

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2017

Present:

Trustees: Gordon Smith, Walter Pomroy, Scott Meyer, David Goddette, Bob Sweetser (by phone)

Others: Brian Story, Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Tom Elwood

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order*

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:02.

There was discussion about the most recent pole collision. Troy said Arjay thinks we may be able to collect from the driver's insurance. Meredith said she is thinking of checking into the cost to insure poles on Route 15 and Route 100C. (*David arrived at 6:07.*)

2. *Proposed Changes/Additions to the Agenda*

Walter added discussion of ideas for the Jim Marvin awards. Meredith said Tom had suggested inviting Bernie Sanders to meet with the board. He will be in town for the JSC commencement ceremony May 13. It was also agreed to add giving approval to Troy to list the old digger truck for sale.

3. *Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings*

Walter moved to approve the minutes of February 13 and 27, 2017, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.

4. *Treasurer's Report & Review and Approve Bills and Warrants*

Rosemary said the budget status reports are awaiting the auditors' adjusting entries. They should be done by the end of the week. Walter asked when we will get the final audit for the past year. Rosemary said the auditors are still working on a couple of minor things. We are still holding payment.

Dave moved to remove parcel 900-440 in the amount of \$58.84 from tax year 2009 from the tax sale list, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.

Rosemary showed possible annual report covers and board members indicated which one they preferred.

5. *WWTF Chief Operator Report and Action Items*

Tom said the latest samples at the wastewater plant were all good. There were increased flows at the end of the month during the melt-off. He narrowed down the location of the problem but did not identify the exact location. There were no call outs at the wastewater plant but there was a call out for the siphon due to high flows. There is inflow from somewhere. He replaced the main PLC CPU unit and that cured the problem with the generator. He installed the new pump Gordy approved in January. It took 6 weeks for it to arrive. Meredith and Tom attended a class in Montpelier for the new EDMR. The reporting will be done electronically from now on. The board needs to designate someone to be the signatory online. He still wants to bring a paper copy to the show the board.

Scott asked if the new reporting requirement is considered a new rule that will be impacted by the requirement to take away two rules for every one added. Tom is not sure. They have already

delayed implementation of it. Meredith said she thinks that is because they are having trouble with the new website. Scott asked if the state is requiring electronic reporting because of the EPA. Tom and Meredith said yes. Scott asked if we can check whether the new reporting requirement is going to be held back. Tom said he will check. Walter asked if reporting online will be easier. Tom said yes, once it's all set up. Scott asked if the state is using the new system already. Tom said it is up and running but it won't take our permit number yet. Meredith said the new system is not less work. There is more data entry than currently. Data entry is being transferred from the state to us. Now the state types the data in but in the future plants will be doing it. Tom will have the data saved online and will also have a hard copy, and we will have a backup on our server because Meredith will get it. Scott asked if we have the technology to do electronic signatures. Meredith said yes.

Walter moved to authorize Meredith, as current Water and Light Commissioner to sign the DMR reports on a monthly basis, Dave seconded and the motion was passed.

We had to pull the lift station pumps at Highland Heights again because they were clogged with things like cotton strings that are not supposed to be flushed. We don't have grinder pumps; they are very expensive. Tom's suggestion is that we give an alert to everyone on that lift station and include the flyer we have on things not to flush. He wouldn't mind hand delivering them. Scott said we should make it clear that rates will go up if the behavior doesn't change. Tom said we use the digger truck to pull the pumps. We could also put a permanently mounted davit there to pull up the pump. Dave asked if he gets called out after hours when the pump gets clogged. Tom said they try not to. They can tell when it is happening because the heaters go out and they try to schedule the work during the day. They have gotten called out for it a few times. We have a consumer confidence report due soon and we have to notify the public of the missed water sample. We may want to do a mailing that addresses everything at once, including information about what not to flush.

Both wells had annual sampling for nitrates done and both were good. There was a call out on town meeting day. The yoga studio had us turn their water off after the fire, then they had the power and water turned back on, then they turned the heat off and a pipe burst. We are billing them. The Pearl Street bridge heat trace used a lot of power last month. An electrician checked it and it turned out the thermostat was full of water and corroded. A gasket must have failed. Tom will get a new part and investigate how we can stop water getting in.

