



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

51 Depot Square, Suite 1

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board July 13th, 2026 @ 6:00pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak (via Zoom), Stacy Jewell, Sarah Gagne, Kresten Sterling, Kate Bent (via Zoom)

Public: KATV, Issiah Willson, Michael Miller (via Zoom), Barbara Edelman/Darryll Rudy (via Zoom), Steve Dolgin (via Zoom), Gillian Sewake, Jim Brown, Chase Empsall, Courtney P, D (via Zoom), Deb Dolgin, David P

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Ellen to approve the meeting minutes from June 22nd as presented. All in favor.

Warrants:

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

Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- None

Discover St. Johnsbury VT ACCD Downtown Vibrancy Fund Grant Agreement:

- Gillian Sewake briefly shared the new state funding. She also shared a little bit of what Discover St. Johnsbury does, which include but are not limited to the community events and the downtown business community in the Town of St. Johnsbury.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Ellen to approve the Discover St. Johnsbury VT ACCD Downtown Vibrancy Fund Grant Agreement. All in favor.

Delinquent Tax Resolution:

- On a motion by Ellen and second by Dennis to approve the Delinquent Tax Resolution. All in favor.

Housing Reserve Transfer:

- On a motion by Ellen and second by Brendan to approve the \$60,024.66 Housing Reserve Transfer. All in favor.

Knob Management Plan Recommendations:

- Sarah Gagne and David shared the Knob Management Plan Recommendations as follows:
- The Committee accepts in principle the Management Plan as drafted but recommends the following adjustments/alterations/addition: Structure of the Committee: Committee is fine with structure as proposed but does suggest that the Select Board be free to explore other options, structures, and responsibilities. These might include a broader "Parks Committee" or a Conservation Commission.
- Property History should be updated to include a section on the competing property maps and village/town line.
- Hunting: Recommendation already submitted to Select Board. For the time being, the Knob should be designated as bow-hunting only, and the Knob property should be designated as all inside the village.
- Parking: Owing to concerns about abutters and regarding traffic flow and other issues, parking requires additional study. It should include the possibility of accessible parking.
- Community Garden: Committee should continue to investigate options. However, there are issues of access to water and parking. We recommend that the Town might explore other options, such as the RK Miles property.
- Trail System: Construct trail system for walking but allowing bikes, circular, and entirely on the property. System should avoid vernal pools, and sensitive areas. Committee accepts Arrowwood's trail design in principle but should continue to explore options and adjust as necessary. Note: recommend that we remove barbed wire along upper fields, which are close to the likely trail areas. Mountain Biking: No immediate need for mountain bike trails as plenty of other MB-trails already exist. Focus for Knob should be on walking. Note: Erosion control may require water-bars, which could make biking difficult. Mowing and Fields: Establish a mowing and bushhogging schedule consistent with Arrowwood recommendations, preserving views and open fields for bobolinks, and removing some of the pines that have grown in the fields. Include mowing of trail system around the fields. Continue to investigate creation of a "soft edge" as well as to develop invasives policy and action steps.

Signage: Develop signage appropriate to property boundaries. Investigate kiosk at gate area.

- Signage should be informative, educational and should celebrate the property and its history.
- Frank thanked the committee.
- There was no motion to approve the plan recommendations.

Rental Housing Improvement Grant FY27:

- Kresten Sterling went over a PowerPoint that included what the Rental Housing Improvement Grant is. Kresten shared the purpose of the Rental Housing Improvement Program is encourage landlords to improve rental housing in St. Johnsbury resulting in more livable, sustainable, and marketable rental units for everyone. Universal Design and energy efficiency improvements are strongly encouraged.
- Kresten thanked the Review Committee Members.

- The maximum grant amount is \$6,000 per unit, and a budget with supporting estimates must be submitted at the same time as the grant application.
- A 1:1 cash match is required. Example: a grant amount of \$6,000 requires at least a \$6,000 cash match from the property owner. The grant is a reimbursement for funds spent.
- The program is managed by the Town.
- The program requirements must be an existing residential rental housing unit available for occupancy or result in a newly registered rental-ready unit in St. Johnsbury by the end of the grant period.
- Property owners must be current on all property taxes (and/or agreements), water-sewer bills, civic fees and fines, rental registrations and parking fees and fines.
- The completed work must be inspected and approved by the Compliance Officer no later than June 1st, 2027, before grant money is released.
- One grant award per rental housing unit. A single property owner is eligible for being utilized, this restriction may be waived.
- Applications will be accepted from April 23rd, 2026, through June 12th, 2026. Anticipated award announcement date is July 13th, 2026.
- The 2025-2026 Awarded Grant recap is 20 Grants totaling \$108,177 with 11 grants completed and awarding in \$60,025 resulting in 5 new rental units, and 6 units that were vacant, supporting the \$425,264 in project cost.
- The scoring update from 2025-2026 is pertaining to the scoring criteria of two bonus points that will be awarded for vacant units brought to the active list.
- The scoring criteria: four bonus points will be awarded for projects that add a new rental housing unit to St. Johnsbury.
- Kresten presented the application scoring that The Rental Housing Improvement Program Grant Review Committee will review and score. The final recommendations will be presented to the Select board for approval.
- Kresten went over the RHIGP program details.
- The funding source for the 2026-27 are 2025 Rental housing reg fees which equal \$29,193.00, housing reserve fund were \$81,662.00, and the housing reserve transfer \$30,000.00. The total balance being \$140,855.00.
- The 2026-27 RHIGP Grant summary included applications received and recommendations.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Ellen to approve the Rental Housing Improvement Grant FY27. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad mentioned that the Auditors were here and there will be a report sometime in September.
- Chad shared the Assessor completed grievances.
- Chad mentioned The Town is prepared for the potential storm for tomorrow.
- Chad shared that the bid openings will start soon for Bay Street.
- Chad asked Joe if he had anything to share. Joe shared the CO-OP grand opening went well. He is also working on grant management.
- Joe also briefly shared about the true temper grant funding, DEC developing, and housing developer.

Other Business:

- Frank asked Chad about the street painting taking a while to get done, Chad said DPW has some vacancies for summer help and a few DPW employees out on medical leave, which is not work related.

Executive Session:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to adjourn. All in favor.

July 13th Select Board Meeting Video:

https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__us02web.zoom.us_rec_share_2Xt5n4sH1Smz-5FINliaNecOF7MUbsOO5USj63lPzUpYTEGbFB2ql8ozw0DdDaVdw.2MUTsRATEWWpTgjk&d=DwMFAw&c=euGZstcaTDllvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=Ju1b0XBLvfVAGEVrHqulCPACXIn_2b1lVTCCbe_28U&m=Gu9z8m4G-z6gSWJA2fZJAcD9Pgi3nG4oVmyQFdDsPdPlgKTrn8x0hPB9eGo7r&s=5UbC12r36KKFEeobmiR3pBbz1U1HzL7vFjBje4lG5Bw&e=

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