



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board July 25, 2022 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

Select Board: Dennis Smith, Frank Empsall, Tracy Zschau, Steve Isham, Brendan Hughes (via zoom)

Staff: Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak, Stacy Jewell, Paul Berlejung

Press: KATV, Todd Wellington

Public: Mary Berlejung, Joanne Brown, Don Smith (via zoom),

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- Joanne Brown approached the Select Board regarding the primary election on Aug 9th and the race for Caledonian County Sheriff. VT Primary used to be in Sept. now considerably earlier.
- Frank reminded Joann that public comment must pertain to Town business. This is a State issue and Joann would have better coverage utilizing the Caledonian Record.
- Dennis reiterated that the Town has no control over State business.
- Steve Isham explained according to VT State Statute the Select Board meeting is about business pertaining to St. Johnsbury and not a meeting to get on the record for state politics.
- Joanne Brown asked if she was being denied the opportunity to speak during public comment.
- Frank explained that she is not being denied the opportunity to speak but it needs to pertain to St. Johnsbury business and not State business.

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the Select Board minutes from July 11th, 2022 will the following corrections except instead of expense, food instead of good and invoices instead of invoiced. All in favor.

Liquor License:

- None

Set Tax Rate:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk approached the Select Board regarding setting the tax rate for 2022-2023. She explained the tax rate is based on the budget approved in March 2022 by the voters.
- Stacy reviewed the proposed tax rates.
- Tracy asked how the proposed tax rates compare to 2021 rates. Stacy explained that they are pretty close to 2021 tax rates unless someone's value changed.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the 2022-2023 Tax Rates are presented. All in favor.
- Stacy mentioned that tax bills will be mailed by Sept. 1st.

Charter Changes:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk explained that the Town formed a committee to review the Town Charter last fall and would like to send to the voters for approval at the November election. After the changes are approved by the voters they then go to the Secretary of State and onto legislation.
- No changes have been made to the Charter since what was presented at Town meeting back in the beginning of 2022.
- At the next Select Board meeting will have more information on how the information will be presented and the dates of public hearings and such. Stacy mentioned only 1 Public Hearing would be required pending no changes are made from the hearing.
- Steve Isham asked if such changes could be added to any election or an election with Town business only. Stacy said any election.
- Steve Isham asked if they would be changing the current 1 year Select Board terms to 2 years. Stacy said it was originally discussed but they decided not to. She explained that there is a more current version with that correction.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to put the Charter Changes on the ballot for the November election. All in favor.
- Tracy requested that the updated copy of the Charter Changes be sent to the Select Board as soon as possible.

Paving:

- Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW provided the following updates.
- Currently working on repairing two water main breaks located within the construction zones at Elm Street and Pleasant and St. Johns. Doesn't expect a boil water notice at this time.
- Steve Beauregard explained that the Town of St. Johnsbury was awarded a class 2 grant for paving in the amount of \$168,000. The grant combined with the paving budget will allow the Town to address the following streets:
 - Undercliff
 - Elm Street
 - Elwood Terrace
 - Hillside Terrace
 - Rocky Ridge
 - Breezy Hill

- High Street
- Was hoping to cover more mileage but costs continue to increase. Request for bids have gone out and bid opening will take place next week. They will be required to complete the projects by Sept. 15th before the ground gets too cold.
- New DPW Loader arrived today. Received a \$53,000 grant to offset the cost.
- Originally going to purchase a 50-horsepower tractor this year however issues with the roadside mower continue.
- Frank asked if the partnership with Danville would continue with the new roadside mower. Steve Beauregard said no. Enough work in St. Johnsbury for the roadside mower including snow clean up in the winter.
- Frank asked if DPW had obtained bids for the purchase of a new roadside mower. Steve Beauregard said no as he is currently looking at a used one for \$62,000 with 1100 hours as currently new ones are selling for over \$100,000.
- Frank asked if the loader was bid out. Steve Beauregard said yes bids were received for a Case, Cat and John Deere. Ultimately went with the Case as it had better features and it doesn't have a diesel particulate filter which has given us trouble with the previous loader.
- Frank asked if the 100-horsepower tractor would have more use than the 50 horsepower. Steve Beauregard said yes different uses as well.
- Frank requested a Special Select Board Meeting for Wednesday July 27th at 11 am to discuss the highway equipment purchase.
- Dennis asked if paving the bridge at the foot of Sand Hill was on the paving agenda. Steve Beauregard said yes along with the bridge on Elm Street. Steve Beauregard explained that he had to cut out Depot Hill due to increase in paving costs. But has added Depot Hill to next year's paving list.

Town Managers' Report:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- The Audit is schedule for the first week of August.
- The ARPA Committee continues to work with HCH consult and the next ARPA Committee meeting is scheduled for August 3rd.
- The issues on Wright Ave have been resolved.
- Storm damage pushed back the hydrant replacements and system flushing.
- The sidewalk at 1187 Main Street is anticipated to be completed in August.
- Vacancies continue within Fire, Police and Dispatch. We are working to get potential new hires on boarded and positions filled. The Police Chief and Town Manager are working with Vermont Manager's Association and the Chief of Police Association, as well as VLCT to discuss policy regarding Statewide recruitment efforts and how to get people to come to Vermont. Also working with NVDA on a technical assistance grant to address recruitment and retention.
- The Town met with Legal and DCF regarding the Fairbanks Inn. The Fairbanks Inn has appealed the violation and will be going to the next DRB meeting in August.
- Walkthrough of 955 Portland Street will take place with Habitat for Humanity on Wednesday.
- The second Final Friday event will take place this Friday 7/29 on Railroad Street.
- VLCT will join the Select Board Meeting on August 22nd to host a training on Roles and Responsibilities specific to St. Johnsbury and our Town Manager form of government. This will include about 45 minutes of presentation followed by 45 minutes of questions and answers.

- Continue to work with Vida Nova regarding master planning for Bay Street. Will be here all day on Thursday to review maps and tour Bay Street.
- Continue to work on finalizing the Armory Corrective Action Draft Plan for phase 2. Recently received the bid for remediation and currently reviewing internally then will be sending out. Continue to make headway.
- Meeting with Irene Nagle to discuss neighborhood designated areas for the Somerville area to support the downtown and hopefully make it more attractive to developers.
- Steve Isham asked if it was a meeting for 955 Portland Street. Joe said no it was a tour for Habitat for Humanity to get a better sense of the building and take pictures to see what they think can be done.
- Steve Isham asked if it was just a discussion and nothing had been finalized yet. Joe said that is correct nothing has been finalized just have to understand the Town's options.
- Steve Isham asked if it had been determined that the Town would not be selling the property. Joe said that has not been determined. Just investigating opportunities right now.

Other Business:

- None.

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