Scott said someone tagged the bridge on Pearl Street with graffiti. Tom said there is worse graffiti on the Main Street bridge. Scott asked who paints over graffiti. Tom said he doesn't know. It is a town bridge so it is up to the town. Scott said it makes a bad impression on parents of college students. He suggested talking to Brian about it. Meredith said she will.

Gordy asked if we got the test results from Rick Aupperlee's system. Tom said we did. His boiler sludge is full of metals from his piping. It was not manganese. Gordy asked if anyone had talked to Rick. Tom and Meredith said no. Tom said the results were inconclusive. The test didn't tell about the water quality, it told about what was in the boiler. Gordy asked Tom and Meredith to talk to Rick.

Tom said Nate said when poles were put in the area where the sewer line extension is going to be they never hit any ledge. (*Tom left at 6:36.*)

6. Foreman Report and Action Items

Troy said on February 26 during the fire on Pearl Street his crew disconnected service from 3 damaged structures. The apartment building was re-energized later that evening and the Studio Center building was re-energized the next day. Service to a VSC building was upgraded for an increase in usage. Our crew worked with contractors to set 6 off road poles for the Gould Hill solar array. We will need to string and upgrade the wire. He is waiting for warmer weather to do that. Two outages will be necessary.

The new digger truck is all set up with radio, logo, etc. The crew has been doing routine maintenance on snow removal equipment. The bucket and digger trucks will get dielectric and stress testing this week. Rubber goods were sent out for their 3 months testing.

Troy completed an estimate for Johnson Farm and Garden to upgrade for their solar array. The estimate was just over \$55K. Their intention is to proceed.

Meredith and Troy attended an IEEE meeting on February 26 on the impacts large solar arrays can have on electric systems and grids. It confirmed our suspicion that a complete system study should be completed before any large array is connected to our system. Meredith said we would contract with someone to do it.

Board approval is needed to forgo external posting of the apprentice lineman position. Jeff wrote a letter about his interest in the position. **Walter moved not to advertise externally for the position of apprentice lineman, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

Troy has an offer for the old digger truck. He would like to try to get a higher price. The board agreed that Meredith and Troy should advertise the truck and decide who to sell to in order to get the best price possible.

7. Manager's Report and Action Items

Meredith showed the board a poster Kyle Nuse had created that could be used to advertise the annual village meeting. Walter said he thinks there should be posts on Front Porch Forum from the trustees. Maybe Meredith could start off with a post. Dave suggested putting a notice on the frame sign outside the municipal building.

Scott said at town meeting under other business someone brought up the question of why the town and village are not merging. We could get the same question. There was also conversation about sidewalks. We should have figures ready to explain why we are not putting in new sidewalks.

Gordy suggested contacting the Scouts to do the pledge as they do at town meeting. Meredith said she will reach out to them.

Meredith said Kyle had suggested we think about daycare. People at town meeting responded well to it. Only 8 took advantage of it but those people said they wouldn't have come otherwise. Rosemary questioned whether childcare is necessary for a one-hour meeting. Meredith and board members agreed it might not be necessary but that if Kyle wanted to take charge and set it up they would have no objection.

Walter moved to approve and sign the final water and wastewater allocation permits for Murray Rentals, Dave seconded and the motion was passed.

Meredith said Dan Benoit has asked for reconsideration of his excess water usage adjustment request. His household has been able to stay current on their most recent bills but they are making no progress paying off the excess charges. Meredith reminded the board that in about June 2015 he had a water leak and got an adjustment. Then in January/February 2016 he had a much larger leak. His request for an adjustment was denied because he had already had one adjustment in a 12 month period. The leak was from a pipe under the trailer and they feel confident it didn't go into the sewer. Our policy says we only allow one adjustment in a calendar year. The board could cancel the first adjustment and adjust the second excess usage bill instead. Or since it has been more than a year since the first request, perhaps the board could make the second adjustment now. Or the board could set up a 2-year payment plan and decide to disconnect if the bill is not paid. The property has already been liened. Dave asked if ability to pay is the issue. Meredith said yes. She thinks it would be in keeping with the spirit of the policy to make the larger adjustment rather than the smaller one. If we did that, they would owe \$296.85. **Dave moved to adjust the balance due from Dan Benoit to \$296.85 with a payment period of 6 months and a stipulation that if that amount is not paid within 6 months the amount owed reverts to the original amounts of \$250.94 and \$832.85, Scott seconded and the motion was passed with Walter opposed.**

Meredith checked references for Dirt Tech; they were all glowing. As Tom had mentioned, it looks like we may not need to do test boring before the sewer extension work. She talked to the engineer, who agreed to mark the best spots to do test borings. We could still have him do that and see how close those spots would be to the existing poles. Troy said we don't know if those poles are set at the proper depth so we can't use that for reference. Bob said he has set poles where they were in a spot with no ledge but there was ledge on either side. It was agreed to do test boring for ledge.

