



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

51 Depot Square, Suite 1

St Johnsbury, VT 05819

802-748-4331

www.stjvt.com

Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board April 10th, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak (via zoom), Stacy Jewell, Rachel Waterhouse, Bradley Reed, Paul Berlejung, Steve Beauregard (via zoom)

Press: KATV

Public: Jim Brown, Don Smith (via zoom)

Agenda Amendments:

- Frank mentioned that Town Clerk's Bathroom needed to be added to the agenda following the Land Records Update.

Public Comment:

- None

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the Special Select Board meeting minutes from March 27th at 5:30 pm as presented. All in favor.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Steve Isham to approve the Special Select Board meeting minutes from March 27th at 5:45 pm as presented. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the Select Board minutes from March 27th as presented. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Frank reviewed the liquor and tobacco license requests
 - JA Morse- 1st class and outside consumption permit
 - Ocean State Job Lot Stores of VT Inc.- 2nd class

- Caledonia Brewing Company LLC- 1st class and 3rd class
- Tracy Zschau recused herself as she is part owner of Caledonia Brewing Company LLC.
- On a motion by Steve Isham and second by Dennis to approve the liquor and tobacco licenses as presented. Brendan abstained.

Equipment Purchase:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW has requested to purchase a 2015 Kubota ZD 323 zero turn mower this year. He explained the purchase is included in the budget for FY 23-24 but Steve is proposing the Town purchase the mower now with additional revenue from the sale of items and some grant reimbursement. He explained that having the zero turn mower will improve efficiency of the mowing crew.
- Frank asked what would happen to the budgeted funds in next year's budget. Chad explained that the equipment plan would be brought back to the Select Board should another piece of equipment be needed.
- Chad explained that several zero turn mowers were looked and the Town is recommending purchasing a used 2015 Kubota ZD 323 with low hours.
- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk commented that DPW has sold a lot of equipment.
- Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW explained that DPW has sold around \$20,000 in equipment this year and has acquired around \$53,000 in grant funds so the money is there for the purchase. He explained that the zero turn mower was something that has been budgeted for next year however they are so short staffed and have had a hard time finding summer help that this will help improve efficiency. The mower includes a bagger which will also pick up leaves make the beautification work easier.
- Frank commented that he has no problem if the money is there. He expressed that it makes sense to buy it now and not wait until later.
- Dennis questioned if anyone had looked at it because even though it has low hours it is on the older end. Steve Beauregard explained he has only seen pictures however he has spoken with the Salesman and believes it was a homeowners unit. He expressed he believes the Town could get another 10 years out of the machine.
- Frank asked if a warranty would be included. Steve Beauregard said no.
- Brendan asked if there was a guarantee that it works. Steve said yes. They would make sure it absolutely works when they go pick it up.
- Dennis asked what the cost for new zero turn Kubota would be. Steve said they are going for around \$22,000 new now. Dennis commented that they are a good machine.
- Brendan asked if there were plans to bring back the work crew. Chad explained that since there has been a cut in the number of hours those on probation and parole are receiving for their sentencing there hasn't been anyone available. He also explained that Work Camp which was comprised of incarcerated individuals will provide a crew when available however they only have enough incarcerated individuals to provide an internal crew. The Town is not anticipating see the Work Camp back at least in the short term. The plan is to backfill the work with the summer crew.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to authorize the purchase of the 2015 Kubota ZD 323 Zero Turn Mower. All in favor.

Local Emergency Management Plan:

- Chief Bradley Reed explained that the Local Emergency Management Plan is reviewed and updated each year. The Plan gives a broad look at what the Town of St. Johnsbury may need in an

emergency situation. He explained that no major changes have been made and contact information has been updated as needed.

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the Local Emergency Management Plan as presented. All in favor.

Fire Warden Appointment:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk explained that Chief Bradley Reed needs to be reappointed as the Town of St. Johnsbury's Fire Warden. She explained that the appointment would be a 5 year appointment.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to appoint Fire Chief Bradley Reed as a VT Town Forest Fire Warden for the next five years. All in favor.

NEK Broadband Governing Board Representatives:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that annually the Town of St. Johnsbury needs to appoint a representative to the NEK Broadband Governing Board. He mentioned that Nicolas Anzalone has been the St. Johnsbury Rep. and is very dedicated. He explained that the Town tried to recruit an alternate but hasn't had luck. He asked if anyone was interested to please let him know. However he expressed that he was not concerned with the lack of alternate as Nicolas is very dedicated.
- Frank mentioned that he felt Nicolas Anzalone has done a great job.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to appoint Nicolas Anzalone to the NEK Broadband Governing Board as the St. Johnsbury Representative. All in favor.

