

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN
FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2020

Present:

Trustees: Scott Meyer, Brian Raulinaitis, Gordon Smith, Bob Sweetser, Phil Wilson
Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order*

Gordy called the meeting to order at 4:04.

2. *Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda*

No changes to the agenda were needed.

3. *Set Date for Pre-Vote Informational Meeting and Approve Annual Village Election Warning*

Meredith showed a draft warning. We have to have an informational meeting no more than 10 days before the vote. It will be a Zoom meeting unless rules on meetings are relaxed.

The board agreed to schedule the informational meeting for 6:00 on May 26.

Voting will be on June 7. People will vote upstairs in the municipal building unless they mail in their ballots. Meredith said we will send a ballot to every voter with a return postage paid envelope to encourage as many people as possible to vote by mail. But we are required to provide in-person voting.

The board reviewed the wording of the ballot questions. Some of the wording is a little different from what was on the original annual meeting warning. Meredith said Gordy had suggested adding the word “estimated” for the amount to be raised by taxes to give us some flexibility.

Meredith said she will put together a cost estimate for the Morristown project. She will let the people at Green Mountain Power know the date and time of the informational meeting and ask if they can participate.

Bob moved to approve the annual village election warning for 2020, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.

4. *Village Employee Work Protocols and Staffing*

Meredith said she asked someone at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development if employees need to wear masks if they are more than 6 feet apart and working outside and he said yes, if they are in proximity to anyone they need to wear masks.

Phil said the interpretation he believes his agency will use is that in common areas employees should wear masks but while they are in their cubicles more than 6 feet apart they don't need masks. Gordy said he doesn't see where an employee would need a mask if alone in a vehicle. Meredith said the direction we gave is that an employee doesn't need a mask if they are in a vehicle alone. They need to put a mask on to clean the vehicle. There is not clarity on whether employees who are working together but more than 6 feet apart need to put on masks. It doesn't seem reasonable to wear masks for physical work 8 hours a day if employees are more than 6 feet

apart. The guidance we have says that employees should not be within 6 feet of each other whether they have a mask on or not. Much of the work our employees do requires people to be closer than 6 feet to each other. If those tasks aren't allowed right now it really cuts down on the work they can do.

Gordy said Vermont Electric Coop employees are doing regular line work every day. Meredith said if we have to address an outage, employees will do that and they will be within 6 feet of each other and not have masks on. Phil asked, isn't utility work exempt from this? Meredith said she thinks there is extra flexibility for essential work but there is work our employees do that is not essential, like changing flags on Main Street, street sweeping or right of way cutting that isn't absolutely essential. We can reach out to VEC. She believes they are only doing emergency work. We will also do emergency work. (*Scott joined the meeting at 4:21.*)

Meredith said today new rules were put in place about taking temperatures. Nat Kinney made a suggestion about a written questionnaire. Maybe we could have staff answer the questionnaire in an email before reporting to work. It sounds like we need an approved thermometer. Gordy said he thinks we should authorize Troy to try to find one and purchase it. Meredith said we want people to fill out the questionnaire remotely, not come in to fill it out.

Scott said we need a safety and health plan. There are a variety of plans we can get from the internet. He thinks it would be beneficial to wait to develop ours. ACCD is supposed to be posting a couple of variations and coming up with a model program. With thermometers, we just have to make sure to get one that works.

Meredith said she ordered 50 cloth face masks. They are supposed to arrive today. We plan to issue 5 or 6 to each employee. She purchased 21 bottles of hand sanitizer. Employees need to be able to access it during the day. We will give one to each employee to keep in their personal vehicle and have one in each vehicle and shop. All but one employee has completed the VOSHA training. We are trying to get clarification on whether the questionnaire on symptoms is sufficient for now. We are working on how to modify work processes to maintain social distancing and figuring out how employees can get breaks if they have to wear masks all day even if they are at least 6 feet apart. The expectation is that employees won't accomplish as much as normal during the day.

