

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, JUNE 4, 2018

**Present:**

Trustees: Gordon Smith, Walter Pomroy, Scott Meyer, Dave Goddette, Bob Sweetser  
Others: Meredith Birkett, Rosemary Audibert, Troy Dolan, Arjay West, Kyle Nuse

**Note:** All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

**1. *Call to Order***

Gordy called the meeting to order at 6:00.

**2. *Changes, Additions to Proposed Agenda***

Meredith said the 40 minutes on the agenda for appearances by citizens was accidentally carried over from the previous agenda and is not needed. She also added review of the proposed agenda for the upcoming joint selectboard-trustee meeting. Walter added action on appointments and salaries as authorized at the annual meeting.

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

Meredith said the previously approved April 23 minutes didn't include the motion that was made at that meeting to give Steve Edgerley \$2 more per hour between the time Tom left and June 1. She revised the minutes to include that motion. Walter moved to approve the amended minutes of April 23, 2018 and the minutes of May 14, May 15, and May 31, 2018, Bob seconded and the motion was passed.

**4. *Treasurer's Report/ Action Items/ Budget Status Report/ Review & Approve Bills and Warrants***

Rosemary noted that the \$5750 in revenue in the general budget is for the truck Utility Partners bought. Half is under general and half is under electric.

Walter asked why general printing and publishing is so high when we have our new machine. Rosemary said one reason is that we had to put the village meeting warning in the newspaper twice. Meredith said we had to buy some binding materials.

Rosemary said the preliminary grand list has been filed. The village's portion goes up by \$422,469, unless grievances bring it down, but it is still less than it was 2 years ago. Grievance hearings are scheduled for June 14.

**5. *Water/Wastewater Report and Action Items***

Meredith reviewed the Chief Operator's Report. All wastewater plant samples continue to meet high standards. Online reporting was done. There was one low air pressure alarm at the wastewater plant. A lot of work has been done on the belt press. Dan will keep troubleshooting it. Dan mentioned recently that Morrisville has a centrifuge and he has found that it uses a lot of energy and has high operation and maintenance costs. He has some other ideas about alternatives. Steve attended the Vermont Rural Water Association annual convention. There was one callout to Upper French Hill for a toilet backup. It was on the customer's line and not the collection system.

All samples taken at the water plant were good. There were no callouts. Water loss could not be reported due to not having meter reading results this early in the month. Steve is working on the monthly water report. That will transition to being his job.

A permanent person, Tim Hall, has been hired by Utility Partners to work at our plant. He will start full time on June 11.

Gordy asked if the transition to Utility Partners seems to be going okay. Meredith said yes.

**6. Foreman Report and Action Items**

The contract tree crew started May 29 cutting danger trees around the substation. They will be doing right of way cutting on both feeders out of the sub throughout the next couple of months. Our crew has started cutting overgrown sections of the right of way on Gould Hill.

The payment was sent out for the 2012 Ram 5500 bucket truck. The truck will be completely serviced and have the required annual boom testing completed when it arrives. It will have a 30 day warranty and should be delivered in about 4 weeks.

The crew completed various Dig Safes, monthly meter readings and disconnects. A good portion of the last few weeks was spent sweeping sidewalks and side streets. At this point, Railroad Street and a small portion of Pearl Street still need to be completed. The crew helped the Tree Board plant an elm tree on Pearl Street. All crew members completed the required annual pole top and bucket rescue during this month's NEPPA safety meeting.

Troy completed two estimates for primary line extensions. He has been working with the contractor at Dollar General. The new service there should be completed by June 15.

Meredith and Troy have been working with the contract engineer related to the solar array at Johnson Farm & Garden. It has been determined that a 50 kVA voltage regulator will need to be installed between the end of the 3 phase near Laraway School and Foote Brook Road. Troy has reached out to Consolidated Communications for a required pole replacement one span back from the beginning of Foote Brook. Alan Lehouillier is in the process of ordering the regulator specified by our engineer. Meredith said our attorney has drafted an amendment to the interconnection agreement concerning this new piece of equipment. Alan Lehouillier will be responsible for covering any costs we have related to the regulator.

