



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board May 9, 2022 @ 6:00 pm

### Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak (via zoom), Lesley Russ (via zoom), Kresten Sterling, Bradley Reed, Stacy Jewell, Paul Berlejung

Press: Todd Wellington, KATV

Public: Jim Brown, Mary Berlejung, Don Smith (via zoom), Joanne Brown, Kevin Fontesha, Gillian Sewake, Chris Mercon, Val, Sam,

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- Joanne Brown approached the board regarding the upcoming state vote in November. Frank explained that public comment is for issues directly relating to the Town of St. Johnsbury. The Select Board has no say in the Senate vote in November. Joanne asked that the Vice Chair overrule the Chair and allow her to discuss the election. Frank said if she has Town business she can be heard.
- Joanne Brown asked about the altered way of set up for the Select Board meeting. She expressed her concern over the set up. Frank commented the set up change was due to the sun and urged her to contact Chad Whitehead, Town Manager to voice her opinion.
- Steve Isham suggested if she wishes to be heard to send a letter to the editor at the Caledonian Record. This would allow her to be heard beyond the Select Board.

### Warrants:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis 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 April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 with the correction of "be aware" under the zoning report. All in favor.

### Liquor License:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham to approve the following liquor license renewals. All in favor. Brendan abstained.
  - Central Cafe- 1<sup>st</sup> class renewal and outside consumption
  - Aladdin Food Management Services, LLC- 3<sup>rd</sup> class renewal
- Tracy announced her ownership of Kingdom Table and Taproom. She identified this conflict and stated for the record that she will not vote on items that pertain directly to the Kingdom Table and Taproom. Tracy did express that she believes she can be fair with other establishments in town.
- Sam from 25 Depot Restaurant approached the Select Board and asked them if they needed any additional information regard their liquor license application.
- Frank commented that the board is all good with the new applications.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the following new liquor licenses. Brendan and Steve Isham abstained.
  - 98 Mill St., LLC.- 1<sup>st</sup> class, 3<sup>rd</sup> class and outside consumption
  - The Tack Room LLC- 1<sup>st</sup> class and 3<sup>rd</sup> class
  - 25 Depot Restaurant- 1<sup>st</sup> class

#### April Financials:

- Lesley Russ, Finance Officer provided the April Financials.
- The property taxes are prorates in the governmental funds as well as interdepartmental and reserve funds. The preliminary audit is scheduled for June 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. .
- General fund at the end of April had a surplus of \$953,441. Departments within the general fund are on target except for the public safety building repairs and economic development due to the Armory Project. Tax sale has been schedule for June 16<sup>th</sup>.
- ARPA grant funds were transferred to the general fund in April and the reporting to the Treasury has been completed.
- Delinquent tax receivables are \$262,263 vs \$318,159 at this time last year.
- Special Services fund at the end of April had a surplus of \$5,588. Regular salaries and overtime combined are at 84% of those budgeted line items and are on target at this time. Overtime in the special services fund will continue as the recently hired employee is now attending the police academy and another employee has resigned. Recruitment to fill this vacancy is underway.
- The Highway fund at the end of April had a surplus of 371,989. The highway fund is on target. Debt payments of \$253k will be paid in May and June. The last quarterly state roads payment for this fiscal year was received in April.
- At the end of April the water fund had a temporary deficit of \$243,455. Revenue is under budget due to booking revenue to the prior year during our audit.
- The Sewer fund at the end of April had a deficit of \$552,094. Revenue is under budget due to booking in the revenue to the prior year during our audit.
- At the end of April the parking meter fund had a deficit of \$9,187. Revenues are improving and expense are on target at this time.
- Dennis asked if the \$953,441 surplus in the general fund included the ARPA funds. Lesley said yes.
- Dennis stated he believed the Town received more than \$900,000 in ARPA funding. It was explained by Chad and Lesley that the Town has only received the first ARPA payment of ARPA funding.
- Brendan asked if Lesley was concerned about the temporary deficit in the general fund. Lesley said no.

