

**VILLAGE OF EPHRAIM
VILLAGE BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 28, 2026 – 8:30 AM
9996 WATER STREET- EPHRAIM VILLAGE HALL**



Present: Rick Hoyerman, Matt Meacham, Carly Mulliken, Tim Nelson, and Ken Nelson – President.

Absent: None.

Staff: Brent Bristol -Village Administrator, Justin MacDonald – Fire Chief/Maintenance Manager, and Kim Roberts - Deputy Clerk.

Guests in person: Greg Straub (Keller, Inc.), Devin Wagner (Keller, Inc.), Journey Sikorsky (Quantum Technologies), and Jake Sikorsky (Quantum Technologies).

Guests Online: None.

1. **Call to Order:** K. Nelson called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.
2. **Quorum:** A quorum was present for the meeting.
3. **Administration:**
 - a. **On-site discussion with Keller Inc. and Quantum Technologies regarding potential for Village Hall improvements associated with Administration Building Project option discussions and long-term viability of Village Hall** for meetings. *This is a discussion-only topic; no action will be taken, and no virtual login will be available.*

Introductions were made between the Village Board and guests from Keller, Inc. and Quantum Technologies.

K. Nelson explained that, with options being discussed for the Administration building, it is important, from a planning perspective, to determine whether the Village Hall is the best option for a permanent location for all Village meetings. He noted that until 1983, the Village owned only one building: the Village Hall. The Village purchased and remodeled the Administration Building in 1983. Village meetings were moved from the Village Hall to the Administration Building at some point in 1984. Meetings were held at the Administration Building from approximately 1984 through March of 2020. The only reason meetings were moved back down to the Village was COVID and the resulting need for social distancing. The Village Hall was a space that provided ample space for social distancing. Meetings have stayed at the Village Hall since COVID.

K. Nelson briefly reviewed the options for the Administration Building, noting the current plan considers a meeting room large enough to accommodate Village meetings. There have been suggestions that the Village Hall should be made the permanent meeting space. The purpose of the meeting is to try to develop options to make the Village Hall the permanent meeting space by determining what improvements would need to be made in accessibility, space, and audio/video equipment.

T. Nelson expressed that he would like to keep meetings at the Village Hall and keep the Administration Building where it is. The Village Hall was always meant for municipal use. He expressed the desire to continue to be able to accommodate Village Hall rentals while improving electronics with permanent installation and better accessibility to the platform.

Mulliken stressed that it made more sense for meetings to be held at the Administrative office. She felt that changes to improve meetings at the Village Hall would change the vibe and the type of activities the hall would accommodate for rentals.

Meacham explained that the current audio/video system is a liability due to its inconsistent dependability. The audience cannot hear. He encouraged the Board to keep the look of the building

while improving accessibility. The improvements needed do not equate to a recording studio; rather, the audience at home and in attendance at the Village Hall do need to hear the meeting.

Hoyerman stated that the Board is not asking for any other administrative function to happen at the Village Hall other than the meetings. He did not want to intertwine the discussion of the Village Hall with the topics of time and employees. He stressed that the Village Hall is central to the identity of the Village; it is symbolic. The people's business should be done at the Village Hall; it should have an official use. He did not support extravagant solutions nor major transformations but supported permanent equipment. He cautioned against looking for a solution in search of a problem.

K. Nelson explained that the need is to look for options and debate them at another meeting. What impact would the options have on the historic building? How can the acoustics be improved? How can full committees be accommodated on the stage? He noted that Quantum has been trying to improve the acoustics since the system was installed.

Bristol discussed the hard surfaces in the Village Hall that impact acoustics. He explained the sacrifices that may be required for a permanent, hardwired audio-video system. He spoke to the amount of time it takes to set up, break down, and troubleshoot the current system. He explained that the current system had about \$25,000 invested into it and that the speakers are in their 4th or 5th location. The location of the speakers plays into the reverb issues. He stressed that whatever solution is developed, it has to be plug-and-play, easy to use for staff, and not require constant adjustments throughout meetings. Ideally, people speaking from the audience should be picked up audio-wise as well.

Devin Wagner of Keller Inc. noted that the Village Hall was a big, beautiful building. It has been used for meetings for years. He reviewed what he heard as the issues: Stage size and height, sound effects due to the size and cavernous shape of the hall, reliability issues with the current system, and challenges with the constant setting up and breaking down of the current system, which creates a situation in which it is challenging for the current system to work all the time perfectly.

Wagner explained that a hard-wired system would be easier to control. He discussed expectations of meeting rooms and how to meet those needs. The big challenge, he explained, is what we are comparing to. Are we comparing the expectation of the audio at the Village Hall to a new building or a remodel? Are we expecting it to perform like a new building or a little better with a remodel? He stressed that the hall is a huge room. He couldn't say it won't work, but there is likely to be code issues the State is going to require when you start changing the hall.

Greg Straub explained how the scope of work impacts code application. He noted that the front Village Hall bathrooms seemed to meet accessibility standards. The existing building maintains its code compliance depending on the scope of the project and the project cost. If the work commenced on something, then it has to be brought up to code.

Wagner discussed the intent of keeping the stage the same or if the desire was to change the shape. Based on that decision, code would be looked at and how changes would function with the walls surrounding the platform. He noted that the floor is beautiful but is a major factor in the acoustics. The addition of soft surfaces would be necessary to reduce the hard surfaces in the hall.

K. Nelson commented that before COVID, there was nothing online for meetings. Now the challenge is for both the audience and the people at home to hear the meeting adequately.

Hoyerman asked Straub if the Village Hall was currently in violation of any codes and if any changes were made, would the Village have to become more ADA compliant?

Straub replied yes, to some degree. Currently, the Village Hall is grandfathered regarding code as long as any work is considered level one improvements, which are one-for-one replacements that are allowed without increasing the ADA compliance. Once the space is changed beyond level one improvements, a percentage of construction costs gets put towards ADA compliance. He went into further detail, explaining that 20% of the cumulative construction cost would need to be put towards

ADA compliance. For example, if the Village Hall remodel cost \$100,000, then \$20,000 would have to be spent on ADA upgrades.

K. Nelson addressed that with regard to ADA accessibility, if someone parked in a handicap spot, they would need to get to the rear of the building and have someone on the inside of the building to send the elevator down. It cannot be called from the outside of the building.

Meacham further notes that the platform is not ADA accessible. He remarked that it may need to be lowered, but may not need expansion of space to fit more people. He suggested moving the speakers to make it easier for people to hear, but stressed that it doesn't need to be perfect.

T. Nelson stressed that Bristol had already explained that the speakers had been moved numerous times with the assistance of Quantum; it's easier said than done. If it were so easy, it would already be fixed. He explained that the wood floor was good for all the functions held at the hall.

Wagner asked the Board if they wanted the platform seating to remain in a straight row or in a "U" shape. This detail would be necessary in deciding if the platform needed to be expanded.

T. Nelson felt that a lower platform would be helpful in a "U" shape that only pushed out two to four feet (2'-4') on the ends. He noted it was a matter of opinion, but didn't want to destroy the hall as we know it. Further, he stressed that the stage was not original to the hall.

K. Nelson felt there was a tradeoff if they were to go with a permanent set up for the platform. If permanent equipment was installed, then the platform is lost and has to be secured. He wondered if there was a semi-permanent option.

Journey Sikorsky of Quantum Technologies said the sky is the limit when it comes to AV technology. A major factor is whether the equipment will be hard-wired or temporary. How the platform is designed will impact the design for AV. He stressed that it is hard to design for everyone and that core limitations (floor and room acoustics) with the current equipment may continue to be core issues and challenges.

K. Nelson noted the Village was very proud of the floor. The Norwegin folk paintings paneling was completed in 2003. He asked the Board if they all could agree to no carpet or wall changes.

Mulliken felt that there had been enough advances in sound-dampening materials that could be explored if more needed to be done.

Meacham stressed for Bristol and Village staff reliability of the system is essential. He revisited meetings when the system had not worked, causing delays and rescheduling of a meeting.

Hoyerman felt the focus should be on what improvements should be made to make the building as useful as possible.

Mulliken worried about the Village Hall becoming a whole other Capital Project with large scope creep.

Hoyerman added that the Village needs to think about keeping its buildings code compliant.

K. Nelson suggested that once the Administration Building is completed, another Capital Project could be started. A Village Hall project could make the hall more attractive to more groups. He stressed that he did not want to sacrifice the platform.

Bristol explained that a layout change to the platform would impact the AV design. He discussed that the wireless gooseneck microphones were maxed out in function. Ideally, permanent solutions without individual microphones would boost audio without introducing more background operations.