Meredith said upon further review it turns out we can't change the line extension policy as we had hoped. She will research whether there is any flexibility for us to change it at all.

**7. Village Manager Report and Action Items**

Meredith said the grant application for funding from VTrans' Small Scale Project program for the reconstruction of the Pearl Street sidewalk requires a letter of support from the trustees acknowledging the village's willingness to provide the local match and future maintenance responsibility. She showed the board a draft letter of support. She also showed the board the site plan for the sidewalk project. The plan calls for a portion of new sidewalk with curb. North of the intersection with School Street there would be new sidewalk without curbing and on the east side of the road there would be some restoration of the green strip that has been eliminated.

Gordy suggested that Meredith reach out to Kathy Black and Joe Salerno as a courtesy to let them know about our plans so they can have input. Meredith said she talked to Joe Salerno today. He advocated for a curb in front of his house to help the green strip stay nice. She said she would have to look to make sure a curb wouldn't direct water away from the catch basins.

Walter asked if we have to follow the site plan if we get grant funding. Meredith said she thinks we could make small adjustments, such as where we put curbing. Maybe we should assume we will put in curbing the whole way and then possibly adjust that plan if necessary. We need to check that curbing will work with the existing stormwater infrastructure.

Gordy suggested contacting the Studio Center as a courtesy. Meredith said she will call Jim MacDowell.

Walter asked about the price estimates. Meredith said they are the state prices from 2014 increased by 3% a year, plus a 25% buffer for traffic control, site prep, etc.

Scott suggested putting out information about how many linear feet of sidewalk the project will involve and how much it will cost. People often ask why we do not put in additional sidewalks. It would be helpful to show them the cost of sidewalk.

**Walter moved to sign the letter dated June 4, 2014 in support of the application to the VTrans Small Scale Project program. The motion was seconded and passed.**

Phillip Kaiser has submitted an excess water usage billing adjustment request for the building owned by Lamoille County Mental Health at 120 VT 100C. He sent a letter saying that he checked for leaks and found none. He will continue to watch for leaks. He can't confirm that the problem was corrected because he hasn't found the problem. This is similar to the request from Jinny Bogni-LeMay in that the property owner cannot explain the spike in usage. Our policy indicates we want to see proof that the problem was fixed.

Walter said we don't know if the water went into the sewer. And property owners only get one billing adjustment per year. If they don't know what caused the high usage their next bill could be high too.

Meredith said we could offer a payment plan as we did for Jinny Bogni-LeMay.

Walter said we have to assume the water went into the sewer since we don't know, so we can't adjust the sewer bill. Walter moved to adjust the May water bill for 120 VT 100C to \$192.06 (the average of the last 3 months' bills multiplied by 3.) Gordy asked what justification there is for offering an adjustment, compared to Jinny Bogni-LeMay's situation. We didn't adjust her bill. Walter agreed that we need to be consistent. He withdrew his motion.

**Walter moved not to approve the excess usage billing adjustment request submitted by Phillip Kaiser, based on the village's policy, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Walter moved to allow the May water bill for 120 VT 100C to be paid over 3 months, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

Meredith said she adjusted the budgets based on actuals through the end of May and on new knowledge such as the Utility Partners contract. She reviewed changes she had made to the wastewater budget.

The budget initially included a transfer of \$52,346 from the reserve fund. She reduced that to \$37,937. She increased insurance revenue to include reimbursement for flood expenses and the accident with the water and sewer truck. She included the \$1000 from the sale of the compost windrow turner. She reduced salaries and benefits based on actuals. She increased the amount of Water & Light Department staff time for the collection system because they will be doing more collection system work. She changed CTO and holiday pay based on actuals and included the 75% of Steve's accrued time that will be paid out this week. Tom's payout is included as well. She may need to add CTO for administrative staff. Social security and retirement have gone down due to salary decreases. She removed Tom's and Steve's insurance costs for the rest of the year. She did not include any expense for uniforms beyond actuals from January through May. She also did not include any professional training and education expense beyond what has already been incurred. She reduced the amount for contracted outside service. She included the cost of the merger study but removed the money that had been in there for a preliminary engineering report we were going to do but decided not to move forward with. She reduced phone costs as we will no longer have to pay for cell phones for Tom and Steve..

