



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board Sept. 12, 2022 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Rachel Waterhouse, Chad Whitehead, Steve Beauregard, Kresten Sterling, Paul Berlejung

Press: KATV,

Public: Mary Berlejung, Joanne Brown, Don Smith (via zoom), Gillian Sewake, Jim Brown, David Donnelly

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- Mary Berlejung approached expressed that she is glad to see public outreach regarding ARPA funding and potential use for sidewalk repairs. Encourages the board to allocate more funds in budget for next year to complete sidewalk spot repairs around town.
- Paul Berlejung presented the Select Board with a proposal to place a memorial banner on the lamp post outside of the Caplan's Building to honor Gary Ely and the Caplan's Building. Dennis said the Select Board would take his suggestion under advisement.
- Joanne Brown expressed concerns with the local funeral home and the Caledonian Record for publishing obituaries of people who have not died.
- Linda Perkins expressed her concerns over the construction on Jones Street. Concerned about access and potential property damage due to construction. Chad explained the Town will reach out to the Engineer.

### Warrants:

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

### Minutes:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to approve the Regular Select Board minutes from Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. All in favor.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Brendan to approve the Special Select Board minutes from Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. All in favor.

#### Liquor License:

- None

#### August Financials:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the August Financials.
- The property taxes are prorated in the governmental funds as well as interdepartmental and reserve funds.
- General fund at the end of August had a surplus of \$445,980. Departments within the general fund are on target currently. Important to note that some expenses are paid annually and some are paid quarterly.
- In August the Town received \$374,625 in ARPA funds. This amount does not include the county portion which is anticipated in September.
- The Special Services fund at the end of August had a deficit of \$12,767. Regular salaries and overtime combined are at 18% of the budget which is close to the budget for the end of August. Overtime in the special services fund continues to be an issue however recent hires should have a positive impact moving forward.
- The Highway fund at the end of August had a deficit of \$179,271. Departments within the highway fund are on budget. The temporary deficit is due to the equipment purchase in the amount of \$281,900.
- At the end of August, the water fund had negative revenue due to the audit entries and expense are on budget.
- The Sewer fund at the end of August had negative revenue due to audit entries and expense are on target.
- At the end of August, the parking meter fund had a deficit of \$1,701. Expense are on target and revenue is just slightly under budget.

#### VOREC Grant:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager outlined the plans of the VOREC Grant. Explained that the grant has been awarded and obligated at the state level however they are extremely delayed in sending letters.
- Gillian Sewake explained that this would allow some lead time to get the purchases completed which is important for the Town, Chamber and Rec. entities.
- Chad explained spending has been discussed with the Finance Officer who agrees that cash flow is not an issue, and it would be ok to move forward with the purchases.
- Tracy explained that they typically prioritize shovel ready projects and it unfortunate when they are held up due to an administrative lag.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to authorize the Town Manager to proceed with spending the awarded \$120,000 VOREC Grant funds pending the purchases are reimbursable through the grant. All in favor.
- Steve Isham asked if the VOREC Grant would affect ARPA funds. Chad said no the ARPA funds are separate funds for other parts of the project.

### Equipment Request:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the equipment request is for the mower attachment for the new tractor. Bids were received ranging from \$38,262.73 to \$57,895. The Town is recommending the purchase of the lowest bid at \$38,262.73. The request for the purchase and use of reserve funds has been approved by the Town Manager and Finance Officer per policy.
- Brendan asked if the \$38,262.73 would be from reserve funds. Chad said yes.
- Jim Brown inquired about the number of angels and configurations the mower would be able to make. Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW explained that it is a boom mower like what the Town had previously, the only difference is it is hooked on the end but still has a reach of 17 feet.
- Jim Brown asked if the mower would be able to take care of the roads. Steve Beauregard said yes, it is very similar to the previous mower.
- Joanne Brown asked about the \$281,000 equipment purchase. Chad explained that purchase was already advertised, and the purchase was complete.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to approve the purchase of the diamond mower in the amount of \$38,262.73 from Pete's Equipment using unallocated highway reserve funds. All in favor.
- Joanne Brown asked if Simon Miller was located within the state. Steve Beauregard explained the company they are purchasing the mower from is Pete's Equipment located in Morrisville, VT.
- Joanne Brown asked if there was any other company more local to St. Johnsbury. Dennis explained that St. Johnsbury has no equipment vendors in Town for the type of equipment Steve needs. Steve Beauregard explained the Town tries to go local to purchase things when they can.
- Joanne Brown asked if the purchase was in state. Steve Beauregard explained that the mower would be purchased in state.

