

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026

Present:

Trustees: Will Jennison, Ellis O’Hear, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau (via Zoom), Darrell Wescom

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Arjay West, Craig Carpenter

Note: All votes taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

1. Call to Order

BJ called the meeting to order at 6:00.

2. The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge was recited.

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

BJ added an update on employee CDL training.

4. Review and Approve Minutes of Trustee Meetings

Will moved to approve the minutes of December 8, 2025, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.

5. Fire Department Report and Any Action Items

Arjay read the fire department report:

Johnson Fire Department Report

Nov. 28 – Dec. 25, 2025

JFD responded to 13 calls. 7 calls occurred during the daytime (6 am - 6 pm) and 6 calls occurred during the nighttime (6 pm - 6 am.) The average duration was: 82 minutes

Nature:

Those calls were: 1 – automatic alarm, 4 – vehicle crashes, 2 – CO alarms, 1 – medical assist, 2 – chimney fires, 1 – mutual aid (structure fire), and 2 – agency assist (LCSO: debris removal after car crash & traffic control for tree in roadway)

Staff:

The average number of firefighters that responded was: 11

Total hours of service was: 170

Other:

We participated in the Johnson Jubilee with a decorated fire truck. Thank you to the firefighters who volunteered their time for this event.

6. Johnson Fire Department Budget Presentation and Approval Vote

Fire chief Arjay West presented the fire department’s proposed budget for 2026. He reduced the amount of billable calls revenue because it was not high in 2025 and he didn’t want to overestimate it. The Vermont minimum wage is going up to \$14.42. Firefighters currently get \$14.50. Historically the board has tried to keep pay above minimum wage by about 50 cents. He would like to ask for a 50 cent per hour raise effective January 1. The estimated cost of that increase is \$1200-1500. It is proposed to increase the amount budgeted for payroll by \$2K. As

wages increase, social security contributions, etc. will increase as well. There is no change in the amount budgeted for insurance. There were minor increases or decreases to some budget items. Electricity expense was reduced to be more in line with year end projections for this year. The price at the pump for fuel and oil for vehicles has gone down somewhat. In 2025 there was an unexpected breakdown with an EGR valve in an International engine. If that cost is subtracted, maintenance costs were close to budget. The amount budgeted for maintenance was increased by \$450 for 2026. There is a predetermined 3.75% growth in the contribution to the capital truck plan and 3% growth in the contribution to the small tools capital plan.

The total proposed budget is \$206,497, an increase of 2.5% or \$5,077. If the board wants the village and the 3 towns served to share equally in the increase, each would see an increase of 2.75%. Historically the board has wanted no growth in the village contribution. If that is the case, then the towns of Johnson, Waterville and Belvidere will each have 3.75% increases and the village will have no increase.

Ken moved to increase pay by 50 cents per hour for 2026 for all Johnson Fire Department staff, Ellis seconded and the motion was passed with Will abstaining.

Will moved to approve a 2026 budget of \$206,497.83 for the Johnson Fire Department, with 3.75% increases in the amount paid by the towns of Johnson, Waterville and Belvidere, Ken seconded and the motion was passed.

Ken said he has talked to Arjay about planning for building improvements and repairs at the fire station so the cost doesn't hit only the village. He thinks we should ask the voters to allow the fire department to fund a reserve fund for building improvements and repair reserve. It would need to be an article on the annual village meeting warning. He thought the board could discuss this in more depth when he is there in person. Erik said we could put a line item in the budget for this and call it a reserve but it will not truly be a reserve fund until it is approved by the voters.

Will suggested we should let the contract towns know that if this article is passed the budget will increase a little. He feels it would be difficult to add it on top of our budget this year. We should let the voters plan for it. Ken said he is not thinking of a large contribution and he doesn't think Arjay is either.

Will moved and Darrell seconded to start a building maintenance and upgrade capital reserve fund to be approved by the voters.

It was agreed that there will be a future conversation about how much is needed as a contribution to the fund. Arjay said he will be sending the towns a cover letter along with the contract, offering to attend a meeting if they want him to. Ken suggested including the information that we will be asking the voters to establish this fund. Erik suggested waiting until after the article is approved and then letting them know it was approved and how much will be put into it.

