

JOHNSON VILLAGE TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JOHNSON WATER & LIGHT GARAGE, 663 RAILROAD ST and  
JOHNSON MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2026

**Present:**

Trustees: Will Jennison, Ellis O’Hear, BJ Putvain, Ken Tourangeau, Darrell Wescom

Others: Erik Bailey, Rosemary Audibert, Ashley Isabell, Cynthia Hennard, Diane Lehouiller, Laurel Persico, Diana Osborn, Gordon Smith

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

**1. Board of Trustees Tour of the W&L Garage Construction Project**

Starting at 5:30, the village trustees toured the water and light garage, which is nearing the end of construction. Present were Erik Bailey, Jeff Parsons, Nate Brigham, and general contractor Dave Pratt.

**2. Call to Order – Municipal Building**

Ken called the meeting to order at 6:11

**3. The Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge was recited.

**4. Review of Agenda and Any Adjustments, Changes and Additions**

The treasurer's report was removed from the agenda.

**5. Executive Session to Interview Village Treasurer Candidate**

**BJ moved to enter executive session as allowed by 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee for the purpose of interviewing a village treasurer candidate, with Erik, Rosemary, and Ashley Isabell invited. Will seconded and the motion was passed at 6:13.** Ken said he would run the meeting but would recuse himself from any votes on the candidate.

The board came out of executive session at 7:08 with no action taken

**6. Members of the Public**

No members of the public wished to comment.

**7. Update on Heroes Banners Project Timeline**

Erik said he has gotten five or six applications so far. Ken suggested taking action on the ones we have received so we can have them up by Memorial Day.

Rosemary said we have gotten \$2,600 in donations for the banners. We will send thank you letters to the donors.

The board agreed that Erik should order banners for the applications we have received.

BJ said he would like to see a resident’s picture as an example on the brochure. Erik said he will use Tom Carney.

Will asked if there is a time frame for when we will open applications up to all veterans, not just those who are living, if we haven't yet received 14 applications. Ken said his opinion is that it should be open to all veterans from the start.

**8. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Electric Budget and Possible Loan/Bond Request**

Erik reviewed the electric department budget, beginning with revenues. He budgeted less for merchandising and jobbing this year than last year because he does not expect the amount to be as high. The budget in past years has included deferred revenue for an upgrade job on Route 100C but that work was completed last year, so that line went to zero. Mutual aid revenue will be down because Morrisville is running Hyde Park electric now.

Erik noted that the amount of the bond that will be requested is now \$291,500 rather than \$415,000. Our payments on that would be about \$62,000 a year.

Erik budgeted 2.35% less than last year for all electric sales figures due to load predictions.

This budget has about \$160,000 less in revenue than last year's actual revenue.

Ken asked why the money for the 100C project should be considered revenue. Rosemary said in the year the project is done it has to be shown as revenue. There is also a corresponding expense in the budget. Erik said we have been planning on doing this project for some time so we put the amount in the budget every year, but it didn't get done until last year.

Erik said he zeroed out the capital reserve contributions in this budget, against his beliefs and the beliefs of most of the board.

Erik noted that in the previous version of the budget, purchased power cost figures were incorrect. The numbers were basically right but weren't in the right columns. This budget has almost \$100,000 more in transmission expense than last year and \$344,500 more in purchased power expense than 2024. Just the power purchase expenses and the reduced income account for about \$259,000 of the gap between revenue and expenses.

Erik found a calculation error he had made in building the budget. In the previous version of the budget he had \$134,000 in miscellaneous labor. He had trouble rectifying the total labor cost for the electric department with the total of all the different labor lines it was broken down into. But he redid it last week and it worked out right. He doesn't know where the error was. When he was unable to make it rectify, he put \$134K into miscellaneous labor in order to account for all the labor and not come up short.

The budget includes \$8,000 for work on the R4 station. Erik added money to pay for either contracted help or additional office staff for AMI implementation.

Darrell asked what the \$50,000 office expense is. Rosemary said that line item is a catch-all for various office expenses such as fuel bills, stamps and electricity.

Darrell said he is wondering if anyone has figured out the cost of sending out bills and putting time into mailing. He wonders if there is a cheaper way to bill people. Erik said we encourage online payments as much as we can, but we can't force it. He thinks a little more than half of customers do pay online.