Update on Land Records Project:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk explained that they were able to scan back to book 32 and came in at \$41,039.07. She explained she was quoted \$16,394 to complete the project. She proposed using the remaining \$8,900 left over from the ARPA funds she was awarded leaving a difference of \$7,433. She mentioned that the project came in under the initial request of \$100,000.
- She explained that this time around the books would be picked up and taken to Syracuse, NY as a majority of the books left are preserved in plastic sleeves.
- Frank mentioned he wasn't overall comfortable with taking them off premise and asked if the books were insured. Stacy said yes the company was insured. She explained that while it is a risk they have been taken off property before and it is the only way to get it done.
- Paul Berlejung asked was year book 32 was. Stacy said it is around 1960.
- Brendan asked what the plan was afterwards. Stacy said the books would still be kept as permanent storage in the vault but would have less hands handling them which in turn would preserve them longer. Eventually all books would be accessible online creating less traffic in the Town Clerk's Office.
- Brendan asked if the books would eventually still have to be preserved. Stacy said yes but not as soon.
- Steve Isham asked if there would be a fee for someone to research property information online. Stacy said yes there would be a fee if someone wished to print the information. Stacy explained she charges the Zoning Administrator for copies too.
- Steve Isham asked where the funding for the remaining \$7,433 would come from to complete the project. Stacy said out of ARPA funds.

- Steve Isham asked if Stacy needed to submit an application or if the Select Board could just approve the request. Chad explained that the Select Board could do either it was up to them.
- Frank commented that he thought it would be better to just allocate the funds by the Select Board than to go through the process.
- Dennis mentioned that it is Town dollars which are being spent on a Town project that benefits realtors, attorneys and tax payers.
- On a motion by Steve Isham second by Dennis to allocate \$7,433 from ARPA funding to complete the digitalization of the St. Johnsbury Land Records. All in favor.

Town Clerk's Office Bathroom Request:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk requested a bathroom be placed in the Town Clerk's Office. She mentioned that this has been discussed a few times and with the recent activity in the building she has again pushed for a bathroom. She explained that she has had two contractors come out and look at the potential area and provide quotes. It was determined that if approved the bathroom would go in what is currently a small kitchen area.
- Frank mentioned that it seems to be a lesser of two evils to place the bathroom there as there is already three walls. He explained that he spear headed this.
- Frank reviewed the two quotes received. Graves Builders came in at \$11,420 which includes the carpentry, electrical and plumbing while Randy Chamberlin came in at \$11,300 and only includes the carpentry and plumbing, electrical would be an additional cost.
- Frank asked where the funding would come from. Chad suggested the Pomerleau Building Reserve Fund for this project.
- Chad expressed that he felt it was fair to her office to have their own bathroom.
- Frank expressed that sooner this can get done the better for the safety and other reasons.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to authorize spending \$11,420 from the Pomerleau Building Reserve Fund to build a bathroom in the Town Clerk's Office. All in favor.

Draft Water/Sewer Budget Review:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager presented the draft water/sewer budget for FY2023-2024.
- He explained that in the past the Town has contracted with H2O Innovations for the operations of the Wastewater Treatment Facility. The Town conducted budgets both including continuing the contract with H2O Innovations and without. To run the WWTF through the Town it would save about \$114,000. Explained that the Sewer budget saw an increase of around \$250,000 for solid disposal as the Town is no longer able to land apply. He mentioned that previously there was a benefit to contracting the work out at the WWTF including staffing up when the Town was land applying however since those benefits are not there anymore it makes most sense for the Town to hire on the WWTF Operator and 5 employees. He explained that Rachel met with the employees at the WWTF to discuss benefits with them. Chad said there is also an internal benefit to taking over the WWTF including retention and succession planning for the next WWTF Operator in the future. Also includes some benefits with regards to the Water Treatment Facility including a potential Operator in the future. Expecting a proposal of 4-5% increase in sewer rates.
- Chad explained that the Water budget had less of an impact. He expects a recommendation of around 2% increase to water rates to keep the plant operational and sustainable.
- Chad explained that the draft Water and Sewer Budget will be online and that he will bring back 10 year projects and recommended rate increases for 2023 to the Select Board.