Meredith said based on their references and fact they had the low bid, she would recommend moving forward to contract with Dirt Tech after test bores are done. The board could authorize her to enter into a contract pending positive test results or could wait until the April meeting. Dave asked if they will have time to do the work if we wait until the April meeting. Meredith said the bid documents said we would like to start the project in April. That probably wouldn't be possible if we wait until April to contract with Dirt Tech but they say their bid is good until April 25. Bob he thinks the sooner we contract with them the better. Others agreed.

Walter asked what we are expecting others to contribute if they want to move forward with getting connected. It would make sense to have Dirt Tech connect them. Are we expecting them to contribute anything? Meredith said in our bid documents we put that the contractor needs to be open to working with adjacent landowners. She was going to reach out to neighbors and tell them who to contact at Dirt Tech if they want to connect at the same time the work is being done. Walter said we need to tell them how much we will charge.

Dave asked what we normally charge to connect to an existing sewer. Meredith said \$500 for the connection fee and \$710 overall with the allocation for a normal residence. Walter said we would need 70 or 80 people to connect for us to get our money back. Dave said we can't look at it as being fully funded by the ratepayers. That would be unfair. Walter said homeowners will pay \$50 a

month after they are connected. So payback would be 6-7 years. Dave said he looks at it more as economic development, potentially for the Jewett property. It would incentivize someone, if not the town, to develop that property. Scott said it would add value to properties on that road. Walter said we will need to decide in the future how to pay back the CIG loan.

Gordy asked if the board is okay with just asking people to pay the usual allocation and connection fees. Scott said he is fine with that. Dave said he looks at it as economic development. Scott said he thinks it is well worth it. Bob said he thinks it will be to our benefit to get the line in there. He agrees we should just charge the regular fee for economic development.

Walter pointed out that anyone who wants to connect will still have to pay probably \$5-10K to put in a lateral. Rosemary asked if we will offer the CIG fund for the laterals. There is about \$120K in it now. Meredith said our estimated cost is \$65K. Walter said it meets the definition for one of our high priorities for CIG funds. Dave said they just have to apply.

Dave moved to accept the bid from Dirt Tech for the sewer extension project and to authorize Meredith to sign a contract with Dirt Tech, pending boring results, seconded by Bob. Scott asked, if they do find ledge and have to blast, what is the cost? And will they do a review of everyone's foundation before blasting? Meredith said we don't have a cost estimate for that. If we hit ledge there will be a separate conversation to negotiate the extra cost. If we do test bores we will have that conversation before signing documents. **The motion was passed.**

Walter said we have a policy about connections to the sewer system so if we are going to charge only the normal fees no motion is needed. The board agreed there should be no special assessment for those who want to connect to the new line. Scott said homeowners should be notified that CIG money is available and that it will be cheaper to hook up while pipes are exposed. Walter said homeowners will need permits from the state so timing could be an issue. We should talk to them sooner rather than later.

Meredith said we got two bids for exterior repairs to the municipal building. The bid had a fixed price component and a cost and materials component. The fixed price is just to remove existing siding on two areas and put it back up. The bids for that part of the work were \$12,500 (from Wescom Construction) and \$34,000 (from Dustin Miller.) References for both contractors were great. The town and village only budgeted a combined \$28K.

Walter moved to authorize Meredith to work with Brian Story and the selectboard to accept the bid from Wescom Construction for the municipal building exterior work, seconded by Dave. Meredith said the contractor will identify the cause of the problem and fix it; that is what the time and materials part of the bid is for. **The motion was passed.**

Meredith said she and Gordy visited East Village Farm, the property that had noise complaints last year. Meredith got a call from the owners. The state got an anonymous complaint about the open culvert in their back yard. The property owners asked that someone from the village or town be there when water quality experts from the Agency of Agriculture checked it out. Brian Story went as well. The state agreed to a plan of putting up a fence to keep the goats from the culvert for the time being and perhaps covering the culvert in the long run. It seems that things have been patched up somewhat with the person who made the noise complaint.