Sikorsky noted that technology has changed in function and usability. He provided an estimated overview of technology needed to improve the Village Hall AV system: Network boxes, digital sound processor with echo cancelling, individual microphones, and speakers. He stressed that the echo cancelling would be very important.

Bristol reminded Sikorsky that the original sound processors installed at the Village Hall caused delays. He asked if technology has improved.

T. Nelson noted that with a permanent solution, it is expected that the cost of the system would increase.

K. Nelson added that there is the option to build a perfect meeting room at the Administration Building, and there will still be significant expenses in it. There is going to be a large expense whether meetings are held at the Village Hall or Administration Building.

Meacham suggested wearable microphones to eliminate background noise.

Sikorsky explained wearable microphones seen on social media would not operate the same way in the Village Hall. You don't get background noise on social media because you are not projecting into the same space that you are speaking.

Wagner explained that he was looking for enough information to generate a scope to draw. If the Board does not want to go with a "U" shape platform, he suggested wearable microphones to still pick up conversation when heads are turned, with everyone on the platform in a straight line. He added that microphones were a better investment. He questioned putting money into the ceiling to get a tangible result and if there was value in doing that and if it was money well spent. Hardwiring the system allows for reliability to shoot through the roof. He added that even if nothing was done to address the sound issues, maybe the reliability itself would be enough of an improvement.

Roberts commented as the minute taker that at times the conversations in the audience, bathroom fans, bathroom doors slamming, and hard surface sound projection make hearing the meeting challenging.

K. Nelson preferred hanging or wearable microphones while retaining the current platform with improved IT that would allow for a switch to be flipped and work hardwired.

Bristol reminded the Board that there was a difference between audio and video and that the goal was to find a permanent solution.

Sikorsky explained that the current AV system was a modular system that has to be connected. A permanent system would be tied together, push button. He stressed that ease of operation and reliability come with significant expense.

A discussion was held regarding the shortcomings of the narrow tables, how to get rid of the need for the tv's used for the Village Board viewing (tablets were discussed as well as an additional projector screen at the front of the hall for the Board to look ahead to), and how wireless microphones charge in a bank similar to the current gooseneck microphones currently being used. Bristol expressed the need for one type of microphone to be used by all members of the Board and Committees. The directional microphones only work as well as people speak into them. T. Nelson cautioned the Board against teching our way through all the issues; some solutions may require discipline in having people speak into the microphone or getting up out of the audience to speak at the podium. Bristol added that the solution needs to be based on human nature and the goal should be that audio should be good for both those at home and in person. Currently, those online have better audio than those in person.

Wagner inquired about a ramp to address accessibility issues for the platform. He explained that a ramp has to move out one inch for every one foot in height. He provided a visual with a tape measure showing where the ramp would have to come off the platform 20" into the hall with railings on both sides. *(The tape measure came out approximately halfway into the hall to reflect the twenty inches of the platform).*

K. Nelson inquired if a single step to the platform would be considered ADA.

Straub replied no. Six inches or less is considered ADA accessible.

K. Nelson reflected on the advantages of the platform. People can see over the audience's heads to see the Board and Committees, and the Board and Committees can see over the equipment to see the audience.

T. Nelson expressed that the priorities should be the stage and the AV system. He desired high fidelity and low maintenance. He suggested considering improvements for the room to soften the hard surfaces. He asked the Board to consider obtaining proposals.

K. Nelson agreed with T. Nelson regarding obtaining proposals.

Sikorsky estimated that, to be safe, the Board could expect a cost of \$100,000 for the AV system. He added that he would steer the Village away from drop-down microphones. Ideally, for the audience, people could pass a microphone to the speaker if they are unwilling to stand at the podium. Additionally, he would need a rough idea of floor plans to provide an estimate.

Bristol asked the Board if the ramp idea had support.

K. Nelson felt that Keller could drop the platform, but a ramp would not look good. However, the Board needed to get to the point to decide if viable or not.

Wagner cautioned the Board about establishing a cost threshold for the project; otherwise, there could be significant scope creep.

K. Nelson stressed that the idea is to spend a minimal amount to preserve meetings with a lower platform with more shape (enough of a “u” shape to make a difference) as a long-term solution.

4. Adjournment:

Mulliken moved, T. Nelson seconded to adjourn at 10:02 AM, all ayes. Motion carried.

Recorded by,

Kim Roberts – Deputy Clerk