The motion was passed.

Ken asked Arjay if there have been any other delays with the new fire truck. Arjay said communication with Allegiance is currently difficult. Craig said the hope is for the cab and chassis to be built in April. The truck may be on the build schedule at E-One in late April. If that works out, it is possible that we will have the truck in September or early October. It all hinges on when the cab and chassis arrive.

Darrell suggested looking into using a different dealer than Allegiance for the next truck. Arjay agreed with that idea. He said typically the fire department has purchased a whole package through a body builder, but this time the best strategy was for the village to buy the cab and chassis to get ahead of any standards changes. One method to get away from Allegiance would be to buy a package with the builder again.

Darrel asked if the contract included a delivery date. Arjay said he doesn't believe we had anything in writing. We had an expectation from a previous salesman, but there are new people working there now. We know International has the build drawings done. Craig said we were planning on a 3-year build cycle and if we get the truck this fall it will actually be a year ahead of what was planned.

Arjay said Western Star and Charlebois are other options. Western Star doesn't have an emergency responder package. Being able to buy something off the shelf was important because of budget constraints.

Ken thanked all the firefighters for what they do. Will said at their last meeting the fire department gave out pins totaling 105 years of service.

7. ***Treasurer's Report: Bills & Warrants, Budget Status Report, Action Items***

Rosemary handed out the budget status report. It is about 90% complete. With the orders signed tonight it will be closer to 99% complete. We will contact Waterville again about their late fire service payment. Will brought up the over-budget expenditure on sidewalks.

BJ asked if Rosemary has looked into higher interest options for our bank accounts. Rosemary said she has not had a chance yet.

Rosemary said she will start trying to go through one or two of the boxes of records returned from SecurShred each day. The majority probably can be thrown away. Eric said the vast majority are dry. The one BJ checked was the worst. Rosemary will wear a mask and gloves when dealing with ones that have mold. At least 80% of the records belong to the town.

BJ said he doesn't like the idea of Rosemary going through moldy records. He would rather have someone else do it besides our staff but there is probably nothing else we can do. Ken said he talked to Eben Patch about the boxes. Eben is supposed to talk to the selectboard about what approach they want to take. There is probably a lot of mold there even if we can't see it. A lot of the records could potentially be digitized. They could be handled by people who are trained to do this in a ventilated area and disposed of in a secure shredder. Rosemary said the selectboard did not discuss the boxes at their last meeting.

Erik asked if Rosemary can tell how many of the boxes are the town's and how many are the village's without opening them. Rosemary said no. Erik said there will be a bill for digitizing the records and it needs to be proportionate, not 50-50.

Rosemary asked, why digitize records we don't want to keep? She needs to see what is in the boxes to know whether it needs to be kept. Erik said there is a trade-off between money and safety. For safety, we could spend more money and digitize some records we don't need.

Will asked if there is someone from the state who can say how safe it is for Rosemary to look at the records. Ken said he is certain they will say to test them.

The board agreed that Ken, Rosemary and Erik should look into safety and cost of the different options.

8. *Discuss Succession Plan for the Village Clerk & Treasurer Position(s)*

Erik had drafted an ad for the clerk/treasurer position. Ken said he spoke to Eben Patch about the idea of the village paying for the town clerk to perform the village clerk duties. Eben did not see a problem with that. It is a small job, mostly elections. Rosemary said one thing she has a concern about is who will determine who should be on the village checklist based on street address.

There was discussion about advertising for a treasurer and using the town clerk initially, while training the village treasurer to handle the village clerk duties eventually. Rosemary said she doesn't think the clerk work would be even an hour a week.

BJ asked if the treasurer should be a CPA. Erik said they should at least have deep public bookkeeping experience. Will said he thinks experience is more important than certification.

It was agreed that Erik will rewrite the advertisement as just a treasurer position and send it back out to board members.

Ken said if we are going to have a full-time treasurer we won't need an assistant treasurer. Rosemary said there should be someone else who can sign checks if the treasurer is out. She thinks the treasurer position could be 30 hours a week. The assistant position could probably be 20 hours. She thinks we will need an assistant treasurer. Erik said the person who signs checks can't do bank reconciliations. Darrell asked if we would have one full-time person and one part-time. Ken said that is what he is thinking. Erik said we don't have to hire an assistant now. We want the new treasurer to overlap with Rosemary. Rosemary will be here full-time until the end of June. He is thinking of May 1 as a start date.