Scott asked how we are dealing with passwords. Do employees have to log onto anything with a password? Meredith said she hasn't taken Steve's email back yet. Once he transitions to a new email address we will cancel his old one. She has to talk to Larry about how to preserve the emails.

Walter asked if Utility Partners emails are subject to open records law. Meredith said not emails sent among Utility Partners employees but if they email her or another staff member they are. It is up to us, not them, to retain the emails.

Gordy asked if Tom still has any access here. Meredith said we haven't changed the locks or anything. Gordy said when someone leaves we should have a policy of taking back keys, etc. Meredith said we took keys back but haven't changed anything. Maybe it would be wise to rekey things. Troy said locks were changed at the garage.

Gordy asked if anything was ever done about providing a KnoxBox for the town and village buildings. Troy and Meredith said not that they know of. Gordy said maybe we could suggest that to Arjay tonight.

Meredith said there was a day someone needed to get into the fire station and she had to track down someone with a key. We don't have one. Gordy and Dave agreed there should be a key at the municipal building.

Meredith said she reduced insurance costs slightly related to removing the pickup. She did not include any workers' comp savings. We can't count those this year. Outside contracted services was increased due to flood-related expenses and the Utility Partners contract. Outside repairs and parts was increased due to flood-related expenses, the truck accident and the PLC repair. She reduced purchases for the current year. We had budgeted for half a future pickup and submersible pumps. She removed the pumps because she doesn't think we will have the capacity to do that project this year. She thinks we should focus on the SCADA and PLC replacement.

The new budget draft is balanced. We still have to borrow \$38K from the reserve fund to cover some big ticket items. Meredith has to make one adjustment related to CTO and holiday pay. She

thinks she only put in Tom's and Steve's accrued time. So we would have to increase the amount taken from the reserve fund a little to keep the budget balanced.

Meredith reviewed the revised water budget. She lowered the capital reserve fund contribution to \$15,991. There is \$32,600 in revenue for the loan that will be forgiven that is paying for the asset management plan. There will be an offsetting expense. Plant operations and maintenance figures are based on January to May actuals. Distribution system labor is based on actuals plus additional Water & Light time. She will need to add in administrative CTO and holiday time expenses. Legal expense was increased based on actuals. She moved \$500 to computer support from another line. Outside contracted services went down. It includes money for the merger study. Cell phone costs were reduced. Under consultant services she added in expense for the asset management plan. The cost of the Utility Partners contract was added to outside contracted services. Distribution system maintenance expense was decreased because Meredith thinks we can do most of that work in house. Parts and supplies and outside repair work were increased. Money for a future truck purchase was taken out of the capital reserve fund.

Walter asked if the cost of contracted IT services we will find out about on Wednesday will affect the budget. Meredith thinks it might. The new cost for IT services will probably be higher.

Meredith reviewed the revised electric budget. She changed revenue to include income from the Transco sale we didn't know about when we budgeted. She adjusted the large commercial sales number for the loss of Parker & Stearns for half a year. Parker & Stearns currently offtake from the Gould Hill solar array but she didn't adjust for that because she assumes they will find a new offtaker. Gross tax revenue changed because she changed the sales figure. We are now only about \$86-87K over budget. The extra revenue helped.

Walter asked, there were no changes to payroll? Meredith said she put a little more of Troy's crew's time into water and sewer but didn't subtract time from the electric department because she is not sure how their time will actually shake out. Walter asked, so there is probably too much budgeted for payroll? Meredith said yes. That gives us some cushion.

The board agreed that Meredith and Rosemary should proceed with the revised budget as presented, including changes discussed tonight.

Dave said his family is relocating. The closing on his house in Johnson is this Friday. As of Friday, he will no longer be a resident of the Village of Johnson, so tonight he is submitting his letter of resignation as of this Friday. Gordy read the letter aloud.