- Frank asked if the managing company of the WWTF keeps being bought out. Chad said yes they have been bought out multiple times over the years. He mentioned the Town has had a good working relationship with them and would give them a good recommendation.
- Steve Isham asked about the increase in salaries in the water budget. Chad explained that is not actually an increase but the salaries were moved from the contracted services line to salaries line so it looks like a 39% increase but it isn't.
- Steve Isham asked about the transfer to DPW. Chad explained this is something the Town has done year over year.
- Stacy Jewel asked who owned the trucks at the WWTF. Chad explained that those belong to H2O Innovations and that he has spoken with Finance about the need for a few capital purchases down the road and she doesn't have any concerns.
- Frank asked how many vehicles. Chad said two.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Bids for the Water Treatment Facility Project were opened on March 16th. The low bidder was Penta Corporation at around \$10.3 million which is about 20% over the latest budgets. He explained that he has instructed the Town's Engineers to value the project and try to decrease the costs. They will also be speaking with DWSRF to discuss opportunities for funding the shortfall.
- Bids for the Railroad Street and Main Street intersection project were opened. The low bidder was JP Sicard at around \$383,000. Our engineers are reviewing the bids before making a recommendation to award with VTrans. If VTrans recommends not awarding this project again the Town plans to ask them to revise the project scope.
- One vacancy remains in the Fire House. A potential applicant is working towards meeting the certification requirements.
- Chief Reed has submitted a SAFER grant application that would fund all the labor costs for 3 full time Fire Fighters for a 3-year period.
- Chief Page has taken receipt of the 2 new police cruisers that were partially paid for with a USDA Rural Development Facilities Grant.
- DPW is currently working on Spinster Hill Road to realign and provide proper ditching. A second crew is working on a stormwater treatment pond to address drainage from the Town Forest and DPW lots, which is funded through the Natural Resources Conservation District. Street sweeping has begun and the grader has been out on gravel roads.
- Engineers continue to work in the preliminary and environmental reports that need to accompany our USDA application for the LVRT Riverfront Extension project. Working with a small committee including NVDA, the DPW director and a member of the Select Board to score the project management proposals for the project.
- The Town was the recipient of a \$200,000 Downtown Transportation Fund grant from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. This grant will pay for lighting and security improvements in the Pearl St. Lot as well as make some pedestrian improvements at Railroad and Portland Street.
- Paul Berlejung, Zoning Administrator commented that he drove 30 miles of back roads today and they were in good shape.
- Chad explained that the Town will be moving forward with Tax Sale and notices will be going out in June to let residents know it is coming.

Other Business:

- Dennis asked about the sidewalks on Pleasant Street. He mentioned the board received a letter that the sidewalks that were ripped out by JA McDonald were just left. Chad explained that sidewalks were not included in the project and currently there are no funds to replace them. Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW explained that JA McDonald still has curbing on Pleasant Street to complete and that they will replace what they ripped out. He explained that there will be a sidewalk on one side of the road. Chad said the Town could look into other options for this area. Steve Beauregard explained that JA McDonald hopes to be done by July 1st however the official deadline is set for July 15th.
- Stacy asked if Chad had any updates on the Charter. Chad explained that it is currently under committee review in the house. He said he would reach out regarding the next steps and to learn more of where it is headed.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager mentioned that the Parking Department is working with the Court House to determine temporary parking within the Main Street lot and along Eastern Ave through May. Once this is figured out he said he would be happy to share the details.
- Joe explained that he hopes to have the updated Tax Stabilization agreement for 98 Mil Street ready for the Select Board by the May 8th meeting.
- Chad mentioned that the VT National Guard was looking to place a readiness center in St. Johnsbury. He said he spoke with Colonel Roy regarding the National Guards plans to try to understand their needs and how the Town maybe able to assist. Talks are still very preliminary and the National Guard has withdrawn their application for the DRB meeting later this month as the property they were looking at has been determined to be too rugged.
- Frank expressed that the VT Nation Guard is more than welcome at another location with St. Johnsbury.
- Jim Brown thanked Chad for his assistances with watering the hanging plants for the summer. He mentioned that the DPW will be watering the flowers 4 days a week and the Beautification Committee will work on filling in on the other days.
- Jim Brown mentioned that the updated Zoning Bylaws are now posted on the Town's website. The Planning Commission is currently working on animal husbandry.

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