#### Internal Control and Fraud Risk Assessment Policy Review:

- Lesley Russ, Finance Officer reviewed the process of reviewing and updating the Internal Control and Fraud Risk Assessment Policy. She explained the process includes review by department heads, feedback and changes are submitted to finance. Everyone is included in the process. Minimal changes were made in 2022 to include that the Town Clerk's Office takes the deposit to the bank and that a second signature is required on expense reports.
- Chad explained that the Select Board generally adopts the Internal Control and Fraud Risk Assessment Policy annually.
- Lesley explained that the Internal Control and Fraud Risk Assessment Policy is reviewed yearly typically in April and the auditors request to review the policy when they come each year.
- Dennis asked if anything has been changed since a few weeks ago. Lesley said no.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to adopt the Internal Control and Fraud Risk Assessment Policy as presented. All in favor.
- Steve Isham commended Lesley on the Internal Control and Fraud Risk Assessment Policy. Someone new could come and in and know what is expected. These documents do a nice job highlighting the key controls. Since the 2014 Audits only 2 minor discrepancies have been noted, it shows that this policy has been implemented and followed. Shows the tax payers that their Town funds are well looked after. Thanked Lesley.

#### St. Johnsbury Chamber Update:

- Gillian Sewake provided the board and community with an update from the Chamber and reviewed the purpose of the Chamber with the board.
- Upcoming Events in St. Johnsbury Include:
  - June 4<sup>th</sup> Pet Parade
  - June 9<sup>th</sup> ACCD Conference
  - Food truck events at the LVRT Pavilion on the second Tuesday of June, July and Aug. from 4 to 7 pm.
- Working on finalizing some logistics for live music every Saturday in St. Johnsbury.
- Jim Brown asked where the live music would be on Saturdays. Gillian said at Boxcar and Caboose.
- Final Friday events will take place the last Friday of June, July and August from 4-7 pm. Railroad Street will be closed to traffic during this time. Along with live music there will be art demonstrations and activities for children. At 7 pm Catamount Arts will put on an 11 amp show in the heart of the downtown.
- Encouraged people to check out Discover St. Johnsbury calendar for more events.
- Highlighted in 2021 twelve new businesses opened in downtown St. Johnsbury. Since 2022 two more business have opened and knows of five more with definite plans to open.
- Jim Brown asked if the Chamber has explored the idea of an outdoor movie fest. Commented that he would like to see something along those lines. Gillian said she would reach out to Jody at Catamount Arts to see if this is something they could work together on but it would likely not happen this summer.
- Brendan commended Gillian on all her hard work. Mention that not only does she do a lot of work on the front lines but she also does a large amount of work behind the scenes. Applaud all the work she does for the community.

#### Fire Department Engine 2 Repair Request:

- Fire Chief Bradley Reed explained that items included in the estimate is what is needed in order for Engine 2 to be inspected. The repair costs are estimated at \$6,368.37. Engine 2 is a 2005 and is due for replacement in 2025. Engine 2 is primarily used as a rescue pumper and carries 90% of the rescue technical equipment needed such as the Jaws of Life.
  - Chad Whitehead, Town Manager indicated that Chief Reed has located the funds within his budget projections for the repairs therefore not asking for a request for funds but since the amount was not budgeted for and is over \$5,000 looking for Select Boards approval for the repairs.
  - Frank inquired how long Engine 2 would be out of service for the repairs. Chief Reed said he didn't know the exact time frame but assumes a couple of days.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to approve the repairs to Engine 2 in the amount of \$6,368.37. All in favor.

#### 955 Portland Street:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that he has been working with the Town's Agent to Convey Real Estate, Mathew Ghafoori on plans to sell 955 Portland Street.
- He explained that 955 Portland Street was acquired during Tax Sale and is filled with trash. Reviewed the report Mathew Ghafoori completed regarding the Town's options for the property. If the property was to be sold as is it is estimated to sell for \$29,900 to \$39,900. If the property was to be cleaned up and striped down to the studs it is estimated the property would sell for \$59,900 to \$75,000. Property clean-up is estimated at \$17,500 to \$20,000.
- Requesting the funds in the amount of \$20,000 for the renovation of 955 Portland Street. By cleaning up the property it will make the house more marketable and pushes it in the right direction to make a nice home for someone. Once the property is sold the funds would be returned to the unallocated general fund.
- Frank asked how quickly the clean-up could take place and if the property was on the market yet. Chad said he is hoping to have the property sold this summer. He believes the contractor is ready to move on it fairly quickly however there is currently a contractor shortage so unsure of the exact time frame.
- Dennis asked if Chad believes the \$20,000 was enough for the clean-up. Chad explained based on the estimates received it should be but if it's not he could come back to ask for additional funds.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to use \$20,000 from the unallocated general fund for the renovations of 955 Portland Street. All in favor.