9. *Village Manager's Report and Any Action Items*

Erik read his report:

Water & Light Garage Project Update:

The new Water & Light garage is progressing quickly. Inside & out it looks like a building. There is a delay in the overhead door delivery date, but Millbrook says that is not a critical path for substantial completion. The Fire Protection contractor is running late, and that may or may not create an issue with the completion date, depending on when they can get here.

DR4720 FEMA WWTF Project Update:

The FEMA CRC still has not come back with a 428 offer. We meet tomorrow morning and I am going to make it extremely clear that we need this info immediately.

WTF Generator Update:

The Bond Bank emailed me Friday afternoon with Good News: Our SCRP Tier 2 grant was approved! Not only was it approved, but to make administration more streamlined, they just combined it with the original grant for a total sum of \$104,857.00, which covers the entire cost to install the new generator and propane tanks. Of course, these things are a paperwork process, and they don't expect the funds to be released until sometime in February.

The GRID grant is still being worked on. I've never seen a grant with so much post-award paperwork. I and most of the other VPPSA utilities are working with John Abbott of VPPSA to finish those up and get them executed.

I will be off on Friday & the Village will be observing MLK Day on Monday.

10. Water/Wastewater Report and Any Action Items

Erik read the report submitted by Dan Copp:

Operational Status of Wastewater Plant and Callouts

- E-DMR's and Wr-43's were submitted to the State
- We hauled 72 thousand gallons of sludge to Morrisville for processing in November
- Monthly Composite testing completed
- Manosh completed scheduled Grit channel cleaning
- Tim and Luke assisted the village water and light crew with replacing the overflow float at the main street syphon float was then tested and is now working as it should
- When changing the float at the syphon we found it plugged and overflowing, Manosh came and jetted. Twice again over the course of the remainder of the month with checking on it we found it partially plugged. The last time we jetted there was a decent sized "root ball" came through.
- Perhaps the conversation of customers that are having their services jetted should first contact the village office and let them know to avoid heavy root balls, grease, and rags put into the system, just a suggestion
- County oil never came back to check the glycol in the heating system at the water plant, so at the suggestion of Nate we contacted B&D plumbing and heating, they responded that day, tested the glycol level, added more to the system and fixed a T stat that was not working for the Modine in the Chemical Room

Operational status of Water Plant and Callouts

- Monthly reports were submitted to the state.
- Coliform samples were negative
- Add a gallon of coolant to the water plant generator. Contacted Corse fuels about the propane installation for the new Generator relayed the info to Erik.

- With the cold Weather we have been checking meter houses in Katy Winn on a weekly basis, driving through on days when the temperature is below zero and checking for outside red lights, replaced one backup heater in meter house #1
- Brookfield Generator contacted Tim about the generator project at the water plant, he indicated to them that the process is in motion and were waiting to hear on grant, when we know, he will know
- Water Loss was 7%.

11. Electric/General Report and Any Action Items

Erik read the report submitted by Nate Brigham:

Electric Dept. –

Outage at 21 River Rod West, blown fuse 4 customers out

Did the Demand meter inventory for ordering of new meters

Guy wire hit by truck across for the Woolen Mills no damage to pole

DCUs arrived

Cut tree off the lines at 854 Gould Hill Rd, no outages

Did line patrol after ice/wind storm

Attended bi-weekly meetings for Shop

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

Water/Sewer -

Manosh cleaned sewer mains in village

Pulled meter and shut off water at 289 Wescom Rd for buy out

Shut off water and pulled meter at 37 Clay hill Rd for winter

Replaced float at the Syphon chamber. Manosh jetted the 6” side and unplugged it three times due to a root ball and a lot of flushable wipes

Frozen water at 679 Rt 100c, Not Villages

Frozen water at 198 Katywin Rd, replaced back flow preventor

Frozen water at 312 West Highland Dr, Not Villages

Assisted with a Fire flow test on Pearl St for the Studio Center

General Dept. –

Picked up snow 3 times

Plowed and Sanded as needed

Safety –

NEPPA safety training has been set up for the year in conjunction with Morrisville, Stowe, Hardwick, and Hyde Park

Ken said asked if a bill was sent to Comcast for the shared pole that was hit. Erik said first it goes to the insurance of the vehicle operator. Ken said if Erik isn't able to get information about the insurer we should move forward with a shared cost invoice to Comcast for the pole.

