



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board Jan. 23, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

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

Press: KATV

Public: Gillian Sewake (via zoom), Scott Beck, Becky Masure, Don Smith (via zoom), Tyler Labrier

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

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 Brendan to accept the Select Board meeting minutes from Jan. 9th, 2023 with the noted corrections. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Frank asked who Wesco Inc. was. Stacy replied Champlain Farms.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy approve the 2nd class liquor license and tobacco for Wesco Inc. and the 1st class club liquor license and 3rd class club liquor license for VFW- Ralph Mollica. All in favor. Brendan abstained.

Proposed Budget Presentation:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided an overview of the proposed Budget for 2023-2024 and the budget development process. Expenses have an increase of 10.8% which includes an increase

in labor costs, pension contributions and increase in fuel material costs. He explained the only change to the budget since the last Select Board meeting was a benefit change for July 1.

- The proposed budget impact on taxes inside the special services district is a 6.33% and outside the special services is 3.55%. The Town is recommending stabilizing the taxes by use of un-allocated reserve funds for 2023-2024. He explained there are no unusually large increase in any of the Town's department budgets. Based on feedback throughout the year the Town has included a planned increase in the paving and sidewalk budgets for 2023-2024. Chad explained that there is a need for repairs to sidewalks and streets and the Town anticipates seeking grant funds to help offset the costs. There is also a recommended increase to the planning and zoning budget due to the Town's growth including new businesses and projected Town Plan renewal in 2025. He explained the proposed budget can be found on the Town website as well.
- Chad encouraged anyone with questions to please reach out to him or the Select Board. Following the public input meetings the budget will go to the Select Board for approve and then be sent to the voters for Town Meeting. Tax rates would then be set in August of 2023.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy the Select Board approved the proposed 2023-2024 budget. All in favor.

December Financials:

- Lesley Russ, Finance Officer provided the following December financials.
- The property taxes are prorated in the governmental funds as well as interdepartmental and reserve funds.
- General fund at the end of December had a surplus of \$1,243,138. Departments within the general fund are on target. The surplus does include ARPA funds in the amount of \$1,069,707. The second payments to those with large appropriations was made in December.
- The Special Services fund at the end of December had a surplus of \$4,985. Regular salaries and overtime combined are at 56% of the budget. Staffing continues to be an issue in the police department.
- The Highway fund at the end of December had a surplus of \$55,628. Departments within the highway fund are on budget. Loan proceeds were received and deposited in December.
- At the end of December, the water fund had a deficit of \$433,855. Expenses in the water fund are on budget except for chemical supplies and fire hydrant purchases that were authorized previously by the Select Board.
- The Sewer fund at the end of December had a surplus of \$1,135,293. The Sewer Fund has received \$1,836,236 in grant funds for the Pleasant and Gilman project. The sewer plant is over budget due to solids handling and the purchase of RBC frames.
- At the end of December, the parking meter fund had a surplus of \$8,191. Revenues are ahead of projections.

Wastewater Treatment Facility Bond Article:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained the history behind the recent changes at the Wastewater Treatment Facility including that the Town is no longer able to land apply wastewater solids due to increasing concerns of PFOAs. An Engineer was hired to look at all of the Town's options and has determined that the preferred alternative is a dewatering system and then trucking the solids to the landfill. Chad explained the dewatering press has been purchased with the Bond.

However there is a remaining 3.98 million for the facility. The two proposed bond items are as follows.

- #1 to repurpose 2.30 million from the 2016 bond for this project.
- #2 to request 1.676 million bond for the remaining cost of the project.
- Chad read the warning.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the bond questions for Town Meeting. All in favor.
- Stacy asked about the warning. Chad explained that it could be warned with the Town Meeting warning and that he would touch base with Stacy on that.
- Stacy asked if the 2 separate questions asking and asked if the approved questions would be in the packet for the regular warning. Chad said he would touch base with her.