Dave asked if we need to think about micro farming. Walter said you cannot zone or regulate against agriculture in the state of Vermont. Scott said it is up to the Agency of Agriculture to deal with it. They handle existing rules for agriculture relating to public health and water runoff. Dave said this conversation has continued for a while. Whose responsibility is it and is it something we need to look into further? Walter said Sandy told us some towns have backyard chicken ordinances. We already decided that the noise is a town issue. It is up to the town to enforce the noise ordinance. Unless we want to make a formal ordinance he doesn't want to spend more time with this. Meredith said she and Gordy left there feeling that things were relatively well resolved and no action was needed on our part.

Meredith said there is an opportunity for Northern Border grant funds for projects in certain counties. Renewable energy development is one thing they will fund. She is planning to go to a workshop on it. We would need to provide a 50% match but she thinks it is worth considering. Her thought would be to pursue solar for the wastewater facility. Walter suggested that because infrastructure is another area they are funding we could also consider applying for funds for the River Road pump station, if they are looking for a more shovel-ready project. Dave said tourism is another of their priorities. We could apply for funds for marketing or our website. Meredith said it looked like they were really focusing on job creation or rate stability. From that standpoint she thought something focused on the utility would be a good idea.

Meredith got an email saying there are more Clean Renewable Energy Bonds available. The email didn't give details on how to apply. She needs to do more investigation. She thinks they are zero interest bonds.

She will give more information at the April meeting about the Northern Border grant. She reached out to VPPSA knowing she would need help with cost estimates for a solar project.

FEMA requires a Hazard Mitigation Plan in order to be eligible for FEMA funding in a disaster. FEMA has come back with questions and responses on our Hazard Mitigation Plan. Lea put together a draft that responds to them. Meredith met with Lea to discuss it. She gave the board the list of comments offered at a June 14 Planning Commission meeting and the draft of how each is addressed. The current list of how we will mitigate natural disasters doesn't have anything utility-specific. She thinks we need to think about whether there are any utility projects we could implement to help protect against natural disasters. Between now and the April meeting she will talk to Troy and Tom about it. Walter said we could mention the pumps we just bought. One reason we got them was that they can better withstand flooding.

There are some maps being developed by the Lamoille County Planning Commission that display the generation potential for wind and solar in Lamoille County. Meredith thinks Lea will come to the April Planning Commission meeting to discuss this and she plans to be there.

Meredith provided the Power Bill Summary for January. She sent a question to VPPSA today asking if other systems saw similarly low loads in January. We were 11% below what we had budgeted. Board members commented that it was warm that month. Walter said he is worried about too much coverage and this highlights that even more. Meredith said she will let the board know what she hears from VPPSA.

Scott asked if what the Studio Center is rebuilding will offset some of the losses we have seen. Troy said for the building he was talking about, there will be a small difference but not much increase.

The board reviewed the Master and JSC Water Meter Comparison. Walter asked why JSC's water use was so high in January 2017 compared to January 2016. Troy said he doesn't know if they had a leak. Scott asked if they could have drained and filled their pool.

Brian Story was recently approached regarding the expansion of the Green Mountain Byway to include Johnson. Meredith will be working with him to better understand the pros and cons of Johnson being included and she plans to put the topic on the April agenda. Walter asked what the Green Mountain Byway is. Meredith said she believes it is designating parts of the state highway system as a scenic byway. It provides access to tourism dollars.

8. *Marvin Awards*

Walter said applications for Jim Marvin awards are due at the end of April. We could nominate a person or a project that has enhanced the community. He suggested people think about possible nominees. Meredith will send out an email with the criteria and put this on the April agenda. (*Troy left at 8:09.*)

9. *Executive Session*

Walter moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel items and contract details, Dave seconded, the motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:10.

Walter moved to exit executive session at 8:50, Scott seconded and the motion passed.

Walter moved to enter into a contract with the New England Hydro parties for the full 11.6% allocation and Scott seconded. The motion passed.

Walter moved to approve the sale of the Village share of the Highgate Converter, based on current terms, with the intention to reinvest the sale proceeds in VT Transco equity and Scott seconded. The motion passed.

10. *Adjourn*

Walter moved and Dave seconded to adjourn at 8:52 and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths