



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Rachel Waterhouse, Stacy Jewell, Chief Brad Reed, Matthew Walsh

Public: Jim Brown, KATV, Gillian Sewake (via zoom), Caledonian Record (via zoom), Don Smith, Mike O'Hare, Peter V. (via zoom)

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- Dennis Smith thanked Steve Beauregard and DPW for their help getting the Concord Ave Railroad crossing smoothed out.
- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager shared that Steve mentioned that having the Select Board's involvement in this case helped.
- Frank mentioned that it looks a lot better.
- Jim Brown thanked Steve Beauregard for his assistance on getting the tree on Cliff Street removed.

### Warrants:

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

### Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the minutes from the Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> meeting with the noted correction. All in favor.

### Liquor/Tobacco License:

- None

### August Financials:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following September Financials.

- The property taxes are prorated in the governmental funds as well as interdepartmental and reserve funds.
- General fund at the end of September had a surplus of \$27,852. Departments within the general fund are on target at this time. Overtime in Dispatch is high due to vacation and fingerprinting. Chad mentioned that fingerprinting overtime is offset by the revenue received for the fingerprinting service. 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 September had a deficit of \$67,238. Regular salaries and overtime combined are 25% 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 September had a surplus of \$31,894. The Highway Fund has received three quarterly State payments to help offset the expenses from the flooding. There are currently two open positions in DPW and recruitment continues.
- The Water Fund has negative revenue due to audit adjustments and will balance out later in the year.
- The Sewer Fund at the end of September had a deficit of \$511,180. This is primarily due to audit adjustments and will decrease as the year goes on.
- The Parking Meter Fund at the end of September had a deficit of \$4,873. Annual permit revenue is received in December and January and we expect a surplus at that time. Chad mentioned that Karen continues to earn what she does.
- Dennis asked if the Sherriff's Department has been a help to the Police Department. Chad explained that it has been a little help as it has allowed some of the officers to take time off. The Sherriff's Department is mainly helping when we are short an officer and is riding along with our staff in Town cruisers.
- Dennis asked about recruitment in DPW. Chad explained that we have received applicants, interviews have been held and we anticipate hiring in the near future.
- Dennis mentioned he heard that Anthony Skelton had left. He asked about filling his shoes in Dispatch. Chad explained that currently the Dispatch Supervisor has been filling most of the role. He explained that he wanted to let Chief Pierce get his feet wet before meeting with him to determine how he would like to move forward with structuring the department.

#### Grand List Adjustments:

- Frank mentioned that Grand List Adjustment #7 is in the amount of \$341.46 and Grand List Adjustment #8 is in the amount of \$270.90.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the Grand List Adjustments as presented. All in favor.

#### Zoning Administrator Appointment Recommendation:

- Chad introduced Matthew Walsh. He mentioned that Matthew Walsh has met with Planning Commission members and has been learning the Zoning position. In his full time position he will

also be working as the Planning Administrator for the Town of St. Johnsbury along with the duties that come as the Zoning Administrator. Chad said it has been great to have Matt.

- Matthew Welch introduced himself and provided a little background. He explained he is happy to take over for Paul and working with the Town of St. Johnsbury crew.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to appoint Matthew Walsh as the Zoning Administrator for the Town of St. Johnsbury. All in favor.