**Walter moved and Bob seconded to regrettfully accept David Goddette's resignation effective June 8, 2018.** Gordy said Dave was an active volunteer firefighter for 17 years. He has been involved in activities such as the Brownfields study. He has been a big asset to the board and the community. Walter agreed that when he moves it will be a loss to the community. Bob thanked Dave on behalf of the board. **The motion was passed.**

The board agreed to ask anyone interested in being appointed to the board to submit a letter of interest before the July 9 meeting describing why they feel they would be an asset to the board.

Meredith said the board had previously discussed being able to read the letters in advance of the meeting. She suggested a deadline of July 2 for submitting letters.

Scott said he thinks there could be high turnout for the July 9 meeting. He doesn't want to have to cancel it for being above the capacity of the room. Dave said if the weather is nice it could be moved outside. Meredith said she would not expect attendance to be so high that it would be over the capacity for the upstairs room. It was agreed the meeting should be upstairs rather than in the office downstairs.

Walter suggested asking candidates to come to the July 9 meeting and talk for 5 minutes each. At that point the board can decide whether to have a special meeting to interview some candidates or have further discussion. The board agreed to that.

Meredith said she will post notices on Facebook and Front Porch Forum. Walter suggested trying to get an article in the News & Citizen. If we aren't able to, he would suggest placing an ad. Meredith said she can price out what an ad would be. She thinks it might be good idea to place an ad. Walter said the opening should be publicly posted as well as possible.

Walter said we will have both mundane decisions and big decisions to make with regard to the charter. How do we want to handle the big decisions, such as whether to go to a manager form of government or whether to change the charter to make treasurer an appointed position? Small decisions can be made pretty well by a committee. The area where we provide water and sewer service is bounded by the village boundary. Do we get rid of that? Walter asked how we want to appoint a charter committee and how big it should be. He said is happy to volunteer to be on the committee.

Scott said he thinks it has to be robust. The form based code committee had members that came and went. There were normally at least a dozen in the room. He thinks a dozen members would be good for this committee. Then if some leave we won't be down to 2 or 3 people trying to handle the load. He thought a dozen would be bit much for the form based code committee, but it was done well. They had a good facilitator and all got along even with differences.

Walter suggested that Meredith might want to call our lawyer for ideas. Meredith said we need to understand the legal process and timeline and the legal requirements. She suggested that the board revisit this topic in a month after she gets input from the attorney, then recruit for the charter committee after recruitment for the board position has been completed.

There was discussion about the fact that there will also be a merger committee. Meredith said we will have to make it clear why we have both committees and what the difference between them is. Walter said he feels we need to move forward with the charter, not knowing if the town and village will merge. If we do merge, the town could probably use the charter created for the village with a few things added. People will ask, why work on a charter if we might merge? He will say that if a merger happens the work can carry over to the town. Scott said the merger study will be done by a third party with no conflict of interest. He doesn't see the charter committee and the merger study getting too tangled up with each other.

Meredith said her goal would be to have the charter ready for the voters to approve at the next village annual meeting, then it would go to the legislature. Walter said he thinks that is optimistic.

Scott asked if we have had any interest in the charter committee yet. Meredith said no. The only person who talked to her about it was Dan Noyes, who asked to be kept in the loop and said he would put her in touch with the Legislative Council.

Meredith said she will get more information on the legal aspects of the charter for the July meeting and then the board can come up with a plan to advertise for committee members.

