



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board March 13th, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

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

Press: KATV

Public: Gillian Sewake, Don Smith (via zoom), Jim Brown, Peter V(via zoom), Heather Grove (via zoom),
Robert Zarnetske (via zoom), Shane LaCroix, Jim Kendall, Elizabeth Stauffer

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Warrants:

- On a motion by and Brendan second by Tracy to table to warrants until after public comment. All in favor. Dennis abstained.

Minutes:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy the minutes from the February 27th, 2023 meeting until the next Select Board meeting on March 27th. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Shane LaCroix provided an overview of his request for a liquor license for Mobile Mixers. He explained that his business will be a full service bar tending service. He mentioned that they are fully insured.
- Tracy inquired if he would need to get a liquor license in each Town he travels to or just the one he resides in. Stacy explained that he just needs approval from the Town he resides in but will need event permits from the Towns where the events are held.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Steve Isham approve the following liquor licenses. All in favor Brendan abstained.

- Lamplighters LLC- 1st class and 3rd class renewal
- Mobile Mixers- 1class and 3rd class.

February Financials:

- Lesley Russ, Finance Officer provided the following February financials.
- The property taxes are prorated in the governmental funds as well as interdepartmental and reserve funds.
- General fund at the end of February had a surplus of \$1,181,124. Departments within the general fund are on target. The surplus does include ARPA funds in the amount of \$1,069,707. Overtime continues to exceed the budget in the dispatch and fire department. The new employee in Dispatch should be available to fill shifts beginning in May. We still have one vacancy to fill in the Fire Department.
- The Special Services fund at the end of February had a deficit of \$81,754. Regular salaries and overtime combined are at 73% of the budget. Staffing continues to be an issue in the police department. We recently had one employee out on short term disability and we anticipate their return to unrestricted duties in the next few weeks. This will help reduce overtime, but still leaves the department with 3 ½ vacancies. Expenses include two new outfitted vehicles at a costs of \$102,800 of which \$50,000 will be reimbursed by a grant.
- The Highway fund at the end of February had a surplus of \$241,787. Departments within the highway fund are on budget at this time.
- At the end of February, the water fund had a deficit of \$294,626. Expenses in the water fund are on budget except for chemical supplies. Revenue is under budget due to year-end audit adjustments.
- The Sewer fund at the end of February had a surplus of \$1,866,356. The Sewer Fund has received \$2,502,503 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 February the parking meter fund had a surplus of \$14,303. Revenues are ahead of projections at this time.

St. Johnsbury Revitalization Grant Fund:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the HCH was hired to conduct
- Robert Zarneske from HCH provided an overview of the process and the written report. He explained that after holding a series of meetings with the advisory committee, conducting online interviews, hosting a Town Hall event and interviewing community members at a Final Fridays event HCH was able to conclude that housing and recreation are a top priority for St. Johnsbury. He explained that other areas of concern are infrastructure, small business, the creative economy and mental health. Leveraging other funds will be key to put the Town in a good position. He explained that already \$500,000 of ARPA funds have been expensed which has netted over 15 million in projects for St. Johnsbury.
- Steve Isham asked HCH to explain the four dimension diagram on page 12 of the report. Robert explained that it is broken into 4 sections. The left side is obligations to the federal government which the town has met. The issue now is the right side. He urged as the grant is dispersed to sub recipients to monitor it carefully. He explained that this grant is larger than anything the Town has engaged in in the past. He suggested that a check list is developed for applicants. Robert mentioned he doesn't think there will be much trouble with the Micro Grants and Planning Grants as long as the Town adds capacity to oversee this program.

- Brendan asked why only some focus groups list out participants in the field notes. Robert said it was the size of the group. Tracy confirmed that the larger groups didn't list all participants. Robert said yes.
- Steve Isham mentioned that he thinks the scoring matrix. He questioned how the committee would balance out applications with the recommendations from HCH and the community. Chad explained that the hope is to balance out through the funding for each phase. He explained that the committee has decided that \$50,000 should be allocated for Micro Grants with an award amount of \$1,000 to \$5,000, use \$100,000 for Planning Grants that would range from \$5,000 to \$40,000. With the hopes that a second round can happen at a later date.
- Chad explained he met with Lesley Russ, Finance Officer and Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk/ Treasurer to discuss the process and bringing on an admin. to help support the program. The idea is that the admin. would be full time and would also incorporate the duties of rental housing and parking administration as the current staff has given their notice. Chad did reach out to NCIC and at this time they are unable to manage this program.
- Tracy asked if the procurement specialist would be contracted out. Chad said yes a draft RFP has been created to advertise for that position when the time comes.
- Tracy inquired about if the Town were to be able to apply for funding for projects and how that would happen as there seems to be a gap there. Chad explained that community groups would be able to ask for the funds on behalf of the Town. However the Select Board has the authority over all funds and if they chose to allocate funds to a Town project they could.
- Tracy asked if certain projects would be flagged for the Select Board as those that could benefit for the funding. Chad said he was unsure of specific improvements that might seek funding however he said the Town would look to federal funding for water and sewer projects and bridge projects. We will let the public tell us what needs to be addressed.
- Gillian Sewake expressed that she felt assistance for the Town and procurement specialist to help leverage additional funding was important.
- Robert mentioned that the only specific requests during the survey was the Kiwanians Pool and Babe Ruth Fencing.
- Steve Isham wanted to confirmed that the Town could just allocate funds if they choose. Chad said yes it would be up to the Select Board.
- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk questioned the Administrative Assistant ad as it doesn't state that the applicant needs a finance background. She expressed that this position is not just an Administrative Assistant. Chad explained that Lesley is still the Finance Officer. He explained that the position would be responsible for overseeing the program such as outreach, working with applicants to complete the application, collecting applications, bringing the applications to the committee, following up on applications, and collecting required documents for payment and submitting payment documents to the Town Treasurer for processing. He mentioned that the Select Board will have the final approval for applications for funding.
- Frank asked if this position would seek out grants for the Town. Chad said no that would be done through a Procurement Specialist.
- Frank asked if the funding for that would come out of the \$104,000. Chad said yes.
- Frank asked if that position would be full time. Chad said yes the administrative assistant position would be full time.
- Frank asked if the procurement specialist would be a Town employee. Chad said no it would be a contracted position.
- Dennis expressed his concerns over hiring for a temporary position with this funding and believes it is a mistake.

- Tracy asked if the admin. would be done after a year. Chad explained that the position would have be re-evaluated and determined at that time if the position should continue to be full time or resort back to part time.
- Joe Kasprzak expressed that with his experience with Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program \$104,000 to bring on assistances with the program is huge. With \$50,000 of the \$104,000 the Town would be able to turn a part time role into a full time role. This would be easier for recruitment to have a full time position and allows for consolidation of part time roles. This proposed position will help to create capacity to assist with the St. Johnsbury Revitalization Grant Fund and the bolstered RHIGP.
- Joe explained that the procurement specialist will be able to assist the Town to understand grant funding available to the Town through other sources.
- Frank asked if it would be an outside grant position. Chad said yes.
- Brendan confirmed that the procurement specialist position was being addressed later on and only the part time was tonight. Chad said yes the \$50,000 is the delta to bring on a full time employee for one year.
- Steve Isham asked if the person would know the position was only funded for one year. Chad said yes that would be made transparent.
- Stacy expressed her concern that the ad doesn't represent the position and what is needed to cover the grant program. Chad explained that the duties would be discussed during the interview and are included in the job description.
- Stacy asked why an ad that was so generic was put out when the purpose she thought was to take work of the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager's desk.
- Frank confirmed that the position would also assist with the Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program and the grants that come in for the ARPA Committee. Chad explained that the position would collect the applications, make sure they are complete, check them in, and send them to the Committee, follow up once awarded funds, and works with the applicant to get their reimbursement requests complete and to the Town Treasurer for processing.
- Frank asked if this would also include Doug Reid's part time duties. Chad said yes this position would also include Doug Reid's duties of parking administration, admin. to the rental housing registry and rental housing improvement grant program.
- Frank mentioned that it will be important to make sure the grant is taken care of and he doesn't feel the Town should hire more part time people right now.
- Tracy commented that this is a big lift and a lot of work and that a team approach would be key. Chad said yes it would be a team approach from the Town.
- Stacy mentioned that her office will not be chasing down finish projects in order to cut them a check. Her office will only be cutting checks. Frank mentioned that everything would be fulfilled before it got to her. Chad explained that the admin will work with the Town Manager's Office to close out the projects and present the reimbursement documents to the Town Treasurer. Chad mentioned this is why the funding for the additional capacity in the Town Manager's Office is important.
- Steve Isham express the importance of the report from HCH and how valuable it can be to the Town beyond the ARPA funds. He explained that the report from HCH has some of the same consistency with the VCRD- Town visit over 7 years ago.
- Tracy asked what the specific ask was for tonight. Chad explained the committee's ask is for \$50,000 for micro grants, \$100,000 for planning grants and \$50,000 for the administrative assistant position.

- Tracy confirmed that if the request was approved tonight the funding down the road could be allocated differently depending on how things go. Chad said that was correct and the committee would bring recommended changes back to the Select Board if needed.
- Joe explained that the request should also include the approval of the application and process.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Brendan to approve allocating \$200,000 in St. Johnsbury Revitalization Funds as follows, \$50,000 for Micro Grants, \$100,000 for Planning Grants and \$50,000 for an Administrative Assistant and to approve the application and process as presented. All in favor.

St. J Center Easement:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that a neighboring property to the parking lot in St. J Center is asking for an easement. Chad asked the board to table until the Town had more information regarding the requested easement.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to table the St. J Center Easement. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- The Railroad Street Project and South Main Street Project are out to bid. Plans are with HBH.
- Water Treatment bid opening is scheduled for Thursday March 23rd at 1 pm. Frank stated he would be there.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager asked the Select Board to consider having a Special Select Board Meeting starting at 5:30 pm on Monday March 27th to give NEKA a chance to hold a Public Hearing regarding their VCDC CDGP Feasibility and Planning Grant and host a public meeting at 5:45 pm for the VCDP CDPG Implementation Grant for the Armory.
- Frank stated that was fine and he would be there.

Other Business:

- Jim Brown asked if he missed anything during the organizational meeting and if he was reappointed to the Planning Commission, NVDA Board and Beautifications. He was told yes he had been reappointed.

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