



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 July 26, 2021 at 5:30 PM Select Board Meeting

Present-

Select Board: Kevin Oddy, Dennis Smith, Frank Empsall, Brendan Hughes, Daniel Kimbell

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak, Tim Page (via zoom), Paul Berlejung

Press: KATV, Todd Wellington

Public: Pam Parker, Steve Isham, Ben Deede, Scott Campbell, Marcey Cavier (via zoom), Joe Weith (via zoom), Ben Copans, Bob Joly, Lynn Wurtzburg, Val Elliot, Mary Berlejung

Special Meeting- Town Plan/ Enhanced Energy Plan Hearing:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager presented the board with letters of support from community members.
- Lynn Wurtzburg and Ben Deede presented the Select Board with a quick summary of the plan and the goals of the Enhanced Energy Plan. Reinforced that the adoption of the enhanced energy plan is voluntary and non-binding. The plan gives the Town greater influence over projects. While it doesn't commit the Town to anything it assist the Town with coordination in a formed manner. By adopting the Enhanced Energy Plan it will give the Town a better position to obtain grants and other funding.
- Pam Parker clarified that the adoption of the proposed plan would be an amendment to the current Town plan. She also presented the board with some letters of support from Irene Nagle, Gillian Sewake and Shawn Tesser.
- Ben Copans from the Planning Commission expressed that the Planning Commission strongly supports the Enhanced Energy Plan.
- Val Elliot explained that she was excited to see the new plan with the potential for more charging stations in St. Johnsbury. She believes the enhanced energy plan will help the Town and State reach their energy goals.
- Steve Isham presented the board will a letter from two St. Johnsbury Academy students regarding their support of the Enhanced Energy Plan for St. Johnsbury.
- Dennis questioned how much control the Town would have over siting of solar farm. Pam explained that if the Town adopts the plan they will get a say in the placement of commercial solar arrays. Zoning laws can also be updated to address concerns with siting of solar farms.
- Brendan asked what other Towns were looked at when creating the proposed plan for the Town. Pam explained that Waterbury, Burke, Troy, Norwich and Barre were all looked at. However Waterbury's plan was the best model.
- Brendan asked what percentage of municipalities adopt an energy plan. Pam said while she doesn't have the numbers right in front of her she believes about 9 in the Northeast Kingdom have and

about 30 in the rest of Vermont have. Lynn commented that the plan is voluntary and it gives the Town the option to decide what to move forward on.

- Brendan asked if there was a limit on the number of projects. Lynn said no. But it also gives the Town a seat at the table to discuss projects.
- Dennis asked if local hydro plants are tapped out within St. Johnsbury. Or does the State have the authority to increase the power? Lynn commented that the rights of the hydro plants were sold by the State. Scott Campbell commented that each utility has its own contract to buy power from. The State policy only influences the contracts but in the end the utility makes their own decision. Pam mentioned that the first map within the plan shows the current and potential for hydro siting within the Town. Steve also commented that there is no potential in St. Johnsbury for wind power.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to add the Enhanced Emery Plan to the next Select Board Meeting for disposition. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to adjourn. All in favor.

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve the June 14th meeting minutes as presented. All in favor.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve the July 12th meeting minutes as presented. All in favor.

Warrants:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the warrants as presented. All in favor.

Liquor Licenses:

- None

Armory Bond Vote:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager presented the Select Board with the proposed documents for a bond vote for the Armory redevelopment project. This included the attached resolution certificate, warning for the bond vote, sample ballot and certificate of posting. Joe explained that while the project is estimated to cost 5.8 million the bond vote is in the amount of 5.4 million as the Town has secured \$500,000 in an EPA grant already. The Town continues to work to apply for and secure other forms of funding.
- Explained site plans and design plans still remain in draft form. Continue to work with historical preservation on these.
- Public hearing to be held on 8/23/21 and 9/7/21 at 6 pm at the Welcome Center.

- Bond vote to be held on 9/14/21 from 10 am until 7 pm at the Welcome Center.
- Documents of the proposed resolution certificate, warning, ballot and certificate of posting can be found in draft form on the Town's website.
- Todd Wellington asked why the total project is 5.8 million but bond vote is for 5.4 million. Joe explained that is because the Town has already secured \$500,000 in an EPA grant.
- Todd Wellington inquired about when the Town might be breaking ground on the project. Joe explained with a successful bond vote this fall construction would hopefully begin within the next year with a move in day of summer 2023.
- On a motion by Daniel and second by Brendan to approve the resolution certificate, warning, ballot and certificate of posting. All in favor.

Re-appointment of Zoning Administrator:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager approached the board about reappointing Paul Berlejung as the acting zoning administrator for another three year term.
- Daniel asked Paul if he was willing to continue. Paul said yes.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to re appoint Paul Berlejung as the acting zoning administration for the Town of St. Johnsbury. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Provided an update on the 3 Rivers project. Submitted a grant in the amount of 1 million waiting to hear back. Congressman Leahy continues to support the funding of \$547,000.00 for the next phase of the 3 Rivers project. This funding would assist in adding lighting, a cross country trail, art exhibits, honking tunnel improvements and parking improvements. Total cost of the project is estimated at 1.55 million.
- Assessor Office is currently open the second and fourth Tuesday of the month.
- The Town Clerk's Office is open Monday thru Friday from 8 am until 4 pm. Residences are encouraged to conduct business through mail, phone, fax or email if possible
- Chief Bouffard's final day with the Town is July 31st. Interim Chief Oslen has begun meeting with the Chief and department heads and currently is attending the weekly staff meetings.
- Firefighter Phil Hawthorne was recently promoted to Captain.
- Andrew Buckley has vacated the Code Compliance position for a job elsewhere. Currently advertising the opening.
- Also have a vacant firefighter position open within the Fire Department.
- The Police Department currently have a vacancy for one full time officer. Working with the Chief and NKHS to explore the potential for a full time Mental Health worker.
- Recruitment continues to still be a struggle. The Town continues to explore other avenues for job postings.
- Dispatch recently filled their vacant full time position. Continue to look for a part time position.
- DPW is currently looking to fill a mechanic and operator position.
- DPW continues with summer road paving, sewer projects, line striping and mowing.
- Oak and Buzzell project has been completed.
- Gilman and Pleasant project is with the State. Expect them to begin in August.
- Water Treatment is awaiting funding.
- Portland Street Scoping is estimated to cost 1-1.2 million. Hoping to secure ARPA funds.

- Eastern Ave and Pearl Street Project is estimated at \$100,000 for side walk repairs.
- Bike Path project received no bids in 2020. Plan to re-advertise this year.
- Dennis asked is anything was in the works for the Portland Street Bridge. Chad said he would ask Steve but at this time he didn't believe so. Dennis expressed his concern with the sidewalk and one of the expansions.
- Dennis also expressed concern over the sidewalk near Whirligig's. Chad will mention it to Steve.
- Brendan mentioned that it would be nice to see the lines on Railroad Street painted earlier in the summer. Chad explained that the line striping crew was tasked to start with crosswalks around town first.
- Todd Wellington asked about the Captain's position within the Fire Department. Chad explained that a Captain left for another department.
- Todd Wellington asked about the plans for the COVID funds. Chad explained that the requirements for the funds are still ever changing and the Town is still trying to understand them. The push has been to use the funds towards infrastructure.
- Todd Wellington asked what the time line for knowing what the funds can be spent on looks like. 6 months? Chad explained that he is hopeful that they will know sooner than 6 months but at this time it is unknown.

Other Business:

- None

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