

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
MONDAY, MAY 8, 2023

Present:

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

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Dan Copp, Roger Demar, Diane Lehouiller, Kyle Nuse

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:00.

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

A request for a sewer bill adjustment and a request to paint the old mill house were added to the agenda.

3. Request for Sewer Bill Adjustment

Roger Demar said an outside spigot wasn't shut off and it froze during a cold snap, causing a water leak. The water did not go in the sewer. Ken asked if he has made repairs. Roger said yes, he did away with the outside spigot. Erik said Roger paid a sewer bill of \$954.91. The 3-month average of his sewer bills is \$46.78. Three times that is \$140.33. He is asking the board to refund him \$814.58. Erik supports that. **BJ moved to refund Roger Demar \$814.58 on his sewer bill, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.** Board members asked Roger if he preferred receiving a check or credit and he said a check.

4. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Lynda moved to approve the minutes of April 10, 2023, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

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

The board reviewed the budget status report. Rosemary said we received \$8K or \$9K in insurance payments for damage done to the cold storage building due to raccoons and water damage caused by the raccoon damage.

Rosemary said electric sales through the end of April were 36% of budget and costs through the end of March were 23% of budget. Water sales for the first 4 months of the year were 35% of budget.

BJ asked why general department benefits are already 46% of budget. Rosemary said that is for extra time employees put in during winter. It will come down in the summer.

Sewer assessments for the first 4 months totaled 33% of budget.

BJ moved to authorize Ken to sign authorization for the new account at Community Bank that will be used for ARPA funds. GiGi asked what the interest rate is. Rosemary said it starts at 3.25%. **Steve seconded.** Rosemary said if we need the money we can get it. We can make up to six withdrawals per month. She is putting \$400,000 in this account and leaving the rest in the Union Bank account.

Erik said there is a meeting tomorrow with Katie Buckley from VLCT to learn about the best legal way to use ARPA funds for operations expenses.

6. Village Manager Report and Action Items

Erik was designated as a member of the Expert panel for the VTC Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Capstone project presentation in Randolph. The panel fielded questions about the project and the future use of students to do such work. Other members of the panel included the class professor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of State, the Asst. Secretary of Labor, and the State Energy Program Manager from BGS. That energy program manager is very interested in our project and is the selection authority for the MERP \$500K grant we are pursuing. He also said the ASHRAE Level 1 energy audit done by the students can be used as the one needed for MERP Grant funding and that this will push us to the front of the line.

The Congressionally Directed Spending request to Senator Welch submitted by Erik and Tori Hellwig of LCPC was selected by Senator Welch as one of the 22 out of over 150 applications that he is choosing to fund. It will fund 75% of project costs up to a maximum award of \$824,000.00. While Senator Welch has selected it, it still must make its way through the congressional budget process. It will require over \$200K of ARPA money for a match. If we use all the ARPA money, the BGS grant and this, we will have \$1.7 million. Erik thinks LCPC's initial estimate of project costs was low. We may or may not end up using the full \$1.7 million. (*Diane Lehouiller arrived 6:17.*)

Due to the recent presence of hypodermic needles near the Cold Spring as well as ongoing dumping of illicit household trash bags in our trash can, Erik had 2 security cameras installed covering those areas. No needles have been seen since, and the trash volume has reduced significantly. A local business has offered to donate 10 needle deposit stations for the village if we will use them. Other local businesspeople have some concerns about the stations due to appearances. (*Kyle Nuse arrived at 6:18.*) Erik will talk to Nate and the sheriff's dept about where they are finding needles and try to determine whether there are locations in the village where deposit stations would be useful and not too obvious.

Ken said he thinks 2 to 3 locations would be adequate. He doesn't want to see too many in town and he thinks we should get opinions from the public on locations. The board agreed that Erik can choose appropriate locations.

Green Mountain Media Blasting and The Little Curio Shoppe sponsored 3 beautiful flowerpots outside of the Village office entrance. Erik thanked them for their community spirit.

7. Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items

Dan gave his report:

Operational Status of Wastewater Plant and Callouts

- E-DMR and Wr-43 were submitted to the state
- Troubleshoot low water pressure issues at the belt press. Found an abandoned process water filter system that was still plumbed in and plugged solid. Took it apart and cleaned the screens and it cured the problem

- Pumped down the process water tank in the effluent room to inspect. There is a thick layer of sludge in the bottom that will need to be pumped out at some point.
- Received and replaced the sludge grinder for the press that we had ordered 4 months ago.
- We installed the new repaired belt on the belt press that we received back from the manufacturer.
- Raked and cleaned up winter yard debris
- Received quotes from Gould Electrical, County Plumbing and Woodys for the electrical efficiency upgrades at the plant.
- Gave a plant tour to GiGi and Lynda
- Pulled the main drive motor on the belt press and took to Farrell Electrical as it has been tripping out overheating.
- Fire extinguishers were serviced and certified

Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- Cleaned inside of the water plant
- Rotated pumps at Katy Win Booster stations
- Water loss for April was 23%

Ken asked if we should have backup for the belt press drive motor. Dan said he doesn't think there is a need for one because we can get a new one pretty easily within a week.

Erik said we will be able to sign up for a state grant funded program that pays for a contractor to come out with special equipment and work with our crew to listen for water leaks. With the same grant we are signing up for a contractor to do valve exercising and inventory.

BJ said we had discussed before possibly getting grant funding to map out our infrastructure. Have we gotten anywhere with that? Erik said not yet. He has been watching for that money to show up. On the electrical side we are moving on this through VPPSA.

GiGi asked, since it appears it is not possible to get money to put the humming transformers at the wastewater plant on the other side of the wall, is there a way to insulate from the front to cut down on the noise? Dan said an electrician advised not doing that as it would create a heat issue and make the noise louder.

Ken said he heard all the cupola windows were opened. Dan said yes. Ken asked if that helped any. Dan said minimally. Condensation is more of an issue in winter. GiGi asked if having students from the tech center work on the cupola is an option. Ken said he doesn't think our insurance would cover that. The school's may, but that is a pretty dangerous area. Lynda asked if we could put fans up there. Dan said we probably could but they would have to be big fans. It is a big area. He noted that having a roof there would not meet code nowadays. *(Dan left at 6:31.)*

8. *Electric/General Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept.

Hyde Park mutual aid 7.5 hrs this month.

Right way cutting

467 Clay Hill Rd did a service change out. Went from 1 meter to 4 meters.

Installed two services for 144/150 River Road West.

140 Hoag Rd voltage issues. Looked at recording couldn't find any Issues

Took 16 meters to Morrisville W&L for testing

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

Water and Sewer-

Turned on water to the Masonic Temple and the Lamoille view Cemetery

Nate continued going to class for water distribution

General Dept.

Started sidewalk/street sweeping

Painted and put away winter equipment

Cleaned up/ raked lawns at Village Green and Municipal Building

Installed cameras at Cold spring due to the finding of needles

Fixed flag pole at Village Green

Safety

Safety meeting with NEPPA on April 12th was on Lock out/ tagout and switching and tagging

BJ asked what is wrong with the flagpole. Erik said it is not actually a flagpole. It is homemade. We may have to consider upgrading it. Ken said he and Erik have talked about putting up a real pole. There has also been a suggestion to put up three poles so we could fly the American flag and the state flag along with community flags.

9. *Fire Department Report and Action Items*

Erik read the report submitted by Arjay West:

Johnson Fire Department Report
Mar. 29-Apr. 27, 2023

JFD responded to 15 calls. 11 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) 4 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am) The average duration was: 67 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 2 - structure fires, 2 - wildland fires, 1- debris fire, 2 - automatic alarms, 1- vehicle crash, 1- odor investigation, 5 - medical assists, and 1- mutual aid (water rescue)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 12
Total hours of service was: 219

Other:

We have three firefighters that have registered for an electric vehicles training class coming up in June at the North Country Fire School in Alburg.

The FCC radio license for the tower repeater was issued on April 19. The next step for the repeater project will be to order radio equipment. We are confirming product availability and lead time to make this decision.

Ken said the board is appreciative of the fire department getting the repeater. Arjay is thinking of offering use of it to NEMS. There may be a small fee.

