



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board April 24th, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Kresten Sterling, Paul Berlejung

Press: KATV

Public: Jim Brown, Don Smith (via zoom), Gillian Sewake (via zoom), Irene Nagle

Agenda Amendments:

- Chad Whitehead asked to have request approval of funds to demolish a trailer that Town took in tax sale added to the agenda following the neighborhood development areas. On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to add the request for funds to demolish a trailer to the agenda following the neighborhood development areas.

Public Comment:

- Gillian Sewake provided the brief report regarding the Kingdom Maple Feast that took place on Saturday April 22nd. She said it was a perfect day, the weather was good, and there were activities throughout Town with over 40 vendors on Railroad Street alone. She estimated over 3,000 to 4,000 people were in Town. She thanked the Town, Emergency Services, DPW and Chad for their assistances and support pulling off this festival. Went really well.
- Frank thanked Gillian and all the volunteers who set up the event. Expressed that it was very well attended and he is looking forward to next year.
- Chad mentioned that there is a spot light on Final Fridays on WCKX News this evening. Gillian explained that the State is making Final Fridays a signature event for the State of Vermont and the events would be featured in all their promotions throughout the year. She explained that it is a pretty big honor and will bring a lot of attention to St. Johnsbury.

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the Select Board minutes from April 10th, 2023 with the noted corrections. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Frank reviewed the liquor and tobacco license requests
 - Aladdin Food Management Services, LLC.- 1st class and 3rd Class
 - Caledonia Brewing Company, LLC- Outside Consumption Permit
 - The Dispencery, LLC- 1st class, 3rd class and outside consumption permit
 - Elks Lodge #1343- 1st class and 3rd class
 - Family Dollar Stores of Vermont, LLC- Tobacco License
 - Firinn Golf Group of Vermont, LLP- 1st class, 3rd class and Outside Consumption Permit
 - Nommik Unlimited, LLC- 1st class, 3rd class and Outside Consumption Permit
 - St. Johnsbury Distillery- 1st class, 3rd class and Outside Consumption Permit
 - VS Courmet, LLC.- 1st class
 - Whirligig Holdings, LLC- 1st class and Outside Consumption Permit
- On a motion by Steve Isham and second by Dennis to approve the liquor and tobacco licenses as presented. All in favor. Tracy abstained.

Neighborhood Development Areas:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager introduced Irene Nagle with NVDA.
- Irene Nagle provided maps for the Select Board to review and explained that conversations regarding the neighborhood development areas have taken place and resulted in an update of the boundaries. She explained that the River Corridor, flood hazard area, and anything with steep slopes has been excluded but was also advised that the area could include more residential homes than originally proposed.
- She mentioned that in the meantime the Town was successful in obtaining the bylaw modernization grant and knew that the consultant during that could look at neighborhood development areas as part of the scope of work. However after speaking with the Planning Commission they wished to move forward now rather than wait for the consultant over the next year as there is a July 1st deadline to apply for tax credits to rehabilitate housing/properties in designated downtowns. Irene mentioned that also this year tax credits would be available to those in neighborhood development areas for properties that are income producing as a pilot program. The Planning Commission felt it was important to try and get something designated so people could apply if they were interested for the tax credit.
- She explained she just wanted to keep the Select Board apprised. She said it doesn't require any resolution from the Planning Commission or the Select Board but just a letter signed by Chad or Joe.
- Frank mentioned that it all sounded good to him.
- Steve Isham asked if based on the application guidelines any bylaw changes would be required or if St. Johnsbury was all set. Irene explained that she does not believe any changes would need to be made and that it looks to her as the Town is ok in that respect. Doesn't mean that there could be additional changes in order to develop housing. Irene thing to note is that rule unless Town regulates river corridors as zoning flood hazard regulations you have to exclude those areas from designation even if it is already developed. She mentioned that it might make sense for the Town to might want to look into and consider regulating those river corridors so you can then include more of those areas within the neighborhood development areas.
- Dennis mentioned that he believed the flood plains were reviewed and adopted last year by the Select Board and asked if that included any development in the river corridors. Chad explained that he believes the flood plain the Select Board adopted last year doesn't allow for development in the

river corridors. Paul Bereljung, Zoning Administrator confirmed that the Flood Plain is adopted by the Town and the River Corridors are adopted by the State.

- Frank asked if the next step would be to have Chad draft a letter. Irene explained that she would draft a letter for Chad to sign. She said the deadline to submit would be Monday May 1st.

Demolition of Trailer:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that through tax sale the Town became the owner of a trailer located in the Green Lantern Trailer Park. The Town posted an advertisement about a year ago for people to submit bids should they want to purchase it. The Town did not receive any bids. The Town has obtained a quote of \$8,000 for the Town to demolish the building. Chad explained that a lead and asbestos company will also have to give the Town a quote for removal.
- After the sale of 955 Portland and the Town recouped the funds owed to them there was a surplus of \$13,947 remaining. Asking the board to spend the \$8,000 funds in excavation and \$2,000 in lead and asbestos abatement. Chad mentioned that the property is starting to collect trash and it would be good to get it cleaned up and out of there.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to spend up to \$10,000 to dispose of the trailer owned by the Town in the Green Lantern Trailer Park. All in favor.

