



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board January 4, 2021 at 6:00 PM-Via Zoom Special Select Board Meeting

Present-

Select Board: Tim Angell, Chair, Kevin Oddy, Vice Chair, Dennis Smith, Daniel Kimbell

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak, Lesley Russ, Jon Bouffard, Steve Beauregard, Anthony Skelton, Tim Page, Paul Berlejung

Press: Todd Wellington

Public: Bob Jolly, James Brown, Scott Campbell, Gillian Sewake

2021/2022 Budget Input:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager began by introducing department heads and select board members to those present at the meeting.
- Proposed budget for 2021/2022 is available on the Town website.
- The only change made to the budget since the last select board meeting on 12/28/20 was an increase in the grand list which was provided by the assessor's office.
- Chad presented a power point outlining the Town accomplishments for 2020, budget development process, approval and voting process.
- Increase in budget is attributed to \$300,000 August 2020 budget adjustment, \$129,522 increase in labor and benefit costs and \$180,000 increase in highway maintenance funds.
- Armory project was cut in 2020. 2021 budget includes reinstating \$20,000 for the Armory moving forward.
- Reduction in reserve fund transfer in the Fire Department for 2021.
- Increase in Police Department budget due to overtime costs.
- Dennis questioned the increase in salary for non-union members. Is it a 3% or 4% increase? Chad will review and get back to Dennis.
- Tim questioned page 17 street safety and traffic proposed budget for 2021/2022 and the \$32,000 increase due to street paving. Chad confirmed this increase also included hiring part time employees to complete the line stripping in town.
- Dennis questioned the cost to train these part time employees. Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW stated on the job training would be provided by staff from the DPW crew.
- Dennis questioned the need for formal training for flagging. Steve said yes a 1 day course is required for flagging and costs around \$50 a person. However this is an on-going training cost for DPW as it is required every two years.
- Tim asked if there were any requests for special appropriations. Lesley said from what she has seen there has been no requests for increase and no new appropriation requests.

- Tim questioned if the deadlines for the requests had passed. Chad stated they had not passed yet and Lesley said the deadline was for the middle of January.
- Scott Campbell asked if the ambulance service was included in the special appropriations. Tim commented that the cost for the ambulance has been moved to the general fund. Chad stated because the town holds a contract with them the cost is now reflected in the general fund.
- Scott Campbell asked if the first page of the budget could be reviewed with regards to the tax rate and the increase in the budget. Chad stated that the increase is primarily due to the \$300,000 budget adjustment in Aug. of 2020. At which time unrestricted and restricted reserve funds were used to soften the reappraisal/taxes and COVID 19 impacts. These adjustments were made before the tax rate was set. It was a one-time thing and a way to spread the impact over a couple of years. Now those funds need to be made up in the budget for 2021/2022.
- Scott Campbell asked if the increase in the tax rate applies only to the properties that increase or stayed the same. Chad stated the increase in tax rate would be applied to all tax payers. The increase is not something the town takes very lightly.
- Daniel asked if the new stimulus package would provide funds for the first responders and if there were any additional funds we could get refunded for that were direct expense related to COVID. Chad commented that the town had been awarded approximately \$300,000 in funds to help offset the cost of the increased OT in the PD due to direct response of the pandemic and to offset the cost of redirection of employees.
- Daniel asked if the amount that the town received can be split between two years. Chad stated that the funds came in for the 2020/2021 budget year and if is unused then a budget adjustment could be made. Lesley explained that the funds flowed right into the fund balance and any leftover funds after 2020/2021 budget year could be transferred to restricted or unallocated reserves.
- Dennis questioned if the previous highway paving grant of \$175,000 was no longer available. Steve explained that the funds had been frozen due to COVID and he would reapply if funds became available in the next year. Chad stated the grant was put into the budget last year to move forward when the funds arrived. However this year the funds were not offered.
- Dennis asked if the Town would be applying another year. Steve stated the Town would apply if the funds became available but the funds can only be used on Class 2 roads. The \$100,000 DPW is requesting in the 2021/2022 budget is for paving Class 3 roads.
- Dennis stated it is a tough year to increase the paving budget to \$100,000 this year. Dennis asked what the school budget was. Chad stated that question would have to be referred to the School Board. Chad did mention that he had a meeting recently with Brian Ricka who said the school rate is running relatively flat.
- Dennis commented that he is concerned with the size of the increase and would hate to see the budget fail. Chad said that he understands what Dennis is saying but the budget increases were not taken lightly. We were wide open when looking at the budget.
- Dennis questioned what the scale back after the grand list produced. Chad stated it resulted in a 70% decrease in the grand list.
- Dennis questioned the increase of \$180 on a \$150,000 home for just this budget. Tim stated he understands Dennis's concerns but this budget is necessary to keep budgeted services as is.
- Dennis explained that he was just concerned with the increase in paving, extra help and chloride. Possible to increase services beyond this year. Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW commented that if the Town continues to hold the line they will continue to fall behind. Steve explained that he receives calls on a steady basis regarding the town roads.

- Tim asked if anyone else had any additional questions or comments.
- Chad explained that the budget will be on the agenda at the next Select Board meeting on 01/11/2021. There will then be a Special Select Board Meeting on 01/19/2021 for the Select Board to review and approve the budget.
- Chad mentioned if the Town was to carve out more from the budget it would result in reduction of services. Tim stated he agrees with leaving the funds for the highway department.
- Tim asked if there was any other news regarding Town Meeting day. Chad mentioned that the State will not be back in session until 01/06/2021. From then they will have 10 days to decide on the legislation. But expects that Town Meeting Day will have a virtual presences.
- Scott Campbell asked if the Town would be interested in pushing back Town Meeting day should the option present itself. Chad explained that the Town would be interested in pushing it back some but would also be sensitive to the school's position in the matter as well. Chad explained that by pushing back Town Meeting day it would provide the Town more information with regards to the budget including March tax payments. It would also have a safety value to pushing it back allowing more time for vaccine administration giving the Town a better chance for an in person Town Meeting. Tim commented that the board will decide if it becomes an option. Dennis stated he is favorable for pushing back Town Meeting day this year. Kevin agreed and commented that it would allow for more solid information.
- Tim thanked all of those for attending this evening.

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