



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board March 27th, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Stacy Jewell, Rachel Waterhouse, Tim Page, Paul Berlejung

Press: KATV,

Public: Jim Brown, Gillian Sewake, Kevin Fontecia, Don Smith (via zoom), Casey Winterson, Jenna O'Farrell, Linda Lotti, Bob Holmes

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- Chief Tim Page gave the Select Board an update on the immigrants coming to St. Johnsbury. He explained that Gillian Sewake has done the heart of the work connecting the immigrants with resources. Chief Page mentioned that he has been working to get the attention of others including the State of Vermont and Agency of Human Services regarding the immigrants in hopes to find a solution before it becomes a problem.
- Frank asked if the meeting was taking place in Montpelier. Chad said no it was a zoom meeting.
- Frank thanked Chief Page and Gillian Sewake for their swift action on this matter.
- Gillian Sewake mentioned it would not have been possible without St. J Hub as they have help coordinate space for people to wait, assisted with meals. NEKCA has assisted with housing. RCT has assisted with transportation and the St. Johnsbury Community members have been so supportive.
- Frank said he appreciated everything and thanked everyone involved.
- Jim Brown mentioned that he lived 2 years in Haiti and would be happy to assist with translating if needed.
- Steve Isham wanted to confirm that St. Johnsbury is not their destination just a point of exchange. Gillian said yes St. Johnsbury is just a point of exchange for the folks that have been to Town so far.

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Tracy and second by Brendan to approve the Select Board meeting minutes from March 13th with the noted correction. All in favor.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to approve the Special Select Board meeting minutes from March 13th with the noted correction of Jamie Murphy's name. All in favor. Dennis abstained.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the Select Board minutes from Feb. 27th with the noted correction. All in favor. Tracy abstained.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Frank reviewed the liquor and tobacco license requests
 - Whiskey Den- 1st class and 3rd class liquor license
 - Pamela Petty- 2nd class liquor license and tobacco license
 - Catamount Arts- 1st class liquor license
 - Center Tower LLC- 2nd class liquor license, tobacco license and tobacco substitute endorsement
 - American Legion Post #58- 1st and 3rd class liquor license
- Dennis asked if Pamela Petty was Petty Co. Junction. Stacy said yes.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the liquor and tobacco licenses as presented. Brendan abstained.

VCDP Resolution- Application for NEKCA Planning Project:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to authorize the VCDP CDGP application and resolution for the NEKCA Planning Grant. All in favor.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to authorize the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager to execute. All in favor.

VCDP Resolution- Application for Armory Redevelopment Project:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to authorize the VCDP CDPG application and resolution for the Armory Implementation Grant. All in favor.
- On motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to authorize the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager to execute. All in favor.

98 Mill Street Tax Stabilization Agreement:

- Steve Isham recused himself as Kevin Fontecia is family.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager introduced Kevin Fontecia to the Select Board. Explained that Kevin is here to discuss the terms of his tax stabilization agreement with the Town.
- Kevin Fontecia approached the board regarding Article 5 #4 of his Tax Stabilization Agreement with the Town of St. Johnsbury. Kevin mentioned that Article 5 #4 refers to the number of FTE jobs. He explained that even despite actively recruiting he has not been getting applicants and when he does he is unable to retain them. He explained that he has revised his business plan to being open only 5 to 7 days a week for dinner to start. The draft menu is being reviewed and is expected to be finalized shortly. Getting closer to an opening date but staffing is an issue. He asked the Select Board to consider extending the requirements for FTE employment out a year.

- Dennis asked if it would just extend year to year. Joe mentioned that he felt it would be best to just push it back to 5 FTEs the 2nd year and 10 FTEs the 3rd year. Joe commented on how amazing the building looks and that the restaurant is turnkey ready.
- Dennis mentioned that the request sounded reasonable to him.
- Frank mentioned that he was in favor of this.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to approve Kevin Fontecia's request to bump the FTE requirements out a year. All in favor.

Designated Downtown Renewal and Resolution:

- Gillian Sewake, Director of Discover St. Johnsbury addressed the Select Board regarding the designated downtown renewal and resolution. She explained that St. Johnsbury was one of the earliest Towns to receive Downtown Designation which provides a number of benefits to the Town. She highlighted some of the benefits to include eligible back taxes credit, incentive projects, and priority consideration. She mentioned the New Avenue Project and the St. Johnsbury Distillery as having been part of the incentive projects that benefit from the Downtown Designation.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Dennis to approval the submission of the Designated Downtown Renewal and Resolution. All in favor. Brendan abstained.

Vtrans Annual Financial Plan:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the Vtrans Annual Financial Plan is a standard form that is completed each year by DPW. The form certifies that the funds raised by municipal taxes are equivalent to or greater than a sum of at least \$300.00 per mile of Class 1, 2, and 3 Town Highway in the municipality. By completing the Vtrans annual financial plan it allows the Town to utilize federal highway dollars for class 1, 2 and 3 roads.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to authorize the Annual Vtrans Financial Plan as presented. All in favor.

Road and Bridge Certificate of Compliance:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager reviewed the Town Road and Bridge Standards and Network Inventory Certificate of Compliance. Chad explained that Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW has confirmed that the Town does meet the required standards for the certificate of compliance.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve and sign the Road and Bridge Certificate of Compliance. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Bids for the Water Treatment Plant were received and have come in about 20% over budget. The Town will be working to determine the next best steps to move this project forward.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager notified the board the Ruth Bristol long time employee and most recently cleaner for the Town had passed away last week. Joe explained Ruth has been a meter maid for the Town and for at least the last 13 years had been the cleaner working 7 days a

week. In the interim the Town plans to back fill the cleaning position with the cleaning company that cleans the Public Safety Building.

Other Business:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager mentioned that on Friday the USDA RD Under Secretary visited St. Johnsbury and made stops at NVRH, NVDA and NEK Broadband with a focus on the reap zone.
- Frank expressed how great this was for St. Johnsbury
- Jim Brown asked if with NCIC closing if that would affect anything with the Town. Chad explained that the NCIC board still needed to vote. But at this time he is unsure what exactly this means for the Town. Chad mentioned that with the closing most likely that would mean the Town would have space for a tenant.

Executive Session:

- On a motion by Steve Isham and second by Dennis that an executive session was needed to address a contractual matter and that premature general public knowledge would put the Town at substantial risk. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to enter executive session and invite the 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.