#### Town Managers' Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Fire Department tow vehicle Squad 5 was placed up for bid on a municipal bidding site as it would not pass inspection so we could no longer utilize it. Squad 5 has sold for \$7,200.
- Wrapping up the insurance claim for Car 1 with the final number coming in around \$20,000. Some insurance funds will have to be chased for equipment once we are replacing the equipment. Chief Reed has completed RFPs for a replacement Car 1 and Squad 5. Bids are due back on May 13<sup>th</sup> and once the bids have been reviewed and a plan developed we expect to be coming to the Select Board so we can executive those purchases.
- Bids for the South Main St. and Railroad St. Bike and Pedestrian Project were due back April 22<sup>nd</sup>. We received one Town bid that came in just over \$377,000. This amount is in excess of the budgeted but engineer at VHB are currently evaluating the bid and come back to the Town and VTrans with recommendations on how to proceed.

- Bids for the ARPA facilitator are currently under review. Expecting a recommendation be made at the May 16<sup>th</sup> ARPA Committee meeting and hoping to have the approval of a facilitator for the ARPA Committee on the next Select Board agenda to move forward.
- JA McDonald continues construction on the Pleasant and Gilman Street Projects. The bore under the river is currently underway but we are still currently pumping and bypassing at this time. Expect this to continue throughout the summer.
- Alliance Construction is wrapping up the sidewalk project on Eastern Ave and Pearl Street.
- Alliance Construction is also scheduled to do the sidewalk repairs the Board approved at the last meeting. This is scheduled to be completed in the next 4-6 weeks depending on availability of the curbing.
- Steve has received complaints regarding dust. There has been a delay in getting the chloride due to chain supply shortage. DPW is expected to receive chloride tomorrow and will begin dispersing it to the dust areas. Another delivery of chloride is schedule for Thursday.
- Tax Sale is scheduled for June 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Onboarding in the Fire Department will take place within the next month.
- Currently advertising for the opening in the Police Department and the new Dispatch position which becomes open on July 1.
- Attended the Fairbanks Museum groundbreaking. Congressmen Peter Welch was present along with representatives from USDA, ACCD and Vermont College Systems.
- Met with the USDA last week regarding the Rail Trail Project. They are excited to see the next phase of the transportation project move forward.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager mentioned that he continues to work on the Armory Project, things are moving along. Working with Irene Negale from NVDA to procure funding from the EPA for master planning. EPA has awarded the town funds for Main Street Revitalization.
- Working with other communities as we prepare for the completion of the LVRT. Preliminary meeting next month to collaborate.
- Joe Kasprzak mentioned that the Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program received 20 applications during this round. The RHIGP Committee is meeting Friday and plans to come to the Select Board soon with recommendations regarding awards.
- Working on a couple preliminary tax stabilization applications with the Tax Stabilization Committee. Hope to come to the Select Board within the next 4-6 weeks with a couple applications.
- Jim Brown mentioned that there is a lot of dust on Gilman and Concord and was wondering if that was on the schedule. Chad mentioned that is within the contracted area and will reach out to JA McDonald as it is within the contract that they address the dust.

#### Other Business:

- Tom Turek approached the Select Board asking the Town to consider looking at green space for athletics in St. Johnsbury. He explained that the youth programs continue to grow in the area and there is a need for athletic fields.
- Tom explained he has identified a few potential places for fields but doesn't want to put the cart before the horse.
- Steve Isham asked if the fields would be available only for youth recreation. Tom said he envisions Town Fields that would primarily be for youth recreation but could about host other events/programs.

- Jim Brown recommended a field he used back in 2014 when he coached soccer. He mentioned the field is a decent width/length and could be ready for use as soon as today potentially.
- Tom asked the Town to consider the need for green space in St. Johnsbury for athletics.
- Tracy commented that she has seen the benefits of the youth recreation programs in the Town.

Executive Session:

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

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