Ken said the Studio Center should be notified in person and in writing about rags plugging the line so they stop doing that. Erik said we put a full one page flyer in the last billing cycle with all the things people should not flush.

12. Update on Minutes Being Put Back on Website

Donna said she found that the old minutes were not actually on the website; the links were there but they did not work. So she uploaded all the minutes she had. Some are missing – for instance, the manager often took minutes for short special meetings and Donna does not have those. She does not have old agendas. Erik said he is not sure there is a retention issue for agendas. BJ said it is helpful to be able to look at agendas to see when a particular topic was discussed.

13. Review and Possible Adoption of Revised Official Vehicle Policy

The board reviewed the revised policy. BJ said the section for employees says no one other than a village employee can be in the car but it doesn't say the same thing in the village manager section. Erik said there are reasons why he might want to have someone other than a village employee in the car. It could be a state employee, for instance. BJ said he thinks the policy should say something about only business-related passengers being in the car. Ellis said he thinks that is too petty. Ken said he doesn't really care either way. Will said the policy says there is no personal use of the vehicle. He thinks that covers non-business passengers.

BJ brought up the section that says that commuting for the village manager can include stops for things like hunting or athletic pursuits that are not more than 25 miles off-route. Erik said that is all part of what was negotiated for his contract. BJ asked, the 25 miles is round trip, not one-way, right? Erik said yes. BJ said the contract doesn't say that. He feels things like hunting are personal use. Erik said his contract says the village will provide the manager a vehicle for official use and personal use as outlined in the Office Vehicle Use Policy. During negotiations, two board members said they would love to see a deer strapped to that car. Ken said this allows Erik to stop on his way home to go hunting without having to go home first and drive back out. BJ said athletics, etc. seems like personal use. Erik said the gym is almost on his way home and there are hunting spots near here. BJ said this allows the manager to do things that are not allowed for other employees. Other board members said it is in Erik's contract. BJ asked if the contract says Erik can use the car to go hunting or to sports activities. Erik said no, but he and the board developed the contract together and developed the policy with the contract in mind. BJ said he doesn't like the wording. He would like to change it so it makes sense. This allows

Erik to do whatever he wants with the car anywhere that is within 25 miles of his commute. Ken said the policy refers to him stopping on the way home. BJ said he feels the wording opens it up to Erik doing whatever he wants. Erik said it allows him to make “normal and customary stops that don’t exceed 25 miles off-route.”

Darrell said he thinks the policy should say there can be no alcohol or use of alcohol in the vehicle. Will said it says the vehicle can’t be used in violation of traffic laws. An open container of alcohol would be a traffic law violation.

Will moved and Ken seconded to adopt the revised Village Manager’s Official Vehicle use Policy as written. BJ asked for clarification on what “25 miles off-route” means. Erik said that is total miles both ways. **The motion was passed with BJ opposed.**

14. Employee CDL Training

BJ asked for an update on Jeff’s CDL training and testing. Erik said he has to retest. The class he took is not recognized by the state. His permit expired. We will get him signed up for driver training.

Darrell asked if we could have existing employees train others as they do where he works. Erik said we used to be able to do that, but now it is only possible for larger employers that have the means to get people certified for specific driver training.

Darrell asked how much the course costs - \$6-8K? Erik said he thinks he has seen courses for about half that. Jeff doesn’t need a full course. Darrell asked how much money we wasted having Jeff take the course that was not recognized. Erik said the course was free. Ken said we wasted a year of time.

Ken said Erik should contact VTrans himself to ensure that Jeff meets their requirements.

15. Other Business

Ken asked if the 2026 flag policy has been implemented. Erik said the policy is set, but he still needs to purchase the tricentennial flags.

There was discussion about how much time Jeff will need to spend on CDL training. Ken said he thinks he should sign up for the minimal amount of training he needs to drive our truck.

16. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34.