

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM AND PHONE CALL-IN
TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2020

Present:

Trustees: Scott Meyer, Brian Raulinaitis, Gordon Smith, Phil Wilson

Others: Meredith Dolan, Rosemary Audibert, John Fiske (Green Mountain Power), Walter Pomroy, Eric Osgood, several other community members

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. *Call to Order*

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:01.

2. *Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda*

No changes to the agenda were needed.

3. *Information & Presentation on 2020 Village Election Ballot and General Department Budget*

Meredith reviewed what led to this informational meeting. The annual meeting that usually occurs in April was cancelled and all voting will be by Australian ballot. Usually elections are by Australian ballot. This year every question will be voted by Australian ballot because of the inability to have a large meeting due to COVID-19. Voting is June 2. Paper ballots were mailed to all active village voters. The village is imploring people to please vote by mail in order to cut down on the number of people coming into the municipal building and protect staff and poll workers. Ballots must be received by 7:00 pm on June 2. Voters can mail them or drop them in the drop box at the municipal building.

Meredith reviewed highlights of 2019. The general department completed design and engineering for the Pearl Street/Clay Hill sidewalk project, which involves reconstruction of a section of sidewalk. The village is in the process of trying to get the remaining easement needed for that project. Hopefully the project can be put out to bid and done this summer but with COVID-19 and the trouble getting the easement, construction may not be done until next spring. The fire department purchased a new Rescue 1 fire truck. Another phase of the municipal building siding project was completed. The town and village have slowly been redoing the siding over the last few years. Now just the tower is left. We were hoping to get that done this year but it remains to be seen if we can do it with delays from the pandemic. Through the work of a beautification committee, new plantings were put in at the village green.

Demolition of the old powerhouse building took a lot of time and money. That was funded through the electric department. The building was at risk of collapsing into the river. It was contaminated and the material had to be taken to a hazardous waste site in Michigan.

The village has almost completed a water asset management plan for the water system, which will help us plan for the future, prioritize projects and come up with a better maintenance schedule. The communication system for the water system was updated. A major computer system at the wastewater treatment facility that was quite old was updated and now is more

secure and reliable. Important repairs were made to the generator which provides backup power for the water and wastewater plant

The 2020 general department budget total is \$545,746. It is a balanced budget. The amount to be raised from property taxes is essentially flat. That amount has been virtually flat or decreasing for 7 years. The budget continues to prioritize support for essential services such as the fire department, snow removal, sidewalk maintenance and municipal building repairs. We were able to fund strategic investments in the downtown. There is money budgeted for beautification efforts, the Holiday Jubilee and Johnson Works.

We do think the pandemic will have some impact on all village departments. Utility revenues are lower than projected with businesses and the college shut down. Projects are getting delayed. We are having to alter how we approach different projects. Work practices and procedures have changed. That will impact productivity. It is too early to know the exact impact on the budget so we did not make adjustments to the budget because of COVID-19. For now the village will monitor the impact and keep voters and customers as updated as possible as the situation becomes clearer.

Meredith said Article 6 has to do with work proposed to be done on the B22 transmission line. Green Mountain Power initiated the project. There is a problem with the amount of transmission capability in northeastern Vermont – the Sheffield Highgate Export Interface constraint. A multi-pronged approach is being taken to try to solve it. Work on the B22 transmission line is part of the suite of solutions. The line is jointly owned by the Village of Johnson, which owns 15%, and Morrisville Water & Light, which owns 85%. To have work done on that line, approval has to be given by Johnson and Morrisville voters for the project to go forward. Green Mountain Power, a utility impacted by the transmission constraint, is going to implement the work. It will address the problem impacting them but some of what will be done is work we would have had to do as owners as part of regular maintenance and upgrades. This project advances the timeline for that work by about 5 years and benefits us through improved transmission. Green Mountain Power is paying for most of the work but will not pay for the part of the work that we would have had to do anyway. Our cost is \$31,739. GMP will pay the upfront cost and we will reimburse them over 5 years, interest free. Upgrades will be done that would have needed to be done anyway and we can pay the cost over several years. It is win-win for us. We can cooperate to solve the bigger constraint and get work done in a way that is fiscally easier for us.

4. Question & Answer Session with the Public

A community member asked what happened with the easement for the sidewalk project. Meredith said the village got easements from almost all involved property owners. The Vermont Studio Center has concerns about giving the type of easement the village was advised to get. The trustees voted to initiate condemnation proceedings but we are hoping we can come to an agreement without going through the whole process. The pandemic has also delayed some aspects of the project. We got confirmation from VTrans that we should be able to extend the grant providing about \$45K of funding for the project into next year.

Meredith said people can reach out to her with any questions or reach out to Rosemary with any questions about getting ballots in.

5. Other Business

Gordy noted that there has been very good cooperation between the selectboard and trustees on COVID-19. Both boards have been doing an excellent job trying to get through this. Meredith agreed.

6. Adjourn

Scott moved to adjourn at 6:22, Phil seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths

UNAPPROVED