



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board Sept. 11th, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Rachel Waterhouse

Public: Jim Brown, David Reynolds, KATV, Don Smith, Gillian Sewake, Matt Krajewski

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- David Reynolds approached the Select Board regarding upper Boyton Ave sidewalk. He provided the Select Board with photos of the deteriorating sidewalk along with a piece of the sidewalk. He explained that the sidewalk that needs attention is about a 1/2 block long and that some tar to cover it up would be appreciated. He mentioned that this section of sidewalk is a popular walking area and that it is risky for pedestrians to be walking in the road when cars are speeding by. He said he would appreciate it if something could be done.
- Dennis mentioned that he hoped something could be done soon. Chad said he would look into.

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 table the minutes from the Aug. 28th meeting. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- None

Vermont Downtown Vibrancy Fund- Letter of Attestation:

- Gillian Sewake, Director of Discovery St. Johnsbury approached the Select Board regarding a request for a letter of attestation for the Town. She explained that the a new fund has been established by the State of VT to help fund downtown organizations and their work She expressed

how transformational this funding will be to Discover St. Johnsbury. It will allow for continued development and success for the downtown. She mentioned that the funding from the state is meant to supplement traditional funding that is provided to the downtown organization from the municipality.

- Frank mentioned that it seemed pretty straight forward.
- Dennis expressed that it was nice to see this type of funding from the State.
- Jim Brown asked if it was established state funding or if it could change with the legislation. Gillian explained that it is part of the base funding for the agency vs. a line item of the budget. She explained that agencies are working with the legislation to see if the funding can be written into statute since it is a requirement of the state to have a downtown organization. But she said it isn't guaranteed it will become part of statute but the state doesn't seem worried about the funding of this for the future.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve to sign the letter of attestation for Discover St. Johnsbury for the Vermont Downtown Vibrancy Fund. All in favor. Brendan abstained.

Statistical Reappraisal Proposal:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the 2020 town-wide reappraisal was completed in a different housing market than St. Johnsbury is seeing now. He explained that houses are selling now at a higher than assessed value. Given that the Town is still within 5 years of the town-wide reappraisal the Town has the option to conduct a statistical reappraisal. This means that not every house will be looked at. A number of houses would be reviewed and then values would be re-set based on the current market conditions. He explained that the Town anticipates that the state will recommend a reappraisal.
- The statistical reappraisal is estimated to cost \$140,000 for 2025. Chad mentioned that he has spoken with Finance regarding the \$140,000 and there are funds available to cover the cost in the reserve for evaluation fund.
- Frank mentioned that he thought it would be good to look at the data and raise the rates accordingly.
- Matt Krajewski, Vice President of New England Municipal Consultants explained that the 2020 reappraisal was completed at a time when St. Johnsbury was just coming out of a depressed local market. The market has since then come back strong. He said during the statistical reappraisal about 10-15% of properties in Town will be physically reappraised and that a data recollection will be completed. He explained that based on CLA numbers the Town will be out of compliance by as early as next summer.
- Denis asked if it was less expensive than a full town wide appraisal. Chad said yes it was less expensive than a full reappraisal.
- Dennis mentioned that it seemed hard to predict how much life. Matt explained that he doesn't expect the Town to see a crazy summer of 2021 again and by 2025 the dust should be starting to settle with this new market in Vermont. The timing of 2025 allows the Town to analyze a more settled housing market.
- Brendan asked if this was done previously to the 2020 town-wide reappraisal. Matt said not to his knowledge.
- Brendan asked how long it would save the Town from a Town wide appraisal and if it make sense to conduct a full appraisal at this time. Chad explained that the numbers are at the level where the State may require the Town to conduct a full reappraisal. Matt explained that he expects the numbers for St. Johnsbury to be out of compliance by next summer. After 2026 the Town would no longer have the option to choose a statistical reappraisal instead the Town would have to conduct a full reappraisal.

- Steve Isham asked how the statistical reappraisal would affect the properties that were not being reappraised. Matt explained that all properties both residential and commercial would be adjusted at the time of the statistical reappraisal.
- Frank expressed that he didn't see any other choice for the Town.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve to authorize the Town Manager to work with New England Municipal Consultants to execute a contract for a statistical reappraisal for 2023. All in favor.

RFP for EPA Multipurpose Application and Implementation:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager explained that the Town has an opportunity to apply for an EPA Multipurpose Grant this fall in the amount of 1, 000,000. He is asking the Select Board to consider allowing the Town to solicit proposals for completion of the application and implementation services. If awarded the Town would have a 5 year period to complete the implementation.
- Joe explained that the grant notification will likely be later this month with a deadline of early November giving a short window of opportunity. This will allow the Town to get ahead of the game by having the application completed and quotes for implementation.
- Dennis asked if specific brownfield sites within Town are in mind like Tru Temper. Joe said potentially Tru Temper and the Town's DPW Garage but nothing is finalized. This just allows the Town to get the resources to push this project forward.
- Frank mentioned that he likes the flexibility of it.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to authorize the Town Manager and/or Assistant Town Manager to move forward with the RFP for EPA Multipurpose Applicant and Implementation. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Confirmed availability for the Select Board to host a Special Meeting at 5:30 pm on Monday Oct. 23rd for the Sullivan and Powers annual audit presentation.
- Working on developing a lease agreement for NVDA for the 2nd floor at 51 Depot Square as NCIC vacates the property.
- Working on developing grant agreements with legal for the STRFGP Transformations Grants.
- The WWTF is ready to begin processing solids with the new sludge press. Casella is currently closed and not accepting loads. Jim is hopeful to have a truck ready for Sept. 24th.
- Chad praised Jim and the crew at the WWTF for all of their hard work getting the sludge press and conveyor system up and running quickly.
- Site work has begun at the Water Treatment Facility. Project meeting is being held tomorrow morning.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager mentioned that he has a meeting Wednesday with VCDP to review the grant agreement and conditions. He commended the 15 Town employees and committee members that took the time to attend the Fair Housing Training and explained that it was a requirement of the VCDP Grant.
- Frank thanked everyone that took the time to attend the Fair Housing Training.

Other Business:

- Jim Brown mentioned that the Planning Commission is still actively recruiting for two more people. He explained that the Planning Commission is very busy right now with the bylaw modernization grant and the upcoming Town Plan review.

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