch Forum. He does not personally support Facebook and wouldn't see information on Facebook. How do we post information to make sure everyone can see it? Meredith said we can put it on bulletin boards around town. It is too late to include it in this month's utility bills. She thinks the deadline for this week's paper would have been today.

BJ asked if we can send emails to power and sewer customers. Meredith said years ago customers were able to sign up for a listserv. She is not sure she still knows how to use the listserv. It hasn't been updated in years. She can look at it and see if she can still access it.

16. Review High Priority Project List

Meredith reviewed the list of things she feels need to be her primary focus if we want to accomplish them, in descending order of priority:

- Village garage remediation and reconstruction
- River road pump station replacement
- Pearl St./ Clay Hill sidewalk reconstruction project
- Sewer & water rate study
- Bucket truck purchase
- Wastewater facility cupola removal
- Municipal building repairs
- Katy Win pump house rehab
- Powerhouse site cleanup and redevelopment

Kyle said she wants to remind the trustees to also remember Main Street businesses, the economy and people as well as infrastructure. She hopes there is time in Meredith's schedule to apply for grants and be a creative thinker when it comes to our downtown economy.

17. Review Draft Water Department and Sewer Department 2021 Budgets

The board reviewed the draft sewer department budget. Meredith said for 2020 we budgeted for \$492,000 in revenues but then the pandemic hit and actual revenues were \$465,000. She budgeted the same amount for 2021. Revenues also include \$40,000 taken out of the reserve fund to pay for the cupola project and the \$345,000 loan for the River Road pump station.

Will asked if there is an actual fund we are taking \$40,000 out of. Meredith said there is an actual reserve fund for the wastewater department. Will ask how much is in there. Dan said he thinks Meredith told him it was about \$53,000. Meredith said the amount we are taking out for the cupola project is a big chunk of it. In this budget we are not putting any money into the reserve fund.

Meredith explained the different expense line items in the budget. We are adding short-term disability and life insurance as required by the IBEW contract. She added \$500 for revamping the website as discussed.

This draft sewer budget has a deficit of about \$14,500. That can be attributed to budgeting \$27K less in revenue than we would have in a typical year because of the pandemic. She and Dan will go through it again and come up with a recommendation on what to do.

Scott asked if Meredith has heard of any kind of assistance for municipalities that have been affected by Covid. Meredith said the last time she checked no assistance for state or local governments had made it into legislation.

The board reviewed the draft water department budget. Meredith is budgeting about 10% less for water sales than the previous year. She is not budgeting for any sales of water to the state. She budgeted \$18K in grant revenue for work on the Katy Win pump house, with an equal amount of offsetting expense.

She explained the expense line items. There is a deficit of about \$12K at this point. Meredith will come back with a revised budget in a few weeks.

18. Set Date for Special Budget Meeting

The board agreed to schedule a special budget meeting for February 22 at 6:00. Rosemary said the warning for the informational meeting has to be posted before March 5. Meredith said we will need to set the date for that at the February 22 meeting.

10. Adjourn

Will moved to adjourn at 11:07, Athena seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths