



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 December 27th, 2023 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

Select Board: Steve Isham, Frank Empsall, Tracy Zschua

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Stacy Jewell, Joe Kasprzak, Lesley Russ (via zoom), Chief
Brad Reed (via zoom), Kresten Sterling (via zoom), Steven Beauregard (via zoom)

Public: KATV, Jim Brown, Scott Beck, Colleen Morris

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Tracy and second by Steve Isham to approve the minutes from the Dec. 13th meeting with the noted correction. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- None

Grand List Adjustments:

- Frank presented grand list adjustments 2023-14 for a homestead at 280 Lafayette Street in the amount of \$263.00 to be refunded and 2023-13 for 425 Old Center Road in the amount of \$267.16 owed to the Town.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Steve Isham to approve grand list adjustment 2023-14 and 2023-13 as presented. All in favor.

Committee Appointment:

- Chad explained that Susan Parker is interested in becoming a member of the Energy Committee. He provided the board with a copy of her resume and letter of interest.
- Chad mentioned that Tim Turney was interested in becoming a member of the Knob Property Committee. He explained that Tim has a background in trail maintenance with Kingdom Trails and works for ACCD.
- On a motion by Steve Isham and second by Tracy to appoint Susan Parker to the Energy Committee and Tim Turney to the Knob Property Committee. All in favor.

NEKCA VCDP Grant Acceptance Request:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager approached the Select Board regarding the NEKCA VCDP Grant. He explained that this was the final piece of the VCDP Planning Grant which was a sub grant to NEKCA. He asked the Select Board to consider accepting the grant in the amount of \$60,000.
- Frank asked if NEKCA was moving. Joe mentioned that his understanding was they were going to focus their energy at redesigning their space at 115 Lincoln Street.
- Joe read the grant resolution.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Steve Isham to accept the VCDP Grant in the amount of \$60,000 for NEKCA and authorize Joe Kasprzak and Chad Whitehead to execute. All in favor.
- Stacy asked if the funds would come to the Town and then be paid to NEKCA. Joe said he believed so but would confirm.

Budget Presentation:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided an overview of the proposed budget for 2024-2025 and the budget development process. The proposed budget impact on taxes inside the special services district is a 6.96% increase and outside the special services is 8.15% increase. He explained that there are no unusually large increase in any of the Town's department budgets. He explained that the Town anticipates seeking 3.4 million in revenue outside of taxes. This would include grant funds.
- He explained that the proposed budget can be found on the Town website or he had hard copies for anyone interested in one. He express that the Town expects a couple of changes to come over the next few weeks and will update accordingly. Changes include a pension reassessment.
- Budget includes a 12% increase in insurance, a \$141,000 increase in ambulance services and the use of \$300,000 in reserves for 2024-2025.
- Chad encouraged anyone with questions to please reach out to him or the Select Board. Public input meeting will be held on January 8th. Following the public input meeting the budget will go to the Select Board for approval and then be sent to the voters for Town Meeting. Tax rates would then be set in August of 2024.
- Steve Isham asked if the public input session would be a special meeting at 5:30 pm or at the regular meeting at 6 pm. Chad explained it has been done both ways in the past and was up to the board. The board chose to host the public input session at a special meeting at 5:30 pm on January 8th.
- Jim Brown inquired if the \$91,000 for planning and zoning included the cost of the administrator. Chad said yes.
- Jim Brown asked what the beautification budget was. Chad explained that the beautification budget is the same as it has been the last two years.

- Scott Beck asked about the delta between inside the special services district and outside of the special services district. He asked if it had to do with a smaller budget but a bigger base. Chad said yes the special services district pays for the majority of the police department budget.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Construction at the Water Treatment Plant continues with building and site work. This project is due to be completed in December of 2024.
- Updated cost estimates were received for the project at the Wastewater Treatment Facility and the cost estimates remain stable. Discussing if the building needs to be year round or if seasonal would be suitable.
- Chief Pierce has been working on public input meetings with the Athenaeum and plans to hold them quarterly. Also expecting a note from the Chief coming soon in the Caledonian Record.
- The Fire Department has completed the Santa Fund for 2023. Chief Reed has been working on placing the order for the new apparatus.
- The Calex meeting has been delayed until tomorrow Thursday December 28th.
- DPW has been working on assisting with leveling the ice rink on Portland Street and balancing backroad repairs with the thaw.
- Joe mentioned that he continues to work on existing projects and has seen an increase in interest with developers in St. Johnsbury.
- Frank asked the time of the Calex meeting. Chad said early afternoon.
- Steve Isham inquired about the FBI training for the Police Chief. Chad explained that he has discussed with Joel.
- Steve Isham confirmed that the Route 2 mudslide was all the states issue. Chad said yes. Stacy mentioned that the State had planned for repairs in that area over 20 years ago.

Other Business:

- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk asked if the current contract with Calex was ending and if the Town would be billed monthly going forward as outlined in the letter what would happen when the Town runs out of money. Chad explained that they are within their legal right to adjust the contract and that he has had conversations with finance and to confirm that there are funds to cover it.
- Stacy asked if Chad has anticipated when the Town would run out of funds.
- Frank asked if the increase would be for the next six months. Chad said that currently the contract is month to month. We either pay the increase now or have the service or we don't have the service.
- Frank inquired about the 3 year contract with Calex. Chad explained that he had legal review it and it was within their rights to make the adjustments as they did.
- Frank asked if the Town Attorney or an Attorney from VLCT reviewed it. Chad said that the Town Attorney did. Chad explained that he spoke with Lyndon Rescue who said they would not be able to provide sustained ambulance services to St. Johnsbury.
- Tracy asked if the increase applied to all towns that Calex serves. Chad said yes.
- Steve Isham asked if the rates were not covering everything. Chad explained that the Town is looking at it to determine if it is better for St. Johnsbury and the residents to merge with Calex.

- Jim Brown asked if the recreational survey was out or had been completed. Chad explained that it was a grant application and that the Town has not gotten word back on if they have received the grant.

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

DRAFT