#### LVRT Riverfront Extension, USDA Congressionally Directed Spending Hearing:

- Chad reviewed the LVRT Riverfront Extension project. He highlighted that phase I included \$540,000 that was funded by NBRC, ACCD and the Town of St. Johnsbury which resulted in the creation of the trailhead pavilion, creation of an additional 1,350 linear feet of cross country trail and 2,883 linear feet of striped bike lanes. He mentioned that the initial design for the trail started over 25 years ago.
- Chad explained phase II would include an additional 2,8000 linear feet of cross country trail along the Passumpsic River connecting the LVRT to downtown St. Johnsbury. It would also include sidewalk, lighting and parking improvements on Bay Street, lighting along sections of the cross country trail and pedestrian improvements through the honking tunnel. Phase II funding would total \$1,721,710 and come from NBRC, USDA Rural Development CDS and the Town of St. Johnsbury. He stated to date the preliminary engineering report, conceptual plans and environmental assessment report have been completed. The timeline would be to complete final design in fall/winter 2023-2024 and begin construction in summer/fall 2024.
- Chad mentioned that as part of the grant process is to discuss the project and allow for public input.
- Steve Isham asked if any signage/kiosk was included in the parking lot now that directs people to keep going to the downtown. Chad explained that currently there is a kiosk there with similar signage throughout the trail but nothing specific to the continuation to the downtown.
- Tracy asked if there was a timeline for the signage. Mike O'Hare explained that the scoping piece has been completed and they are going into the design phase at this time.
- Mike O'Hare mentioned that he felt this was a great project and was highly needed. He explained that it was preferred alternative to the current end of the LVRT.
- Stacy asked if signage for those coming off of Route 5 would be included. Chad explained that signage would be included in the state portion of the project. Chad explained that Town roads would be the Town's job with regards to signage. Mike O'Hare mentioned that currently there is a regional wayfinding project that is working to assist with the signage for the LVRT trail.
- Frank mentioned that is all sounded positive.
- Tracy mentioned that it sounds exciting.
- Chad thanked Senator Leahy and Senator Sanders for their support of this project and St. Johnsbury.

#### St. Johnsbury Development Fund Grant Agreement:

- Chad presented the Select Board with a draft of the St. Johnsbury Development Fund Grant Agreement for the award of \$200,000 from the STRFGP. The St. Johnsbury Development Fund is looking to use the grant funds to purchase property on Hastings Hill. He highlighted that the conditions of the grant agreement including failure to acquire the property within 1 year would result in return of entire funds, failure to complete design work and apply for applicable state and

local permits within 3 years would result in a return of funds and substantial progress toward achievement of the project if not completed within 5 years would result in a return of the funds.

- Chad explained that substantial progress is defined as 5 complete units within 5 years.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the St. Johnsbury Development Fund Grant Agreement and authorize the Town Manager sign and execute the agreement with the St. Johnsbury Development fund. All in favor.

#### Municipal Planning Grant- Recreation Study:

- Chad explained that the Town is looking to apply for a municipal planning grant through AACD in the amount of \$30,000 for a recreation study. Applications are due by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 and the grant does have a \$6,000 match. Chad mentioned that he has identified \$3,000 toward the match and would be able to identify another \$3,000 from the existing budget.
- Tracy explained that she was excited to see this recreation study coming together.
- Chad explained that so many pieces to put together to try and figure out where to go from there. It would be nice to have a study to give some direction.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Dennis to approve the Resolution for the Municipal Planning Grant and authorize the Town Manager to sign. All in favor.

#### Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- WWTF to date has processed around 500,000 gallons of solids. They continue to take advantage of the weather and press more solids before winter shut down.
- DPW is working on a grant project on Spaulding Hill Road.
- The Gilman and Pleasant Street project has been completed and will be wrapping up.
- The Water Plant construction continues.
- Steve Isham asked if it was possible to install speed bumps on Town streets. Chad explained that they do not fare well in the winter.
- Mike O'Hare mentioned that some of the street signs in the Gilman and Pleasant Street construction area have not been put back up. Chad mentioned he would follow up on it.
- Dennis asked if there had been any discussions regarding the sidewalk on Boyton Ave. Chad mentioned that it has been looked at and needs to be replaced but is that the most important sidewalk at the moment. He explained that sidewalks that need repair include Easter Ave, Main Street, Boyton Ave, Pearl Street South just to name a few.
- Dennis explained that he understood that the sidewalk on Boyton Ave may not be the top of the list for replacement but asked if it was possible to pave over the concrete. Chad explained that he would review with Steve Beauregard to see if he has a recommendation for a short term fix.
- Jim Brown asked about the situation with the land that JA McDonalad just vacated. Chad said it did not have anything to do with the Town. Dennis commented that the revitalization of the Tru Temper lot is in progress. Chad mentioned that there was nothing to report with regards to the Tru Temper project at this time.

#### Other Business:

- Jim Brown mentioned that local businesses in the downtown would like to see a loading and unloading area on Railroad Street. Chad explained that he would bring the concerns to the parking folks.
- Frank asked who specifically. Jim said Moose River.
- Frank expressed his concerns with a loading and unloading zone taking up parking spots on Railroad Street.
- Steve Isham invited those who were interested in a loading and unloading zone on Railroad Street to come to a Select Board meeting and bring it up.
- Jim Brown mentioned that he told them he would bring it up for them.

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