



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

51 Depot Square, Suite 1

St Johnsbury, VT 05819

802-748-4331

www.stjvt.com

Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board September 15th, 2025 @ 5:30pm

Present-

Select Board: Steve Isham, Frank Empsall, Dennis Smith, Brendan Hughes, Tracy Zschau,
Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprak, Kate Bent (via zoom), Lesley Russ, Kresten Sterling, Matthew Walsh
Public: KATV, Dave Greenwood (via zoom), Colton Boef (via zoom), Kevin (via zoom), iPhone (via zoom), Jeremy. McMullen (via zoom), Resident (via zoom), Abby Long (via zoom), Rep Scott Campbell (via zoom), Shawn Tester (via zoom), Kresten's iPhone (via zoom), Maggie Gray (via zoom), pwieser (via zoom), Pam Parker (via zoom), iPhone (via zoom), Kim Russell (via zoom), Jason L (via zoom), Jane Vinton, Issiah Wilson, Jim Brown, Chase Empsall, Stephanie and Jay Churchill, Claire Bonnett, Pamela P, Mark D, Joanna Hastings, Andrew McGregor, Gillian Sewake, Rose Houghton, John, Barbara, Darryll Kudley, NDSC, Donald Timson, Don Smith, Jody Fried, Scott Beck, Dan Hughes, Maggie and Gavin F, David Kaplan, Howard, Kim Fontaine, Mike Sullivan, Ron F, Vanessa Allen, Adam Kane, Karen B, Paul Conlon, Lenny G., Patricia and James L, Mathew Ghafoori, Jim and Lori, Steven, Pearl M

5:30PM Riverfront Redevelopment and rkMILES Acquisition:

- Joe presented the Riverfront Redevelopment presentation starting with how the Riverfront redevelopment has been a priority for St. Johnsbury for decades.
- In 2020 the Town constructed the Trailhead Pavillion with plans to connect the LVRT to downtown St. Johnsbury. The connection is expected to bring thousands of outdoor recreation enthusiasts downtown annually.
- Acquisition of the four rkMILES properties will enable the Town to move the South Main Street trailhead to Downtown St. Johnsbury and provide 60-80 parking places next to the Trailhead Pavilion.
- If there are environmental issues, the Town as owner, has access to funding that the private sector does not.
- The Town has adequate funding for the acquisition in the STJRF & the Economic Development Reserves.
- The properties are assets at \$985K. The Town has the opportunity to purchase these properties for \$400K. Riverfront Development is a proven strategy for revitalization downtown.
- Joe viewed the maps for the four properties.
- Acquisition Costs included: purchase price of \$400K, closing cost and legal fees of \$5,000, legal fees of \$12,000, and the 2025 property taxes (pro-rated 5 months) at \$9,612.25. Totaling \$426,612.25.
- Property Carrying Cost included: property maintenance (2 hours a week-annually) \$4,624.88, 2026 municipal property taxes (budgeted for 6 months to January 2027)

\$6,461.33, heating (estimated through February to April) \$4,000, electric (annual estimate) \$2,400, water/wastewater (annual) \$597.00, and insurance at \$1,500. Totaling \$19,583.37.

- The Purchase and Sale Agreement price is \$400K, the deposit at the time of signing the PSA would be \$20,000.
- Conditions of the sale (that is Contingencies): 4.1.1 Buyer's investigation, review and acceptance, in its sole discretion, of Seller's title to the Property in accordance with Section 4.2 of this Agreement, of the Property Documents, and of the condition of the Property, including without limitation the physical condition of the Property, the environmental condition of the Property, and any applicable use and development limitations, in accordance with the following: For a period of 120 days after the effective date, the buyer may perform physical and environmental due diligence relating to the property, including without limitation: (a) Environmental Site Assessment and enrolling the property in BRELLA.
- The Town has 120 days to perform this due diligence.
- The Town has the right to request an extension of the Contingency period for another 30 days if necessary.
- Funding the acquisition and carrying cost which includes Economic Development Reserves at \$230,270.62, St. Johnsbury Revitalization Fund-Balance at \$215,925.00. Totaling \$446,195.62.
- SE Group Economic Impact Study includes key highlights: St Johnsbury to Joe's Pond Segment, 70,000 visits annually. \$2.2M Sales Activity. And 36 FTE'S supported.
- Joe gave some comparisons to Skowhegan ME, Bangor ME and Littleton NH riverfronts.
- Joe gave some insight into why the Town is interested in the rkMILES Acquisition which included: one in a generation opportunity to gain site control along the riverfront.
- The properties will have an immediate impact on downtown St. Johnsbury by providing 60-80 parking spaces.
- Bay Street parking will reduce the impact on downtown parking and provide safe access to the LVRT.
- Negative impact on the Grand List will be minimal (121K or \$1,400/yearly in property tax revenue.
- Site control will ensure the highest and best use for the property.
- Funding for the acquisition will come from the STJRF, and the Economic Development Reserves.
- The Economic Development office remains committed to long-term, deliberate development strategies that focus on community properties determined by residents, business owners, and stakeholders.
- Joe also acknowledged the support from our State and Federal Partners. The Town of St. Johnsbury obtained over \$6.7M in funds from both state and federal agencies to assist our community with downtown revitalization. The investments are all in close proximity to the riverfront and will also support riverfront redevelopment.
- The partners include Vermont Community Program (CDBG) at \$1M, Community Recovery and Revitalization Program at \$340K, Designated Downtown program at \$2.9 which supports \$27M investment, and the EPA cleanup/multipurpose/brownfields coalition funding at \$2.5M.
- After Joe's presentation, the Town allowed for public comments. There were the opposing side and the supporting side.

- The supporting side agreed that taking risks can often be a positive thing, rather than looking at it from a negative perspective. The supporting side also highlighted the growth that an improved riverfront could offer the Town.
- On the other hand, many residents were opposed to purchasing properties and in agreement that this should be taken to the voters. The opposing side had similar views on the unknown environmental clean up and redevelopment costs. Also stemming from the possibility of higher property taxes, monitoring on the properties from police, and the other vacant buildings in Town.
- One thing that both sides were on agreement was that the price was fair for the Bay Street properties.

6:00pm rkMILES Purchase and Sales Agreement

- A motion was made by Dennis to hold a special town meeting to bring the acquisition of rkMiles to a town vote and seconded by Frank. Dennis and Frank voted in favor and Brendan, Tracy and Steve voted in opposition and the motion was not passed.
- A motion was made by Tracy to approve the Commercial Real Estate Purchase and Sales Agreement between FHS Holdings, LLC and the Town of St Johnsbury for the purchase of 249 Bay Street, 258 Bay Street, 256 Bay Street and 145 Bay Street and to authorize the Town Manager to execute the agreement on behalf of the Town of St. Johnsbury.
- Brendan, Tracy and Steve voted in favor and Dennis and Frank voted in opposition, and the motion passed.

6:10pm Economic Development Reserve Transfer Request:

- A motion was made by Brendan and seconded by Tracy to transfer \$230,270.62 from Economic Development Reserves to unobligated General Funds for the purchase of the property. Brendan, Tracy and Dennis voted in favor and Frank voted in opposition, and the motion passed.

6:15pm St. J Revitalization Fund Request:

- A motion was made by Brendan and seconded by Tracy to award \$215,925 from The St Johnsbury Revitalization Fund for the purchase of the property. Brendan, Tracy and Dennis voted in favor and Frank voted in opposition, and the motion passed.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to adjourn. All in favor.

September 15th Select Board Meeting Video:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/cnRJ9tOHxeTTi6hk9h_AWszjgBAED3zbyaeG_6x47xZXcLYIvU9Kmb4iPyH1mMUj.bKf5VgLiSuxlW3Tt

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