



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

Town Manager's Office  
51 Depot Square, Suite 103  
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819  
802-748-3926  
[www.stjvt.com](http://www.stjvt.com)

Town Clerk 802-748-4331  
Dispatch 802-748-2314  
Police 802-748-2314  
Fire 802-748-8925  
Public Works 802-748-4408  
Assessor Office 802-748-4272

## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board February 24, 2020 - Pomerleau Building – 6:00 PM

Present- SB: Kevin Oddy - Chair, Brendan Hughes, Dennis Smith, Tim Angell  
Staff: Assistant Town Manager-Joe Kasprzak; Town Clerk-Stacy Jewell; Administration Manager-Heather Alger  
Press: KATV, T. Wellington

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- None

### Warrants:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan the warrants were approved.

### Liquor Licenses:

- Presented by Town Clerk:  
1st Class Renewals: Whiskey Den  
2nd Class Renewals: PettyCo Junction Country Store and Champlain Farms  
3rd Class Renewals: Whiskey Den
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tim the board approved the Liquor License renewals. Brendan Hughes abstained.

### Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan the minutes for 2/10 were approved as presented.

### St J Chamber Update:

- Vermont Downtown Program 2019 Reinvestment Statistics Report presented by Tara Holt the Director of the St. Johnsbury Chamber and Designated Downtown.
  - Public/Private Investment – 4 Façade Renovations and 15 Other Building Rehabilitations. With Private Investment at \$2,247,225.62 and Public Investment 121,614.82. State and Federal Tax Credits of \$153,000. Of the 15 building rehabs, 2

of them included major façade renovations. 1 of which rec'd tax credits. The other 3 listed are businesses that installed new signage.

- From New Construction there is 1 Public Improvement Project with a Public Investment of \$87,221.
- For Business and Job Growth the Number of businesses opened in downtown is 7. The number of new jobs is 31. The number of businesses that expanded within the downtown is 3 with the # of new jobs at 11. The number of downtown businesses that closed/downsized is 1. With the # of jobs lost at 2.
- Housing - Total number of existing housing units downtown is 601. Number of new housing units downtown is 1.
- Retail and Commercial Vacancies - Number of first floor vacancies in downtown is 20. Number of upper floor vacancies in downtown is 5.
- Local Program Contribution - Number of volunteers is 98. Number of volunteer hours donated is 1057
- Most notable in downtown St. Johnsbury this year is the start of work to renovate one of St. Johnsbury's most iconic downtown buildings. In 2019, the former New Avenue Hotel, more recently known as Depot Square Apartments, and now in the process of being reborn as New Avenue House, saw current residents relocated, and bid selection completed for contractors for a full top-to-bottom renovation. With over 40 units of affordable housing and six retail spaces street-level, the capacity for this space to play a role in the ongoing growth and development of downtown operations is enormous. The process of bringing this project to fruition is the result of countless hours of work by dedicated folks throughout the state, across many agencies, and with diverse objectives that intersected in one important act – to return that historic building to a useful and revered part of the community.
- A team of dedicated volunteers banded together to create the Window Warriors. The Window Warriors build scenes in vacant windows. They kicked it off for the winter season, and brought new volunteers out to participate, inspired business owners to lend materials for the displays, and generated new donations. The group even generated national press for their efforts. The project inspired another resident to write a grant for another window project, featuring the work of local artists on large format vinyl posters, to liven up the windows at New Avenue House during the renovation.
- In 2019 we were awarded grant funding from USDA RBEG to increase marketing of St. Johnsbury and St. Johnsbury businesses, to increase marketing of the St. Johnsbury Farmer's Market, and improve the visitor experience.
- Our ongoing signature seasonal events, Pet Parade and Victorian Holiday drew great crowds and raised the overall visibility of St. Johnsbury. The Halloween Parade, despite the rain, welcomed a healthy crowd of participants, dressed to impress!
- We rolled out Welcome Bags, distributed to local realtors to pass on to people viewing properties in and around St. Johnsbury. These bags were filled with information, and promotions, like free memberships to local museums, movie tickets, coupons, and other swag

- Funding the downtown program to allow adequate staff time and resources for promotions without the input of grant funding remains a challenge. Asking businesses to support our work is a natural fit, but these same businesses have funding requests from other Chambers, other organizations. With limited resources, making our case for inclusion in their community funding plan is ever that more important.
- It could be advantageous to the organization to build a funding mechanism that allows staff time to not dependent on business contributions, and lets business contributions pay for programs like events and marketing. This speaks to both the struggle to create a sustainable funding model, and the limited resources available for crucial support like marketing of the town and its resources.
- Assistance with financial planning that would help build funding models to present to town officials, the public and businesses could help with taking steps to rectify both of these challenges.
- Managing accurate vacancy statistics remains a challenge that we have been aware of, and made steps to improve, but we are not there yet. We have begun using a subscription service to better manage properties and associate data, but it is only as good as the input, and we have not accurately dedicated resources to improving. Increased paid hours for staff, or increased volunteerism to dial in those details would improve our ability to report statistics and chart our growth or decline.
- This organization continues to struggle with setting itself apart from the regional Chamber, and each is regularly confused for the other. It is worth asking, does the name of the organization, originally intended to help people understand what it does, serve to cause further confusion? Would using the Discover St. Johnsbury branding and narrowing the focus of our service area create a stronger organization better outfitted to support and promote the downtown? While I do worry about the message it would send to businesses outside the designated downtown, were the organization to focus its concept, the messaging of the impact of a strong downtown supporting the town as a whole could be emphasized.

### **Manager's Report:**

- Report given by Joe Kasprzak:
  - Informational Town meeting will be March 2, 2020 at 7:30PM at the auditorium at the Town School- voting will be on March 3, 2020 from 10:00am to 7:00pm in the downstairs gymnasium. The school is located at 257 Western Avenue. Voters can also pick up absentee ballots at the Town Clerk's office.
  - St. J is a preferred site for Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) Grant Program. Is looking for grant applicants that will need to work with a site host, public or private property owner, to develop a plan.
  - CUD Informational meeting is scheduled at 142 Eastern Avenue on Wednesday February 26 at 5:30 PM.

- Wastewater Treatment Facility: A draft RFP for operations of the facility is being developed and anticipated to be released the first week of March with proposals due to the Town mid-April.
- Working toward getting website converted to new platform. Once converted we can work on content. Kevin Oddy mentioned that Casella should no longer list pricing because they change so frequently.
- Gilman and Pleasant Street- construction cost estimates have been redone to include sidewalk replacement on Pleasant Street and come about \$100k over previous budgets. Recommendations are to keep as is and bid to evaluate and see what contingencies remain. Funds are secured through USDA RD for wastewater, but are still pending for a Clean Water Revolving Fund grant as well as DWRLF. We are recommending advertising of the work as soon as possible to get the projects into construction this summer.
- NBRC 3 Rivers Bike Path Project. Currently in winter shutdown
- Joe attended the Legislative Breakfast on Monday morning at the St. J House. Everyone is on board funding Lamoille Rail Trail.
- Joe continues to watch TIF legislation and has had legislators contact him with regard to the roll-out of our Rental Housing Improvement Program and its implementation. implementing our program – interest

**Public Comment:**

- Todd Wellington asked who was heading up this project. Joe responded Gary Holloway / Downtown Program Manager at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). Todd asked about current charging stations and was informed that the current stations are low voltage. The new chargers will be fast chargers with high volt.

**Other Business:**

- None
- On a motion by Tim and second by Dennis the meeting was adjourned.