



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 February 12, 2024 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

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

Public: KATV, Jim Brown, Gillian Sewake (via zoom), Don Smith, Bob Swartz, Bob Joly, Peter Van (via zoom), Todd Wellington, Karen Geraghty

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the minutes from the Jan. 22nd meeting with the noted corrections. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Frank presented the following liquor and tobacco license requests:
 - Pizza Hut- 1st Class
 - Jiffy Mart - 2nd Class
 - Jiffy Mart- 2nd Class
- On a motion by Dennis and second Tracy to approve the liquor and tobacco licenses as presented. Brendan abstained. All in favor.

January Financials:

- Lesley Russ, Finance Officer provided the following January financials.

- The property taxes are prorated in the governmental funds as well as the interdepartmental and reserve funds.
- The General Fund at the end of January had a deficit of \$880,500. Departments within the general fund are on target. The unbudgeted revitalization expenses of \$633,318, Armory expenses of \$103,093 along with other annual payments (pension, special appropriations and bond payments) have created the temporary deficit.
- Special Services Fund at the end of January had a deficit of \$4,777. Regular salaries and overtime combined are at 61% of the budget. Recruitment continues due to four vacancies in the department.
- The Highway Fund at the end of January had a deficit of \$23,311. The Highway Fund has received the annual State payments to help offset expense from the flooding. Operating expenses in the highway fund are on target.
- The Water Fund at the end of January had a temporary deficit of \$312,522. This is due to billing in arrears and loan payments.
- The Sewer Fund at the end of January had a deficit of \$557,531. This is primarily due to billing in arrears, a vehicle purchase and loan payments.
- The Parking Meter Fund at the end of January had a surplus of \$37,390.

Readiness to Serve Transfer:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager requested that \$30,000 from the readiness to serve payments be transferred to economic development fund as it has been done in the past.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to transfer \$30,000 from the readiness to serve payments to the economic development fund.

USDA RD Grant Resolution:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager explained that he has been working with the Food Co-op on this big project which is a priority project for the Town. The resolution presented would be used for construction and up fit of the Co-op. The deadline for the grant resolution is Feb. 28th, 2024. He requested that the Town apply for the USDA RD Grant on behalf of the Co-op. He mentioned that this is nothing new and the Town has done this before in 2020 and 2022.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis approve the USDA RD Grant Resolution. All in favor.
- Karen Geraghty, Fundraising Project Manager for the Co-op mentioned what a remarkable project this has been and the community has been so supportive. She explained that they are working towards acquisition of the site by April 1st, 2024. They are also working on increasing their Co-op shares from 950 to 1,000 by March 1st, 2024. This grant would be used for construction and up fit of the building.
- Jim Brown asked if the financials were in place for the purchase on April 1st, 2024. Karen Geraghty said that they are working on it and getting very close.

Recreation Committee Appointments:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the Town has been awarded a grant for a recreation study and recommend that the Town appoint folks to the Recreation Committee. The following individuals have shown interest in being on the committee.
 - Peter Van Straten

- John Lenzini
 - Jason Marks
 - Tom Turek
 - Brittany Petty
 - Scott Beck
 - Randy Rathburn
 - Tara Longley
 - Heather Mulligan
 - Justin Crocker
 - Carol Lyon
 - Matt Racenet
 - Sarah Gagne
 - Rich Alercio
- Chad mentioned that most of the individuals listed are St. Johnsbury residents but not all are. However they all have an interest in St. Johnsbury.
 - On a motion by Tracy and second by Dennis to appoint those recommended by the Town Manager to the Recreation Committee until after Town Meeting in 2025.

Design Advisory Committee Appointments:

- Bob Swartz explained to the Select Board that two former members who recently resigned have asked to be reappointed to the Design Advisory Committee along with a new member. He recommended that the Select Board reappoint Diane Cummings and Mike Robey and appoint Gillian Sewake.
- Steve Isham asked about the length of the appointment. Chad recommended appointment them to the DAC until the organizational meeting in 2025 as the board did with the Recreation Committee.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to reappoint Diane Cummings and Mike Robey and appoint Gillian Sewake to the Design Advisory Committee until the organizational meeting in 2025. All in favor.

Wastewater Facility Solids Handling Update:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided an update on the Wastewater Facility Solids Handling project. He explained that a bond for 3.9 million was secured for the project which included building a building to house the new solids handling press. He explained that this fall the WWTF operated the press for 12 weeks and processed 850,000 gallons of solids before winter shut down. The cost for construction of a building with the correct air exchange needed for the press is exurbanite. If the Town moved forward with running the press seasonally there would be a cost savings of 1.6 million on this project. Based on this and the recommendation from the Dufresne Group the Town is proposing and recommending scaling the current project back and identifying future projects with the bond funding and running the press seasonally.
- Frank asked how long the press is able to run seasonally. Jim Brimblecombe, Chief Wastewater Operator said he believes the press can run from April to November and he is certain the WWTF can process all the solids within this time frame.
- Jim Brown asked if the press was housed totally outside. Chad said no the press is currently housed in a building that is not heated.
- Jim Brown asked if the current building would cause a health or safety issues. Jim said the building is pretty well ventilated.

- Steve Isham asked if the holding tanks were full how they plan to get them to a reasonable level. Jim said they would press 4 days a week until they are caught up. He said he doesn't see a problem it getting caught up to a reasonable level.
- Tracy asked if the funds needed to be reallocated. Chad said not yet. He was just bringing it to the Select Board's attention to get input.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Town Meeting is approaching. An informational meeting will be held the Monday night before Town meeting at 7:30 pm at the St. Johnsbury School.
- The Town Report has been completed and is with the printers. The Town Report will not be printed in the Caledonian Record like it has been in the past. Copies will be available both online and in the Town Clerk's Office by Friday.
- Construction at the Water Treatment Facility continues to move forward.
- Steve Isham inquired if the surveying in the area of Portland and Railroad Street was a town project or a private project. Chad said he would have to speak with the DPW Director as he was unsure if it was a town project or private project.
- DPW continue to provide gravel to dirt roads and repair them as best possible. If anyone has concerns regarding a road they are encouraged to call the DPW Garage.
- Jim Brown asked if the sidewalk plow was back up and running and what happened. Chad explained that the sidewalk plow had a hydraulic leak and DPW had a hard time obtaining the part from Canada however the machine has been repaired.

Other Business:

- Jim Brown provided an update on the bylaw modernization and what the Planning Commission continues to work on. He explained that the Planning Commission is a bit behind on the Town Plan but is working to get a survey out to the community for input.
- Dennis asked if the Town had an update on the proposed Charter changes. Chad said no the state was supposed to reach out to him as they were reviewing it and making minor edits. Chad mentioned that he would reach out to them to obtain an update.

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