Gordy asked Meredith to check with Arjay about getting signs for the fire department about who is allowed in the building.

Meredith said we need more clarification on the requirements for health checks and developing a plan. For the upcoming week, it is Nate's week to go in and we will probably just have him go in and do essential tasks. Hopefully sometime next week we can have a few people able to go in and do sidewalk sweeping, working in individual trucks.

Scott said the new rules say we need a safety officer. We had decided that Meredith and Brian would be the village and town safety officers. But it sounds like for outside work there should be a safety officer there. He would recommend that Troy be the health and safety officer for our crews. He could be the site health and safety officer and Meredith could be the overall health and safety officer.

Gordy suggested that in Troy's absence the ranking worker should assume the role. Scott said they would have to be knowledgeable about how the disease spreads and would need to know what the safety and health management plan says. Meredith said Nate could probably be the backup for times when Troy isn't there. If just one employee is going in, it doesn't make sense to have someone come in just to look over their shoulder. Scott agreed.

Scot said when a job has a requirement for a safety and health plan and officer, if VOSHA were there they would ask who the safety officers are, whether the workplace has a plan and whether they can walk away if they feel unsafe. We would want employees to know the answers to those questions. Gordy said we have reiterated multiple times that if anyone feels unsafe they have the right to shut down the job or leave.

5. Village Utility Billing Protocols

Meredith said a comparison of this week of April compared to the same week last year shows our load down 15%. The week before it was down 17%. NVU use is way down and we think some increase in residential use is balancing that somewhat. There was a 6% residential revenue increase on March bills. By next week we should have April data.

Susan wants to know if the board wants to waive credit card fees beyond April 30. There has been about \$462 credited back on bills so far for credit card fees, most from electric and some from water. Brian said he would rather keep waiving fees than have people stop by the office. Others agreed. The board agreed to continue waiving credit card fees for May.

6. Village Green Easement Adjustment

Meredith said she spoke to Alex Nadeau. He has no plans to develop the lot behind the village green. He just would like an easement for access. There would be no major change in the amount of traffic going through the green. George Pearlman was not overly concerned. Meredith believes George gave the village an easement for one driveway into the green. She told him she would keep him in the loop. We have to figure out where the easement will be. Phil said it looks like it would need to be on George Pearlman's property.

Brian asked if there is a way to give an easement that says we have to give approval for what happens there. Meredith can ask our attorney if we can say the easement is only for a walkway and personal driveway. Brian said he thinks a driveway would change the village green quite a bit. Meredith said there is an existing easement for a driveway and Alex wants to move it to a different location. She will look at maps and see if it will all fit on village land.

7. Other Business

Scott asked if there is still hope of doing the sidewalk project on Pearl Street. Meredith said our attorney heard from the Studio Center that they are not willing to give us the easement we need. We would have to use the condemnation process, which would take 60 days. She thinks there is no hope of construction this year. She hopes we can get an extension on the grant and move the funds into the next calendar year.

Scott asked what this issue is with the easement. Meredith said we got strong advice from our attorney that we need a warranty deed easement in which the Studio Center affirms they have clear title to the property so we can be confident there are no other claims. The Studio Center's attorney said we don't need that level and they can just give us a quit claim deed. Our attorney said if we are going to invest public money we want confidence that the title is clean. We have been unable to

convince the Studio Center there is no risk to them to provide the easement we want. The recommendation she got is to go forward with the condemnation process.

Gordy said he is disappointed. We bent our rules for sewer lines a little to accommodate the Studio Center's project. He is disappointed they are not willing to work with us on this project.

Meredith said she needs to get confirmation from the state that we can get an extension on the grant before starting the condemnation process.

Gordy said he is hoping we can have a vote on the union contract at the next regular monthly meeting. He and Phil are working on a final draft.

8. *Adjourn*

Scott moved to adjourn at 4:49, Brian seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths