



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board August 22, 2022 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

Select Board: Frank Empsall, Dennis Smith, Tracy Zschau, Steve Isham, Brendan Hughes

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Paul Berlejung, Kresten Sterling, Stacy Jewell,

Press: KATV

Public: Mary Berlejung, Don Smith, Garrett Baxter (VLCT), Kevin Oddy

Agenda Amendments:

- On a motion by Dennis Smith and second by Brendan the board moved the BCA Agenda item to the end of the meeting.

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes/Warrants/Liquor Licenses:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steven the board approved the minutes from 7/27/2022. Brendan and Tracy Abstained.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis the board approved the minutes of 8/8/2022 with minor corrections.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy the board approved the warrants as presented.

Town Charter Revisions:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan the Select Board approved the Town Charter Hearing Warning on October 3 and October 24, 2022.

USDA RD Police Cruiser Grant:

- Town Manager, Chad Whitehead reviewed a grant offer awarded to the Town by USDA Rural Development (RD) for the purchase of two new police cruisers including equipment and upfit. The grant was applied for more than a year ago and prior to committing to any purchases the Police Chief will be bidding out the vehicles and equipment to update costs.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy the board approved the acceptance of the USDA RD Police Grant based on the conditions established in the August 9, 2022 letter from Dianne Drown from USDA.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan the board approved the use of Police Equipment Reserve funds as local match for the grant in the amount of \$46,138.00 with the condition that the Town Manager return to the board with any increase in costs after bidding the cruisers and equipment.

LVRT Riverfront Reserve Request:

- Town Manager, Chad Whitehead provided the board with an application for use of ARPA funds to match NBRC, EDA and USDA RD funds awarded for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Riverfront Path Extension project. The request for \$236,000 was reviewed and approved by the ARPA committee with recommendations by the committee to the select board to approve the use of the funds.
- The Town Treasurer, Stacy Jewell expressed concern that ARPA funds were not available until the Auditors provided their report. The Town Manager presented the board with a Reserve Fund Requisition executed by the Town Manager and the Finance Officer's indicating that the Unallocated General Fund balance was currently \$2,213,475.79. Additional funding is anticipated to increase that General Fund unallocated balance in the next few months when the second payments are made for the SLFRF.
- Steve Isham asked what the economic impacts are anticipated from the project and Town Manager Whitehead responded with the following from the application packet: *The project is expected to have a positive impact on job retention and job creation in the town and region. Although now five-years old, a useful study demonstrates the positive economic impact of an infrastructure project such as the one proposed in the October 2016 study by Camoin Associates entitled "Economic and Fiscal Impact of the Vermont Trails and Gateways Council Member Organizations." According to the study, \$15 million in new sales annually are attributed to the result of trail visitors spending on travel expenses such as food, lodging and equipment. The highest proportion of spending (\$5.6 Million) was spent on food and drink, supporting the idea that this project will bolster the downtown economy. This effect has already been observed with the increase in business activity in the downtown since the initiation of the last trail extension in 2018. Using a model that calculates how spending and associated economic activity continues to circulate indirect activity, Camoin estimates that the \$15 Million in new annual sales translated to 365 jobs, \$8.8 Million in earnings, and over \$22 Million in sales.*

It is expected that the project will attract real estate development in and adjacent to the Designated Downtown, providing needed housing and lowering regional outmigration rates. Non-motorized transportation routes have been noted to attract real estate development (see the Urban Land Institutes report "Active Transportation and Real Estate, the Next Frontier"). The recent pandemic has made remote work more accepted in many industries, so workers can live virtually anywhere with good broadband, which is present in the downtown. The proximity of recreational amenities and active transportation infrastructure is a significant draw to remote workers, and these workers can effect an increase in the per capita income of the region.

- On a motion by Tracy and second by Dennis the board approved the use of \$236,000 in Unallocated General Funds to be used as local funds for the LVRT Riverfront Path Extension Project.

Town Manager's Report:

- ARPA Committee meet with HCH to continue to develop a public outreach plan. HCH will be attending the August Final Friday event to gather input and are working to do public input meetings mid September. We still anticipate developing a plan for recommendation to the Select Board this Fall.
- The Police Department has filled the two full time vacancies. One is already certified and has already started working on the schedule. The second goes to the 16 Week Police Academy starting this week. We still have a part time vacancy and need to backfill shifts because of training requirements. The Chief continues to work on recruitment and retention planning.
- The DWSRF Intended Use Plan has been issued and included the funding for the Water Treatment Facility upgrade. This is currently in the public comment period and once that is up, we will be approaching the board with the final loan applications.

- DPW has received the 12 hydrants that were ordered and have been replacing hydrants around town. Several of the hydrants that were identified as out of service were able to be repaired without replacement earlier this summer.
- Solids handling project continues into final design for the permanent building. The press contract has been signed and will be in production for delivery in April. We will need to bring in a mobile press unit in the next few weeks to dewater sludge in the existing holding tanks. We have secured contracts for disposal and to lease the unit. The current sewer budget includes \$75,000 for solids handling but did not include the equipment rental as at that time, we were not certain of manufacturing and delivery timeframe. Total cost to rent dewatering equipment and disposal is anticipated to be approximately \$160,000, partly due to increased trucking and disposal costs, but also due to the equipment rental costs. We are developing plans and will bring it back to the select board at the next meeting.
- Paving bids came in at \$109/ton, up from \$74/ton. Options include utilizing unallocated highway funds to offset the increased cost, reducing the amount of paving by 30% or postponing paving until the spring. Current pavement bids reflect impacts from State paving projects, as well as paving requirements for existing utility projects. Our recommendation is to re-bid this winter to see if costs come back down and complete the paving in the spring before the end of the fiscal year.
- Habitat for Humanity design team visited the house at 955 Portland Street on Friday. They are working on a concept plan and a budget to renovate this building for employee housing.
- This Friday is the last Final Friday event is this Friday and Railroad Street will be closed to traffic from 2:00 – 9:00 PM.
- Steven Beauregard and I met to discuss security and lighting in the Pearl Street and Railroad Street parking lots. Steve has reached out to Efficiency Vermont to see if their LED street light program was funded to replace the existing lights in the Pearl Street parking lot. He is also reaching out to Green Mountain Power to see if they can install additional lights in the Pearl Street Parking lot (behind the movie theatre). We are also working with the IT consultant that installed the downtown Wi Fi network to get some Wi Fi security cameras to place in these parking lots with security camera signage.

Other Business:

- Don Smith asked about the Timing of the LVRT project and Chad indicated that the Town will be working with consultants to get environmental clearances and permit this fall and winter with a goal to get into construction next summer.
- Tracy indicated that she was happy to see quick response on getting parking lot lighting up.

Board of Civil Authority:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy the board found that there was a need to enter executive session as premature general public knowledge would place the Town at substantial disadvantage.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan the board entered executive session and invited the Town Manager and Chair of the Board of Civil Authority.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy the board exited executive session. The Chair had nothing to report.

On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy the board adjourned.