Arjay joined the meeting at 7:33. He reminded the board that the fire department put together a truck committee in October. They wrote a description of what they want the new truck to do. They asked 3 vendors to provide pricing and a design. One of them did not respond after getting our spec list. One said pricing would start at \$300K. The third vendor, Desorcic from St. Albans, is Arjay's preference. The fire department already has comfortable relationships with their salesman and service team. The committee has worked with them on several design revisions. Their original estimate was \$310K and it is now down to \$235K for a basic, stripped down truck that would meet the goals for crew capacity. With the \$20K donation the fire department received the committee looked at how they could improve the base model. They would like to add sliding windows in the rear for air movement, electric rewind reels for hydraulic extraction hoses instead of manual rewind, an extra heater in the back, air suspension, rear sway bars, two telescoping scene lights, and extra shelving and retractable trays. Those could be covered by the \$20K donation. They would also like to add a PTO-driven generator. That would cost about \$14K. The generator would have a retractable reel with electrical cord on it. It would allow the tower lights to have five times the output. Hydraulic tools are trending away from gas powered units. Currently the fire department has a gasoline motor that runs a hydraulic pump. Electric seems to be the trend. By having the generator we would have the opportunity to consider electric tools when replacements are needed. That style of generator is not something that can be added on after the truck is built. The firefighters agreed to take money out of the fundraising savings account to pay for the generator.

Arjay would like authorization to enter into final negotiations with Desorcic Emergency to purchase a truck at a cost not to exceed \$268K. The village's obligation would remain at \$235K. The fire department would prepay the donation amount and the amount from the fundraising account so the amount financed would be \$235K.

Gordy and Walter noted that the amounts Arjay had given add up to \$269K. Arjay said he thinks there is room to squeeze the vendor somewhat. He thinks the loan amount can be \$235K.

Gordy asked how long the capital plan calls for keeping this truck and when we would get it. Arjay said the truck is scheduled to be kept in service for 16 years. He thinks a build period of 8-10 months is likely.

Scott asked if it will be a diesel. Arjay said yes. Scott asked if it will have 4-wheel drive. Arjay said no. (*Kyle Nuse arrived at 7:47.*) Scott asked if the truck will have traction chains. Arjay said they opted not to get automatic chains. Many people told them there would be too many times when the

truck was going either too slow or too fast for them to work well. All the fire trucks have manual chains and the firefighter are in the habit of putting them on.

Walter asked, if the generator is added as part of the body, can it be accessed if it needs maintenance? Arjay said it can be accessed from the underside. Walter asked, can it be replaced? Will it last 16 years? Arjay said he does not believe it will be problematic. Many departments around us are using PTO-driven generators. Generators driven off fans with a belt are cheaper but they have been problematic. He has never heard of anyone in our area replacing a generator but our fire department has no experience with a PTO-driven generator. He does not feel it would be a maintenance headache. There are access panels inside to get to it.

Walter asked if there is any idea what we could get for the old truck as a trade in. Is there much value there? Arjay said one local department has an interest in it but he doesn't know if that will materialize. He thinks the \$17K figure in the plan is reasonable. Not many builders also sell trucks. The department usually has to sell them at used apparatus sales. The value of the old truck hasn't been part of the discussion about the cost of the new truck.

Walter said the amount to be spent on this truck has been increased but we haven't adjusted the amount for any of the others in the plan. Is the need to spend more a trend or is it just this one truck that needed to be beefier than expected? Arjay said he thinks both are true. The rescue truck needs to be multi-purpose so it presented more challenges than some other trucks will. The fire department has begun looking at its capital plan. They believe they will need to start making adjustments because the cost of trucks is outpacing the 2% inflationary factor. He thinks we need to begin to increase the buying power of the plan. He believes there will have be increases to make it sustainable.

Scott said sees lots of countertop space, which could allow the truck to be used for incident command. Arjay agreed. He described ideas about using tool boards and organizing storage.

Walter asked, are we able to get a PACIF grant to pay for any of this? Arjay said he doesn't see any available grants for the truck itself. The generator, the telescopic lights and the electronic hydraulic rewind all have safety benefits and might meet requirements for a PACIF grant. Meredith said PACIF grant applications usually have to be submitted in early spring. Last year they cancelled the second round but she can see if they will have one this year.

**Walter moved to authorize the fire department to negotiate a contract for an E-One fire truck at a cost not to exceed \$269,000 with the loan amount needed not to exceed \$235,000.**

Arjay said he thinks the contract can be drafted in about 3 weeks. The board could authorize someone to sign it before the next meeting. Walter said he would like to see the final contract.

**Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

Gordy suggested that the village could provide a one-page quarterly update to taxpayers about all the things we are doing. Dave suggested an email newsletter. It could be once a month but he thinks quarterly is a good start. He suggested including part of the information in the email and linking to full information on the town website. Scott said an email list would be a good way to get out information about things like boil water notices. Meredith said there is an existing Friends of Johnson email list that has not been used recently. She could try to resurrect it but she is not sure if

it was more of a town thing. Gordy and Dave recommended setting up a new list. Meredith suggested sending out a paper version for the first one, perhaps as an electric bill stuffer, and inviting people to sign up for an email list. Board members said some people will not use email. Walter said he thinks we need to send it out on paper quarterly. The question is who it should go to. Not everyone gets a water or electric bill. Meredith said we could ask the post office about mailing to all 911 addresses in the village. That would be a separate mailing we would have to pay for. Walter said he would prefer stuffing it into a bill.

Board members agreed sending out a quarterly update would be a good idea. They would like Meredith to send out a draft for review. Walter suggested that a couple of weeks before updates go out Meredith could ask board members for suggestions on things to include. Gordy suggested also asking for input from Troy, Arjay, Utility Partners and Rosemary.

Dave asked if Meredith has time for this. Proofing and reproofing can be time consuming. Gordy said he could proof it. Scott said it is only four times a year.

Meredith suggested sending it out the first month of each quarter and the board agreed.

**Walter moved to appoint Meredith Birkett as Water and Light Commissioner, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

**Walter moved to set compensation for trustee board members at \$1200 per year for the chair and \$1000 per year for other members, Scott seconded and the motion was passed.**

The board reviewed the proposed agenda for the joint selectboard-trustee meeting. Meredith said she and Brian both wanted to add discussion of the village charter.

Walter said we should have the photos from the study of the area around the Old Mill House for reference during the discussion about where Jim Rose is going to park. He noted that the proposed plans for that area included river access. Recent river bank erosion near the cold storage building did some of the work. He suggests making improvements to give us nice river access there.

Gordy asked Meredith to have information about traffic control costs during the ice jam flooding for the joint meeting.

Meredith said Brian had come up with some detailed questions we could ask the consultant to address in the merger study. She was thinking of something a little more broad. Maybe we will end up somewhere in between. Gordy said he thinks the study will have to be utility-oriented. Walter said we will evaluate bids based on the consultant's knowledge. Meredith said we will have to think about past experience on studies like this one vs. broad utility knowledge without experience specifically doing a merger study. Walter said he feels leaving the questions to be addressed by the consultant more open ended is better. We should just ask them to tell us what they will do and how they will do it. We need an outside point of view on how to look at it.

Meredith will ask Brian if he invited Jim Rose to the joint meeting; if not, we can.

Scott said it would be helpful to have a list of vacant properties in Johnson and whether there has been any interest in them for the joint meeting.

Scott asked what is next for the powerhouse after the Phase 2 assessment. Meredith said she thinks the assessment will give us enough information for a more public process. We will know what the assessment found and what mitigation efforts will likely be needed. The report we get may say that certain future uses would be hard to mitigate for. It might suggest potential future good uses. Maybe we can get quotes for dismantling the building once we know the sources of contamination. Walter suggested asking what we would have to do if we had to go into the building on an emergency basis.

Scott asked about the data gap analysis for the talc mill property that Meredith had mentioned in her written report. Meredith said a Phase 1 environmental assessment would be of the entire 195 acre parcel. When she and Brian Story participated in a conference call with LCPC staff, EPA staff, and VT DEC staff the whole group agreed that would be very costly and would include acreage not targeted for redevelopment. They agreed that data gap analysis would give us the information we need and would be more efficient than a formal Phase 1 assessment. The Brownfields Committee at LCPC will consider funding approval this month.

**Walter moved to enter executive session to discuss a personnel matter, inviting Troy and Meredith to remain, seconded by Bob.**

Kyle said she had hoped to hear the discussion on trustee recruitment. Meredith summarized for her what had been decided.

**The motion was passed and the board entered executive session at 8:35.** The board came out of executive session at 8:48.

**8. *Adjourn***

**It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 8:48 and the motion was passed.**

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*