



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## **Armory Redevelopment Information Meeting For Bond Vote September 7, 2021 at 6:00 PM Special Select Board Meeting**

Present-

Select Board: Kevin Oddy, Dennis Smith, Frank Empsall, Brendan Hughes, Daniel Kimbell (via phone)

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Rachel Waterhouse, Chief Tim Page, Captain Jason Gray, Anthony Skelton

Press: KATV

Public: Steve Isham, Scott Campbell, Bill Vermeulen, Elizabeth Emmons, David Roy (via zoom), Stephanie Clark (via zoom), Joe Weith (via zoom), Diane Cummings, Ray Cummings, Peter VanStraten (via zoom), Scott Newman (via zoom)

### Informational Armory Redevelopment Public Meeting:

- Kevin Oddy, Chair of the Select Board opened the public meeting by explaining that the Armory Bond vote will take place tomorrow Tuesday 9/14 from 10 am until 7 pm at the Welcome Center. The approval of the bond vote gives the Select Board the ability to move forward and work with the Town Manager's Office to secure more funding. The Select Board is committed to applying for favorable funding and will only move forward with the Armory Redevelopment Project if it is in the best interest of the Town and tax payers of St. Johnsbury.
- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the Town has considered a combined emergency services building previously. However redevelopment of the Armory as a Police and Dispatch building makes the most sense. It takes a vacant and blighted Town liability and turns it into a functional facility. The difference in cost of a joint facility and the Armory project was \$650,000. By renovating a historical vacant building there is a much better change of securing more funding.
- Presented Armory Tour Video.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager explained that the Armory has been a priority for over 6 ½ years. Lots of different avenues have been pursued including private development, housing potential and community group projects however the barrier is too high for these projects. The remediation is estimated to cost between \$850,000 to 1.3 million as there are PCB's in the basement.
- Stephanie Clark provided the plans, review of the project, funding and a timeline. Currently the Town has secured \$500,000 in EAP clean up grant and will reapply for \$500,000 for a Slums and Blight Grant in November 2021. She also explained should the general obligation bond be approved on 9/14/21 the Town will be able to apply for and hopefully secure last gap financing to further reduce the cost of the project.
- Timeline currently as follows
  - 5/2023 Open Doors

- 2022 Construction
- Spring 2022 Remediation
- Fall 2021 Bid Construction
- Fall 2021 Bid Remediation
- Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Armory Bond Vote
- Richard Kozlowski approached the Select Board regarding his concerns with the Armory Redevelopment Project. He stated his biggest concern is parking in the area as he has leased the parking lot of the Armory for over 22 years for his business. He is also concerned with safety and the traffic flow between the buildings. Joe Kasprzak, Town Manager explained that the Town will continue to work with Richard and other businesses in the area. Hopeful that this project will be an economical driver for the area and provide development opportunities in the future.
- Daniel Kimbell commented that he manages a business across the street from the Armory. Understands Richard's concerns over parking for employees and customers. However also sees the potential for a lot of good from the project.
- Scott Campbell asked how many parking spots the PD and Dispatch center need for visitors. Chief Tim Page commented that moving the Police Station to the Armory site would clear up parking in front of 1187 Main Street. He also expressed that the PD and Dispatch Center do not see a lot of traffic other than complainants and finger printing applicants. Should the PD or Dispatch Center need more parking for trainings, ect. arrangements would be made prior to the event. Scott Campbell expressed that he is in favor of the Armory Development Project. Great asset for the community. Thanked everyone who has worked on this project.
- Peter VanStraten asked if the Town estimates an increase in the budget to be in the new building. Joe Kasprzak commented that operationally not a lot of change. Will be working with the Energy Committee to do what we can to keep the operation cost down. The Town will continue to pursue funds to lower the direct impact of the project to the tax payers.
- Bill Vermulan commented that he would vote for a new PD and Dispatch Center but not this bond vote or this building. He expressed his concern over how elaborate the proposed building plans were. Doesn't believe the elaborate proposed building plans are suitable for St. Johnsbury.
- Chief Tim Page addressed the issues Bill Vermulan presented. He expressed that the design was looked at as what were the "must haves". There is a reason for what is in the building plans like the juvenile holding cell is mandated. Nothing was done elaborately. Everything was done with functionality, purpose and meaning. What is included in the building plans is what the Police and Dispatch need to complete their jobs.
- Kevin commented as a former Part Time Police Officer there are laws that govern a lot of what the Police and Dispatch is asking for in the building plans, such as cells, toilets, showers, ect. Nothing is elaborate in those plans.
- Bill explained he has relied on the St. Johnsbury Police Department for over 20 years when he heads south. The Police watch and check his property daily for him when he is away. Commented that he would vote to fund a new Police and Dispatch Center just not this one as it is over the top for me.
- Chad reminded folks that voting will take place next Tuesday Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 10 am until 7 pm at the Welcome Center. Absentee ballots will not be mailed after Thursday.
- Scott asked if ballots could be submitted between now and Monday. Kevin explained that ballots would need to be mailed before Thursday or dropped off in the drop box by Monday afternoon.
- Kevin thanked everyone that came out to the Public Hearing. He also thanked the Town Manager's Office for all of their hard work on this project.

On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan the board adjourned by unanimous decision.