Articles for Town Meeting Ballot:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk explained that not all the articles for the Town Meeting Ballot were ready for tonight. She explained that she thought the Cemetery Commission would be presenting an article tonight to ask to establish a reserve account. She asked for a Select Board meeting on Monday 1/30/23 for the ballot and warnings.
- Meeting was set for 1/30/23 at 6 pm. It was confirmed that only a majority of the board would need to sign.
- Chad explained that he would run the Cemetery Commission request by legal to determine if that posed any potential risk. Stacy explained the proposed wording came directly from VLCT.
- Stacy mentioned the article to appoint a Town Moderator has been removed from the ballot as the Town Charter updates have not been sent to the committee yet.
- Frank asked Scott Beck if he knew when it might go to the legislative committee. Scott mentioned that is was on the docket.
- Stacy said she would get the articles put together for the Select Board to review ahead of the meeting on Monday night.

Forest Fire Warden Appointment:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to appoint Chief Bradley Reed as the Forest Fire Warden for the Town of St. Johnsbury. All in favor.

Packard Court Update:

- Becky Masure and Tyler Labrier provided the Select Board with an update regarding Packard Court. Becky explained that the DAC had already approved the plans and the safety concerns presented have been addressed and the trees have been cleared, a perimeter fence was installed along with no trespassing signs.
- Tyler explained they are seeking funding to move forward. They are working on resubmitting a HUD application for 3.7 million due 01/24/23 with an award date of May 2023. Also working on VT Housing application due in Feb for an award date in April.
- Hoping for funding awards in 2023, construction to begin in spring of 2024 and project completion in 2025. Ready to move forward once given the green light. Continue to communicate with the Zoning Administrator and will go through the DRB process again for the updated Senior Housing and Pocket Park approval.
- Brendan stated that he appreciated that the forest was gone. Thanked them for taking care of it.

- Frank commented that it looks a lot better. Appreciate the efforts.
- Tracy expressed that it was exciting to see the site plans and the recent clean-up of the site.

955 Portland Street Intent to Convey Real Estate:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager approached the Select Board about the offer made on 955 Portland Street in the amount of \$50,000 from Isaac Jacobs. Chad explained the property was purchased at Tax Sale by the Town for \$10,700, clean-up cost \$19,787, along with real estate fees and legal/admin. fees leaving the total cost around \$36,053. Explained that the individual purchasing it has proposed to convert the property into 3 units. Chad explained that the intent will convey real estate will be posted and people will be able to file an appeal until Feb. 25th.
- Dennis asked if the property would support parking for three units. Chad explained that the property owner would need to come up with a plan for that.
- Dennis mentioned that he doesn't see a lot of adequate parking there. Chad explained that in order to go from a 2 unit property to a 3 unit property they would have to go to the DRB for approval and parking could be addressed at that time.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the Intent to Convey Real Estate for 955 Portland Street. All in favor.

Downtown Transportation Grant Fund Resolution:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the Town is looking
- He explained the proposed project has been ran by the Bike Red. Committee. The first portion of the grant would address the Portland Street concern of uncontrolled sidewalk which at this point is nonexistent. The second portion of the grant would address safety concerns in the Railroad Street Parking lot. It would include pulling out all landscaping, placing pavers and potted plants, along with more lighting and a security system. The project is estimated to cost \$250,000. With \$200,000 coming from ACCD and the remaining \$50,000 coming from local funds to satisfy the 80/20 match for the ACCD grant. Recommend using \$50,000 from the sidewalk reserve fund for the match.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to approve the Downtown Transportation Grant Fund Resolution, authorize the Town Manager to execute and the use of \$50,000 from the sidewalk reserve fund for the local match. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- He explained that the sidewalk plow's tracks were damaged and needed to be replaced. Another pair was obtained today and DPW expects to finish sidewalk clean up tomorrow.
- LVRT continues to move forward. Expecting to see the preliminary engineering report in the near future. Working on advertising for a project manager.
- Hoping to have the VOREC Grant application finalized in the next couple of weeks so reimbursement can be submitted. The bike trailer has arrived, the bikes are on their way and working on a snowshoe pop up.
- Tracy asked about ARPA. Chad explained that the ARPA Committee has a meeting on Monday January 30th to review the proposed application and plan to bring it to the Select Board at the first meeting in February.

- Brendan asked if the Select Board would be seeing applications for ARPA funding at the next Select Board meeting. Chad said no but plans to discuss the process and application.

Other Business:

- None

Executive Session:

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

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