BJ asked about what is budgeted for outside services. Do we have to pay for AMI training? Erik said no; that is in case he needs extra people to help with AMI implementation or if we need to hire a part-time office person to help. BJ said we had talked about the cost of a part-time employee being \$30-40K, but this line is \$70K. Erik said there are other costs associated with an employee. Rosemary said the line also includes other expenses like attorney fees.

The budget includes the payment on the loan for the small bucket truck. We borrowed \$119,000, which was less than the amount the voters authorized. At the 2024 annual meeting we asked for authorization to borrow \$330,000 for the same reasons we asked to borrow \$415K at this year's annual meeting. That was authorized by the voters, but we did not need to borrow the money so we did not.

Will asked what VPPSA is saying about a rate increase request. Erik said they are waiting until our auditors finish the 2025 audit. They won't look at the finances until then.

Will said people are asking him about the future of small municipal power. His understanding is that all the bigger utilities are also asking for increases this year. It looks like we will still be in the middle of the pack as far as cost per unit. Erik said all the VPPSA utilities are asking for increases this year.

Erik said the power market is like the stock market. It takes highly trained analysts to give their best guess where it will go. He showed forecasted power costs compared to actual costs for this year so far. One month the actual cost was lower than the forecast, one month it was higher and one month it was close to the forecast. The actual cost depends on weather events and where and when they hit us and our resources. We are part owners in several power producing resources. The big cold snap in January cost us about \$50,000 in excess power, but some resources we are part owners in made us \$150,000, so we ended up saving money in January. We are still ahead of the game for the year. Will said July could turn us upside down. Erik agreed. Erik said we were 42% under budget in January for power supply charges, 14% over budget in February and 4% over budget in March.

Will said some people are concerned about the \$300,000 the board previously asked the voters to approve borrowing. His understanding was that that was requested as a buffer and we did not use it. Erik said that is right. Ken said the only bond in the last 6 years was \$119,000 for the bucket truck. Will said the \$300,000 starting a trend is a big concern he has heard. But that was not borrowed. The \$415,000 we wanted to borrow has been reduced to \$291,500. Erik said part of that reduction is due to zeroing out outside contracting for tree trimming.

There was discussion about whether the voters will need to approve borrowing and what type of vote will be needed to borrow. Rosemary said she believes we need voter approval but the vote can be a floor vote.

Will asked if borrowing \$62,000 for 5 years is reasonable with the increase we plan to request. Erik said the analysis for the increase would factor in borrowing \$291,500 if the voters approve that.

Will said he understands that the \$291,500 may or may not be used, similar to the \$300,000 we got approval to borrow before. That \$300,000 was not borrowed and does not come into play as debt. We brought our numbers down for this year. The board and the manager intend to do all we can to mitigate the money we are requesting.

Cynthia Hennard said she missed the first part of the meeting and asked if there was a breakdown of why there is less revenue this year than the year before. Erik reviewed that information.

Laurel Persico asked if it is in the budget to get a backfeed from Green Mountain Power. Erik said that is not in the budget. He is looking for grant money to support that. Ken said that will be expensive.

Laurel asked, our power comes from Morrisville? Erik said it comes from that direction but only some of the power is generated in Morrisville. Ken said our feed comes from the substation on 100C. That is the main line. There is another line by the old mill. Laurel asked where the transmission line below her house comes from. Gordy said it comes from Fairfax to Cambridge to Johnson and goes to Lowell.

Gordy said we looked into a physical connection with Green Mountain Power, but we were going to be charged over \$100,000 even if we didn't use it and if we did use it we would be charged even more.

Gordy said one message he got from the last meeting was that quite a few people would have voted for the bond if there had been better communication. One thing that would be nice to know is what our average cost per kilowatt is and how that compares to other utilities. It would show that we are roughly in the middle.

Ken said communication is a two-way street. No one comes to ask questions when the board is working on the budget. Will said every board member got voted in because people trusted them to do the job. Citizens shouldn't have to come to a meeting if they trust the board members, but if there are concerns they can come to a meeting and see the process. He encouraged people to come and listen if there is something on the agenda they are interested in. He said that from now on information meetings will be after work hours and will be warned in multiple locations.

