



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

51 Depot Square, Suite 1

St Johnsbury, VT 05819

802-748-4331

[www.stjvt.com](http://www.stjvt.com)

## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

Select Board: Steve Isham, Frank Empsall, Dennis Smith

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Rachel Waterhouse, Stacy Jewell, Lesley Russ (via zoom), Steve Beauregard (via zoom)

Public: Jim Brown, Bryan LeBlanc, KATV, Gillian Sewake (via zoom)

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- None

### Warrants:

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

### Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham to approve the minutes from the Aug. 28<sup>th</sup> meeting with the noted correction. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham to approve the minutes from the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> meeting as presented. All in favor.

### Liquor/Tobacco License:

- None

### August Financials:

- Lesley Russ, Finance Officer provided the following August Financials.
- The property taxes are prorated in the governmental funds as well as interdepartmental and reserve funds.

- General fund at the end of August had a surplus of \$138,838. Departments within the general fund are on target at this time. Overtime in Dispatch is high due to vacation and fingerprinting. There is currently a vacancy in dispatch and recruitment is underway. Retroactive pay in September will impact both Dispatch and the Police Department in the Special Services Fund.
- The annual 401A retirement payment was made in July which totaled \$415,433 and was allocated to the governmental funds and the water fund. Additionally the majority of special appropriations were expensed in July.
- Special Services Fund at the end of August had a deficit of \$44,642. Regular salaries and overtime combined are 815% of the budget. Short staffing continues to be an issue, currently there are four full time and one part time open positions in the Police Department. Recruitment continues.
- The Highway fund at the end of August had a deficit of \$15,246. The Highway Fund has received three quarterly State payments to help offset the expenses from the flooding. Expenses are over budget due to the 401A pension payment and paving which will be reimbursed by a grant up to \$168,000.
- The Water and Sewer Funds have negative revenue due to audit adjustments and will balance out later in the year.
- The Parking Meter Fund at the end of August had a deficit of \$3,636. Annual permit revenue is received in December and January and we expect a surplus at that time.
- Lesley reminded the Select Board of the Audit Presentation by Sullivan and Powers on Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 pm.
- Dennis asked if there were any possible recruits for the Police Department. Chad explained that Chief Page has been in touch with Caledonia County, Essex County and Lamoie County Sheriff's along with State Police to see if anyone would be able to assist St. Johnsbury but everyone is down staff right now. It continues to be a challenge to recruit officers both in Vermont and nationally.
- Dennis asked if the current staff were getting time off. Chad said a little time off but not enough.
- Dennis mentioned that the situation needed to be addressed sooner rather than later. Chad explained that he meets with the Police Chief almost daily and hopes that the new Police Chief will help with recruitment as well.

#### VCDP Municipal Policies and Codes:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager approached the Select Board regarding the VCDP Municipal Policies and Codes. He explained that this was a requirement for the VCDP funding award received for the Armory and NEKA. He mentioned that the policies and codes in the document are standard policies that are already adopted by the Town of St. Johnsbury. He explained that this was a condition of the awards and needed to be fulfilled by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Awarded amounts are \$330,000 for the Armory and \$60,000 for NEKA.
- Denis asked if it was anything different from the existing policies. Joe said no it was boiler plate, very standard policies.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham to adopt and sign the VCDP municipal policies and codes form MP-1.. All in favor.

#### Grand List Adjustments:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk explained that the grand list adjustments presented tonight are due to homestead adjustments. She explained that revised tax bills have already been issues by her office.

- Frank mentioned that Grand List Adjustment #1 is in the amount of \$298.51, Grand List Adjustment #2 is in the amount of \$404.52, Grand List Adjustment #3 is in the amount of \$1,229.57 and Grand List Adjustment #4 is in the amount of \$1,324.31.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham to approve the Grand List Adjustments as presented. All in favor.

#### Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- St. Johnsbury Center Cemetery is starting the process to dissolve. He explained that a number of items need to be done first. He is working with the Cemetery Commission to determine what this means for the Town. Chad explained that he is reaching out to VLCT to determine the Town's liability and responsibility regarding the takeover of the cemetery as they dissolve. It is still very early on in the process.
- Chad explained that Joel Pierce the new Police Chief is slated to start on Tuesday Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>. Chief Page will be staying on to probably for about two months to help orientate Chief Pierce to the job.
- Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW provided an equipment purchase update. He explained that he is looking at purchasing an excavator, tractor and landscape trailer this year. He explained that he is looking at excavators that are 4-6 years old as new ones sell for upwards of \$200,000. Looking at tractor replacement with a mulcher, splitter and leaf blower. He explained that these purchases will total all together \$200,000 and is budgeted as part of his current budget. He just wanted to give the Select Board an update on his plan to move forward with these equipment purchases.
- The WWTF has started pressing and is working with Casella to get loads out. Hoping to get as much as possible pressed and shipped out before the cold weather.
- Special Select Board Meeting will take place on Monday Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 pm for the audit presentation with Sullivan and Powers.
- The Town on boarded a new Planner who will have the potential of taking over as the Interim Zoning Administrator if approved by the Board. The Interim Zoning Administrator will allow the Town and Planning Commission to have a probationary period of 6 months or more before making a recommendation for a 3 year appointment. The Planner will be able to assist the Planning Commission with the Bylaw Modernization and Town Plan review.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager mentioned that he continues to work on the Armory details and a multipurpose grant.
- Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW mentioned that the building forms and walls went up last week at the Water Plant. He explained that the project is progressing well.
- Jim Brown asked Chad about the appointment of a potentially new Planning Commission member. Chad mentioned he thought he was going to meet with the Planning Commission at the first meeting in October before appointment. Following that he could be appointed to the Planning Commission at the Select Board meeting. Jim agreed and said the Planning Commission had a working session scheduled for Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

#### Other Business:

- Bryan LeBlanc approached the Board regarding a tree that is on Town property in the area of Stiles Terrace and School Street. He explained that the tree is very old and asked if the Town could take a look at removing it as limbs are already falling off of it.
- Steve Beauregard, Director of DPW said he would address it.
- Jim Brown mentioned that there is also a tree on Cliff Street that is on Town property that is ready to fall over. Steve Beauregard mentioned he would take a look at it.

- Dennis asked about the sidewalk on Boyton Ave Chad explained that he has not had a chance to go out and see it. Steve Beauregard mentioned that he is not 100% sure of what exact area was referred to but he would take a look at it.
- Dennis asked where the fire hydrant repairs stood. Steve Beauregard explained that most have been fixed recently such as those on Cliff Street and Railroad Street.
- Frank asked about the fire hydrant on the top of Maple Street. Steve Beauregard explained that one hydrant on the top of Maple Street is bagged as it does not work and needs to be removed however there is a working hydrant next to it.
- Steve Isham mentioned how he had spoken with Sara Rory from USA and that she was highly complimentary of how the Town handled the ARPA funds and wished other Towns had followed suit. She referred to Chad and Joe as “Rock Stars.” He expressed that it was nice to hear the good news and compliments of St. Johnsbury.
- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk mentioned that the next Select Board on Monday Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> which is also Columbus Day. She mentioned that her Office is open but the Town Manager’s Office is closed that day. She suggested moving the meeting to another day.
- Frank asked why her office was open. Stacy explained it is because taxes are due that Friday and typically her office does a million dollars that day.
- Frank explained that the meeting would be moved to Tuesday Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm.

#### Executive Session:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham that there was a need for an executive session to discuss a contractual matter that premature public knowledge would place the Town at substantial risk. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham to enter executive session and invite the Town Manager. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Steve Isham to exit executive session. All in favor.
- The chair had nothing to report.

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