10. Beautification Committee Flower Planting Project

Kyle Nuse said the Beautification Committee is hoping to do a collaborative project with the Laraway School to build a two-tiered planter around the welcome sign at the Cold Spring. Laraway is willing to donate time to build the planter with students. She would like to use the \$500 in beautification funds in the budget to pay for materials, soil and flowers. The drawing Laraway came up with was included in the meeting packet. She estimates costs of \$250 to \$300 for materials for the planter, which will be made of wood, \$25 for soil and \$150 to \$175 for flowers.

Erik suggested that if the wood is not pressure treated hemlock or cedar should be used. Kyle said she will pass on that recommendation.

BJ said he knows the Beautification Committee is having a hard time finding manpower for weeding. This will add to the work. Will there be enough manpower to take care of it so it does not get overgrown? Kyle said the Beautification Committee has reprioritized their time. Last spring, summer and fall they put a lot of time into the Cold Spring, which was really overgrown. Because they have already put so much time and energy into that and have seen direct impact, with many people happy about the appearance and many people sitting there, they want to continue to dedicate time to that space. They will be maintaining it.

GiGi suggested a lumber yard in Fletcher that probably would have better and cheaper wood than a larger establishment. She can give the name to Erik. Since flowers are so expensive she would rather see perennials or vegetables planted in the planter. She has a real problem with taxpayer money paying for flowers. She thinks local businesses should be participating in beautification. In Cambridge local businesses can sponsor a flower pot for \$60 for a summer.

Kyle said the area is shaded for much of the day so they will plant things that can grow in part shade. GiGi said she can contribute some hosta. Kyle said they want punchy colors because it is a somewhat dark area. They do use a lot of perennials and they ask for donations for the flower boxes. GiGi said Costco has shade flowers that would cost a lot less than \$150 to \$175. Kyle said the committee will try to be as thrifty as they can. If they can buy flowers for less they will. But members all work and may not be able to drive to Costco. GiGi said she would be willing to go.

Ken said he thinks the estimated cost for flowers is awfully expensive. If this expenditure is approved he would ask that the Beautification Committee be very frugal with the amount spent for flowers and look for donations first. All receipts should be given to Erik as soon as there is an expenditure.

Lynda moved to allow the Beautification Committee to spend up to \$500 on materials and plants needed for a flower planter, Steve seconded and the motion was passed.

11. Appoint Diane Lehouiller as Village Project Manager for Powerhouse Grant Project

Ken said he suggested that Diane talk to the board about being liaison for the proposed project near the covered bridge since she started the project. If she did this she would check with Erik and the chair and vice chair before giving the go ahead to anything.

Diane said Melanie Riddle told her not to apply for the Spark Grant until the site was accepted. The engineering firm that demolished the powerhouse, KAS, is meeting with the Vermont DEC tomorrow at 11:00. Diane will attend and she invited Erik if he can make it. They are going to decide what we need to do with this site.

Lynda moved and Steve seconded to appoint Diane Lehouiller the liaison for the powerhouse bridge project. Ken said he would appreciate it if Diane would copy him on emails she sends related to the project. **The motion was passed.** (*Diane and Kyle left at 6:54.*)

12. Discuss VTrans Bike and Ped Scoping for Sidewalk Extension to Wescom Road

Erik said a sidewalk to Jolley is high on a long list of things the village would like to do. The key to getting VTrans construction money is doing a scoping study, which can cost \$30-60K. There is an 80% grant that LCPC is prepared to help us apply for. We need a letter of commitment to the project in order for them to accept the application. We would have to pay \$6-12K for our match. Maybe that could come from ARPA funds or from the sidewalk reserve fund. Rosemary said we have about \$47K in the sidewalk reserve fund. Erik said this would be a full engineering study that would give us cost estimates.

Steve said he thinks next to the village garage renovations this was maybe second on our priority list. Ken said sidewalk repairs was second. Lynda said the School Street sidewalk is

badly in need of repairs. Ken agreed. His concern is how we classify which sidewalks are good or in need of repair. Did we ever have a plan for sidewalks? Rosemary said she thought Troy Dolan rated them all at some point. Lynda said she thinks we need a plan. She doesn't know if it is more cost efficient to do them all at once or to do a section each year.