Establish Private Road Name:

- Paul Bereljung, Zoning Administrator expressed that Greg Brown has requested a third mailbox for his property on Breezy Hill. Paul explained that the E-911 state statute says if there are three or more mailboxes on a private driveway that the road must be named. Paul explained that Greg Brown wants to call the driveway either Cool Wine Drive or Dutch Way. Paul explained that one neighbor preferred Dutch Way.
- Greg Brown approached the board regarding why he wished to have the road names Cool Wine Drive. The company name that is being used to develop that area is Cool Wine LLC. He explained that it is his wife's maiden name translated from Dutch to English. He expressed that he understands that the name does included a reference to alcohol but it is not intended as such but as a way to honor his wife and her family.
- Tracy asked if there was any precedence over naming a road with an alcoholic beverage. Chad said not that he was aware of. Chad explained that Cool Wine LLC developed the road and it is done frequently where the road is named after the business that developed it.
- Tracy confirmed that it is a private road and just needed a name for E-911 purposes.
- Chad asked if the E-911 commission has ever commented on the name of the road. Paul said no it just goes through the process.
- On a motion by Steve Isham and second by Tracy to name the private road Cool Wine Drive. All in favor.

St. Johnsbury Revitalization Fund Grant Update:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided an updated on the St. Johnsbury Revitalization Fund Grant Program. He explained that the application is complete and FAQs have been created. He expects that it will be posted on the website shortly. He mentioned that no program details have changed. An employee will be on boarded on May 1st that will be doing the administrative work for the Grant Program and other administrative holes that have been left vacant due to Doug Reid leaving.

- He explained that the Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program is underway and applications are due by April 30th. Chad explained that Kresten will be handling the management of this grant program. Kresten commented that once applications are received he will be sharing with the Committee who will review and make recommendations to the Select Board. Chad explained that the program has proven to be very popular so far this year.
- Chad explained that the 99.1% of rental units are registered at this point with just over \$42,000 gathered in revenue. Chad explained the budgeted goal was \$38,000. The Town will begin the rental registration process again come July.
- Tracy inquired about the timeframe for those who wish to apply to the St. Johnsbury Revitalization Fund Grant Program. Chad explained that applications will be accepted from May 1st until May 30th. He explained that he will be getting the word out via the radio and the paper. Then will focus on getting the word out that another round will be coming in 2024. Depending on how successful that is or how quickly people can get applications together we may come back to the board to open a second round in the fall of 2023. Chad reminded the Select Board that currently there are two pools of funds right now. #1 Micro Grants in the amount of \$1,000 to \$5,000 and #2 Feasibility and Implementation Grants in the amount of \$10,000 to \$40,000. Later on down the road will be the Transformation Grants.
- Steve Isham asked if Kresten had a sense of how much the total grants have come in at so far. Kresten said he didn't have an idea but knew of \$60,000-\$70,000 of project that he knows of off the top of his head.

Designated Downton Capital Planning:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that every 8 years the Town has to reapply for their Downtown Designation. As part of the process the Town needs to submit a 5 year capital plan. He explained that since the last time the Town submitted the capital plan in 2015 the Town has complete Railroad Street improvements, Depot Square Park, Eastern Ave/Pearl Street Sidewalk Project, the first phase of the LVRT and \$18.2 million in Utility improvements.
- Chad mentioned that while utility improvements at the Water and WWTF have been done the ones identified in the new plan are in addition to what has been completed and that the utilities support growth in downtown St. Johnsbury.
- Chad reviewed the proposed 5 year capital plan moving forward to include the LVRT Riverfront Connection, \$250,000 in Railroad Street and Pearl Street enhancement Project, \$12,710,935 in Water Treatment facility upgrades, \$3,998,000 in solids handling at the WWTF, \$11.2 million for the Armory Redevelopment, \$3.7 million for the Portland Street Utilities, \$1.69 million for the Portland Street sidewalks, \$2.9 million for Railroad Street Utilities. He explained that projects added to the capital planning are projects that already have bond approval or a written plan in place for.
- He mentioned that the Designated Downtown Capital Planning had to be approved by the Select Board and submitted by May 1st.
- Tracy asked if the Town could deviate from the plan. Chad said yes we have in the past we would just need to notify them when we do and why we are.
- Gillian explained that it is like a strategic plan.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Steve Isham to approve the designated downtown capital planning as presented. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- The Town continues to work on the funding gap for Water Treatment Facility Project.
- Continue to wait to hear from the engineers regarding the Railroad Street Project bids.
- Today the Police Department welcomed a new officer by the name of McKendrick Johnson. He will be attending the academy in June.
- The Police Department Cruisers have arrived, have been outfitted and are on the road.
- LVRT Extension Project report has been completed and submitted with a regarding for funding to Leahy's Office.
- The Downtown Transportation Grant has been executed and Chad will be meeting with Steve Beauregard regarding the next steps to get the project into construction.
- Household Hazardous Waste Day and Yard and Lead Debris Clean Up has been scheduled for Saturday May 20th. DPW will also open Oak Street on Wednesdays for residents to drop off debris as long as no issues arise.

Other Business:

- None

Executive Session:

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

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