Gordy asked if the village can get out information about the average amount of time VOJ customers are without power. Erik said our reliability is unmatched except possibly for Burlington.

Erik showed average bills from different utilities in Vermont.

Gordy suggested that the board could have Erik write up a summary of each board meeting in a way the average person could understand. What would it cost to put that into electric bills? Ken said we often are unable to put anything in electric bills because the state or VPPSA or power authorities require us to put something in. Erik said extra postage cost money so we put in only as much as we can with a single stamp. Will suggested a meeting summary could be put on the

counter at the municipal building for people to pick up. BJ said we can also post it on social media and on the website.

Gordy said some customers say they have no voice if they live outside the village. They do have a voice if they come to a trustee board meeting or send an email to the trustees. He suggested that the board get that message out. Ken said we don't ask the voters to approve the electric department budget at the annual meeting. All people outside the village have to do is come to a meeting and the board will listen to them.

Laurel noted that rents in the budget are going up. She asked if that is town orchestrated. Ken said the board asked Erik to raise the rents for the water and light department using village facilities. That rent is shown as revenue in the general department budget. Erik said the rent had not been changed since before he started work here. Ken said the water and light departments are funded by ratepayers only. Storm drains are taxpayer funded. We are charging utilities more in rent in order to cost taxpayers less. Will said the general department owns the garage and the utility pays for using it. Erik said the general department pays for electricity, water and sewer. Ken said Erik's salary is divided among the four enterprises: electric, water, sewer and general. Erik showed a breakdown of how much time employees spend working for each of the departments.

Laurel asked if the new treasurer and village clerk situation will change village taxes. Ken said it depends on whether any increased costs will equal the difference between what we pay Rosemary and what we will pay the new treasurer. Will said the transition will affect taxes but we are not sure how much or in which direction.

Laurel said on the treasurer's report it shows the balance on hand in 2025 was negative \$322,000 and the balance on hand this year was \$426,862. That is a \$90,000 difference. Did we lose \$90,000 last year?

Ken said we will have about \$159,500 less in revenue this year than we did in 2025. Laurel asked if we are going to continue to have that trend. Ken said he doesn't know. It depends on whether more houses get bought out, etc. Laurel said she is very aware of the village losing accounts. Diana Osborn said revenue from the college last year is shown as higher than the year before even though we are being told that the village is getting less revenue from the college. Ken said they rented out their apartments to Smugglers' Notch for the entire winter. Will said we didn't anticipate that.

Erik said we didn't have as much revenue as we thought we would in 2025, but spending was also lower than budget. At the end of the fiscal year, we were \$28,900 in the black.

Laurel said she is concerned about the electric department. Will said rightly so.

Will said the auditors are working on last year's finances. When they are done we will go to VPPSA and they will look at the numbers. Erik will work with them and they will recommend a rate increase to request. Ken and Erik are thinking of about 10%. Erik said 10-12%. Will said we are doing every step of the process to request an increase as fast as we can. Anyone can give Erik or Ken a call if they have questions.

Erik said we are working with VPPSA. There is a new commissioner of the Department of Public Service, Kerrick Johnson, who has a background in public power. The issues we have are not unique to us. All utilities are dealing with the same issues. He is working with VPPSA and with someone Kerrick Johnson brought on who is looking into our numbers.

Cynthia asked if the village will vote on borrowing on May 11. Ken said no. Rosemary said the vote must be warned at least 30 days ahead of time. Ken said our information meeting will be May 11.

**9. Executive Session – Attorney-Client Communications**

**BJ moved to enter executive session as allowed under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1) because the board of trustees has made a specific finding that premature general public knowledge about confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body would clearly place the Village of Johnson at a substantial disadvantage, Darrell seconded and the motion was passed.**

**10. Other Business**

The board decided to have a floor vote on borrowing on June 17. Rosemary said an informational meeting is not required for a floor vote. The trustees said they would like to have an informational meeting anyway on the night of their regular June meeting

**11. Executive Session – Attorney-Client Communications**

The board entered executive session with Erik Bailey remaining at 8:16.

The board came out of executive session at 8:43 with no action taken

**12. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*