BJ said he would like to move forward on the study of the sidewalk extension because of the fatalities we have had of people walking in the road.

Ken said he knows the study is a good idea but we have been told by the voters to stay within our budget. He is in favor as long as we can do that and use reserve funds or possibly ARPA funds. In his opinion the reserve fund would not be for adding sidewalk but for repairing existing sidewalk. He noted that there are new ways of leveling sidewalk, like foam injection.

BJ said to him one of our big jobs is to make sure people are safe. To him one person's life is worth this.

Steve moved to sign the letter of commitment for a scoping study for a sidewalk extension to Wescom Road and to earmark up to \$12,000 of ARPA funds for the village match, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.

Steve suggested that if Troy did do a study maybe someone could try to find it. Erik said he will do that.

13. Review VPPSA AMI Grant and AMI Contract, Authorize Chair to Sign Contract

Erik said right now is a good time to submit an application for an AMI Grant. It provides 50% money for installation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure and we don't have to manage it because it is done through VPPSA. Automatic water meters are covered under the grant as well. Probably it will be a couple of years before the installation of the new meters is done.

GiGi asked if putting in these meters will increase rates. Erik said it will increase our cost some but not noticeably. GiGi asked if we are now planning on doing annual smaller rate increases. Erik said right now we are in the queue for a rate case with the Public Utility Commission for electric rates. Afterwards we will do smaller rate increases to keep up. He believes water and sewer rate increases are a necessity. In this past budget he kept water and sewer rate increases from being over 10% to reduce the impact. He is already planning on a 3.5% increase for water rates for next year. He noted that as long as electric rate increases stay within 2% we no longer need a rate study.

Lynda moved to authorize Ken to sign the Agreement for Advanced Metering Infrastructure Project with VPPSA, BJ seconded and the motion was passed.

14. Review and Possibly Adjust Trustees' Rates of Compensation

BJ said it has been a while since rates of compensation for trustees have been increased. He thinks they should go up by \$250 to \$1500 for the chair and \$1250 for the other board members. Erik said that is still below the rate of compensation for the selectboard.

Ken asked when the last time was that the trustees' rate went up. Rosemary said has been more than 10 years.

GiGi said she tries to be as fiscally responsible as she can be. She probably wouldn't support the increase except that she thinks it is important to recruit younger people and better compensation might be an incentive for them. Erik noted that there is one board member who turns their check in to the fire department. Steve said his main reason to support the increase would be what GiGi mentioned, that it might help younger people get involved.

BJ moved to increase compensation for village trustee board members by \$250 to \$1500 for the chair and \$1250 for other board members, effective January 1, 2024 and the motion was seconded and passed.

15. Discuss/Act On Updated Village Green Food Truck Permit Application and Fees

The board reviewed the updated Village Green Food Truck Requirements and Application prepared by Erik. Lynda asked if anyone has applied yet. Erik said Waffle Wagon gave us an application last fall. BJ said he thinks they are actually planning to go somewhere else now.

Steve said until it is established that Jenna's Coffee House is doing well he doesn't want to do anything that would jeopardize them. He feels it would be all right to allow a food truck on the village green that does not conflict with their business because it has different hours or has nothing that is like what they sell but he would be opposed to anything like coffee. GiGi said she would disagree. People who would stop at a coffee place on the green would not be the same people who are stopping at Jenna's Coffee House; they would be people who are driving through. Steve said he has seen a lot of people walk out of Jenna's with coffee to go. Ken said he had the same concerns as Steve about competition. In his opinion anyone who opens a brick and mortar restaurant should not have competition because they are paying taxes, but he agrees with allowing vendors who are open after the brick and mortar stores close.

Erik said he changed the fee to \$18 per day. The hours were 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily and he changed them from 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday and 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday and Tuesday because nothing else is open then.

Lynda said she was part of a conversation among community members about a restaurant possibly coming to the old Plum & Main location. People talked about concerns with competition with existing restaurants and the consensus was that business owners want more restaurants. They feel that is good for business.