### Town Managers' Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- The ARPA Committee continues to work with HCH consults. HCH attended the August Final Friday event to gather public input and is working to establish focus groups on the subjects of business/creative economy, housing, outdoor recreation, mental health/ social services and infrastructure. Anticipate these meetings to be held the last two weeks of Sept. virtually but will be open for the public to attend.
- DWSRF Intended Use Plan has been issued and included the funding for the Water Treatment Facility upgrade. Currently this is in the public comment period but we anticipate a Construction Application will be brought to the Select Board at the next board meeting.
- DPW continues to replace hydrants in Town.
- Some emergency utility repairs have taken priority in DPW and resulted in a boil water notice last week.
- DPW crews are working on replacing the subbase and road materials on a section of Old Man Mountain Road.
- The sewer siphon under the Moose River is complete and operational. The department is working to clean out some of the service lines that were affected by the change in operations during the pumping.
- The solids handling project continues into final design for the permanent building. The press contract has been signed and will be in productions 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. Total cost to rent the equipment and disposal is anticipated to be approximately \$160,000. Expect to have this on the next Select Board agenda.
- As previously discussed at the last Select Board meeting paving bids came in 30% higher than anticipated. Moving forward with our recommendation to re-bid this winter and complete the paving in the spring before the end of the fiscal year.
- Habitat for Humanity design team completed a preliminary cost evaluation for 955 Portland Street. Estimates range from \$192,000 to \$288,000 to remodel the building for two units. The Town is working with NCIC to see if there maybe any funding sources to help reduce the cost to the Town.
- Steve Isham asked if it had been determined that 955 Portland Street will be renovated by the Town and used as employee housing. Chad said no the Town is exploring possible options.
- On Sept. 1, 2022, a resident of the Fairbanks Inn was kicked out. This individual relocated to a private lot across the street and camped out for nearly a week before the property owner decided they wanted the individual off their property. The Police Department worked with service providers to try to get the individual assistances, but they refused. The individual was cited for trespassing and released. It is believed that this individual is still in the area but have no details on their housing situation.
- The Town has asked for details regarding the housing program and the responsibilities of the hotel owner but have been told that the “residents” of the hotel make their own arrangements and the State of Vermont only pays the cost of the rooms.
- There continues to be increased Emergency call volume to the Fairbanks Inn, and the Town continues with our stance that the owner is not operating the property as a hotel or motel in violation of Town ordinances.
- Jim Brown commented that the individual has been seen sitting on the benches in front of the Court House.
- Steve Isham asked if the Town has received any penalties from the State regarding the Moose River incident. Chad explained that the Town has not been fined. That the State was happy with the quick resolution of the issue. Steve Beauregard explained that the issue was corrected within hours of the Town finding out about it.
- Brendan inquired if the five focus groups for ARPA funds were derived from the committee. Chad explained that the committee and the public.
- Brendan asked how it was determined who would be a part of each focus group. Chad explained that the focus groups were created based on committee and community interest and are open to those from the public who wish to attend.
- Joanne Brown asked if the Fire Department was even held accountable for the hydrant not working. Dennis explained that there was no way of knowing the hydrant would not work at that time. Hydrants are mechanical devices they malfunction. Explained that there was no prior knowledge or evidence that the hydrant did not work. Chad explained that the Fire Department and DPW are proactive in working together to test the hydrants in the Town.

#### Other Business:

- David Donnelly approached the Select Board regarding freedom of speech, child rights, public rights, elections being cyber hacked and constitutional rights. David explained he has liberated himself from government actors. David mentioned he wanted the board to review some documentation. Dennis said the board would look at it.

- Jim Brown expressed concerns with the signage used by JA McDonalds on the Pleasant and Gilman construction project. The signage is inaccurate and confusing making it remarkably difficult to work with. Chad explained he will look into this.
- Jim Brown explained that the Planning Commission is requesting a public hearing for two matters. The board scheduled the public hearing for Oct.11<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 5:30 pm with the regular Select Board meeting to follow.

Bulay Appeal:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy that an executive session was needed to address a matter that premature general public knowledge would put the Town at substantial risk. All in favor.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to enter executive session and invite the Town Manager. All in favor.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to exit executive session.
- The Select Board Chair had nothing to report.

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