Erik said the application now says no food truck may offer a majority of products significantly similar to those offered by any local village restaurant open during the same hours. GiGi asked, how about Maplefields? Others said that is not a restaurant. Erik said it is not something we need to protect from food trucks.

GiGi said someone had mentioned that parking was an issue. Erik said the application says the food truck must be parked so as to maintain access to all village parking spaces.

Ken asked if it still says there are no generators allowed. Erik said yes.

Steve moved to approve the updated Village Green Food Truck Requirements and Application as written, GiGi seconded and the motion was passed.

16. Review and Approve Updated Village Accounts Receivable Clerk Job Description

Erik said the Village Accounts Receivable Clerk job description was updated but was accidentally not included with the other updated job descriptions last month so it still needs to be approved. This is Marla's job. He updated some job titles referenced and changed the chain of command. She was previously reporting to everyone and now she is reporting to Erik with guidance from Rosemary.

GiGi asked if Marla has the skills to manage the village/ town website, which is one of the items included in the job description. Erik said she has been doing it as it is built now. At some point it needs to be rebuilt. We have a contractor that handles big things but she is able to do things like making sure minutes are posted. What she does is more like updating than managing. Marla works 20% of her time for the town and they reimburse us for that. This job description includes the work she does for the town.

BJ moved and Lynda seconded to approve the Village Accounts Receivable Clerk job description. Lynda asked if the other office job descriptions got updated as well. Erik said Lydia works for the town and Susan works for Rosemary so he can't do those job descriptions. Rosemary said when Lydia was hired the job description for her job was new. **The motion was passed.**

17. Discuss/Possibly Approve Johnson Emergency Management Coordinator Appointment

Erik said he has talked to Eric Osgood and Eben Patch about this. He has extensive FEMA ICS training and he feels it makes sense for him to be Emergency Management Coordinator.

GiGi asked if it will cost us more. Erik said no. It is just an extra responsibility for him. Steve said his concern is that Erik does not live here. He would love to see him doing the job but he thinks we should find someone who lives in the village. Erik said if there is a situation where he needs to be in the village he can put a cot at the firehouse. We can have two Emergency Management Coordinators. Ken said in the past the second one has been a board member. He suggested that Steve could do it. Steve agreed.

BJ moved to appoint Erik and Steve as emergency management coordinators, Lynda seconded and the motion was passed.

18. Request to Paint Old Mill House

GiGi said she has been on a mission to paint the old mill house. She has volunteers willing to help. She believes that Brian Story said as long as there was a small group of volunteers they would be covered by insurance. She will figure out how to get paint. In February the selectboard told her she had to wait until a joint meeting of the trustees and selectboard to get permission but this item is off the agenda for the next joint meeting. Beth Foy said, "If you can get that done, good for you." She took that as permission. She is asking if the trustees will give her permission to paint the mill house. She has permission from the Department of Health. Apparently the building was illegally power washed in the '90s. She was told that as long as there is no scraping it is fine to paint it. She spoke with Dean West of the Historical Society, who said his recollection is that the house used to be white with green trim. The green trim would match the welcome center for the rail trail. She thinks it would be a boost for the village to improve the look of the house.

Lynda asked about priming and prepping. GiGi said she would do no prep, just painting. Lynda suggested solid stain instead of paint. GiGi said she thinks that would chip. She said at this point she would go with whatever is the most cost effective. She thinks it will take three coats of paint. Lynda suggested that the first coat should be primer.

Ken said since the village is not paying for it he does not think a motion is necessary, just consent from the board. Board members agreed that GiGi can paint the mill house. Ken asked her to make sure she gets permission from the selectboard.

19. Executive Session to Discuss Attorney Correspondence

BJ moved to enter executive session as permitted by 1 VSA 313(a)(1) to discuss correspondence from the village's attorney, Steve seconded and the motion was passed at 7:42.

BJ moved to leave executive session at 8:46, GiGi seconded and the motion was passed.

20. Adjourn

BJ moved to adjourn, Steve seconded, the motion was passed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:47.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths