



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board May 13th, 2024 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak, Jim Brimblecombe, Steven Beauregard

Public: Gillian Sewake, KATV, Todd Wellington, Jim Brown, Chase Empsall, Lorriane Synosky, Evan Olseon,

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- Lorraine Synosky approached the Select Board regarding a recent article in the Barton Chronicle on the movie "Just Getting By" which highlights why and how people fall into poverty and homelessness. She mentioned the increase in homelessness population in St. Johnsbury including on the front porch of 51 Depot and the LVRT. She shared that a community member was at the pavilion on Bay Street and was told to go away and that she wasn't welcomed there by the homeless. She questioned that St. Johnsbury is supposed to be a place for everyone and wondered what can be done to address this. She said she is concerned that the homeless will keep making lives miserable for all.

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Tracy to approve the minutes from the April 22nd Select Board meeting with the noted addition. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Steven Isham presented the following liquor and tobacco licenses and renewals:
 - Aladdin Food Management Services, LLC- 3rd Class
 - Aladdin Food Management Services, LLC- 1st Class
 - Kari On Ventures, LLC- 2nd Class
 - Kari On Ventures, LLC- tobacco

- Ocean State Job Lot Stores of VT, Inc- 2nd class
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to approve the liquor licenses as presented. All in favor. Brendan abstained.

DAC Appointments:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that Jackie Fox and Tom Tureck would like to be appointed to the Design Advisory Committee. He mentioned that both have met with the DAC and they are happy to have them on the committee. Chad recommended that the board appoint Jackie Fox and Tom Tureck to the DAC until the Organizational Meeting in March of 2025.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Frank to appoint Jackie Fox and Tom Tureck to the DAC until March of 2025. All in favor.

CUD Appointment:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that Nick Anzalone has agreed to represent St. Johnsbury again this year for the Communication Union District. He explained that the Town has tried to recruit an alternative but have not had any luck.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to appoint Nick Anzalone to a 1 year term on the NEK CUD. All in favor.

Portland Street Sidewalk:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the sidewalk on Portland Street in front of White's Market and at 501 Portland Street is deteriorating and need replacement.
- Frank inquired about the sidewalk on the Portland Street Bridge. Chad explained that the repair of that was already approved by the Select Board and the work started today.
- Chad explained that the sidewalk reserve fund currently has \$87,000 with another \$125,000 from this current budget year and \$125,000 in 24-25. He explained that the estimate the Town obtain to fix those areas was \$65,000. He explained that the Portland Street Utility Project is at least 10 years out and it doesn't make sense to wait at this time.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to allocate \$65,000 from the sidewalk reserve fund for the sidewalk repair in front of White's Market and 501 Portland Street. All in favor.
- Jim Brown asked for clarification of the spots in need of repair. Steve Beauregard explained the sidewalk is from entrance to entrance.
- Jim asked if it was within the curb cuts. Steve Beauregard said yes.
- Dennis asked Steve Beauregard if he had obtain a quote for sidewalk replacement on Boyton Ave. Steve Beauregard explained that there is not enough money to go around and it would have to be paved in for now.

STJRF Grant Agreement- NFC 560 Railroad Street Project:

- Evan Olseon from Northern Forest Center provided an update on the project at 560 Railroad Street. He explained that the completed project will include 9 middle market apartments and 2 commercial spaces with the hopes of helping to fill the critical housing gap in St. Johnsbury. The project has obtained 1.2m in public funds and 518k in private funds. The scope work has been

finalized and the construction contract is in place. Project costs have increased due to needing to remove the basement slab but NFC has worked to adjust the funding to make it happen.

- Project Timeline includes:
 - May 2024- new basement slab
 - Summer 2024- framing, roof and windows
 - Fall 2024- drywall, painting and millwork
 - Spring 2025- button up the project
 - Occupancy projection 03/28/2025
- Frank mentioned that he thinks this is a great project and is glad to see it moving forward. He expressed his hope to partner with NFC again in the future.
- Brendan asked if NFC has had any interest in the apartments. Evan said that people say it but they are not currently actively looking for tenants at this time. Currently NFC is focusing on the two commercial spaces.
- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that \$150,000 was obligated from the STJRGP for the 560 Railroad Street Project. He explained that the agreement presented tonight was reviewed by legal and includes the same conditions as previous agreements including that NFC has to build housing within the next five years.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Brendan to authorize the Town Manager to execute the grant agreement with Northern Forest Center for 560 Railroad Street as presented. All in favor.

Water/Sewer Budget Presentation:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that he provided the projected expenses for the budget to the Select Board. He said it is looking like a 4.25% increase in water as there are fairly healthy reserves and 16% increase in sewer which also has fairly healthy reserves. He mentioned that the increase in sewer is largely due to the fact that the Town can no longer land apply. He pointed out that Jim Brimblecombe ran the numbers and it looks like the Town is saving around \$130,000 a year by operating the plant.
- Steve Beauregard explained that his proposed budget is very similar to how it is now and is flat line. The Water Treatment Facility is expected to come online in Nov. 2024 but will run as it does now for the most part.
- Steve Isham asked if the 5% increase was yearly or 10 years. Chad explained that the increase would be for the next year. He mentioned that the Town looks at 10 year projections but tries to keep the increase steady so it is not too large of an impact.
- Chad explained that the budget would be made available on the website.
- Dennis asked why a land apply consultant fee was still included in the budget since the Town doesn't land apply anymore. Jim mentioned it was Stone Environmental costs. Chad explained that the Town still had to complete PCB testing yearly on the properties they previously land applied on. He expected that this would be a forever cost.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Chad presented the April 2024 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 April had a deficit of \$1,043,160. Departments within the general fund that are over budget are Economic Development due to the Armory expenses, the Public Safety Building due to a new boiler and cleaning, Pomerleau Building due to a new bathroom for the Town Clerk's Office, the Fire Department due to increases in salaries and the unbudgeted Calex increase and revitalization.
- The Special Services Fund at the end of April had a surplus of \$75,061. Regular salaries and overtime combined are at 84% of the budget. Recruitment continues due to five vacancies in the department.
- The Highway Fund at the end of April had a surplus of \$315,079. The Highway Fund has received the annual State payments to help offset expenses from the flooding and winter maintenance came in under budget. Loan proceeds in the amount of \$184,067 were received in April.
- The Water Fund at the end of April had a temporary deficit of \$190,943. This is due to billing in arrears and loan payments.
- The Sewer Fund at the end of April had a deficit of \$517,579. This is primarily due to billing in arrears, a vehicle purchase that was not budgeted but approved by the Select Board and loan payments.
- The Parking Meter Fund at the end of April had a surplus of \$35,082.
- Meetings with Department Heads will be taking place to discuss their budget and collect year end projections.
- Frank asked when the new finance officer was expected to start. Chad mentioned that Zan Zettler was projected to start on Monday May 20th and would have about three weeks overlap with Lesley.
- The Recreation Committee is moving forward.
- Public Safety Task Force has been created and includes the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Code Compliance Officer, Dispatch Manager and Town Manager to discuss concerns.
- Tax Sale is scheduled for the end of June.
- The bike path extension of Bay Street is moving forward.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager mentioned that he is awaiting bid documents for the remediation of the Armory.
- Brendan applauded the Police Department for being out at the farmers market this past Saturday. He explained it was nice to see and he would like to see more of it.

Other Business:

- Jim Brown mentioned that the Planning Commission is working on a final draft of the bylaw modernization and would like a special meeting to review the document with the Select Board, Design Advisory Committee and Development Review Board. Act 250 changes are coming down the road which will effect some of the bylaws. FEMA also has new flood map information which will need to be updated in the bylaws.
- Jim Brown asked the Select Board if they were aware that the Planning Commission reports directly to them. The Select Board said yes.
- Jim Brown explained that there is only 1 year until the Town Plan needs to be completed. He is waiting to hear about possible changes to the questionnaire the Planning Commission would like to put out. He explained that he would like to have the Select Board more involved. The Planning Commission wants to be able to do outreach and is appealing to the Select Board to get help to get it done correctly.

- Steve Isham asked if the Select Board would have input when the joint meeting would be held? Chad said he would try to circulate some dates at the Planning Commission meeting on May 21st. Jim mentioned that for a special meeting it would only need to be warned 24 hours in advance.
- Steve Isham asked how the Planning Commission would guarantee that the survey is completed by residents and not guests. Jim mentioned that it doesn't need to be just residents. Input is still important. Jim explained that it is not a professional survey they are just looking for some input.
- Brendan commented that he thought the extra work to go to events would be helpful.
- Discussed moving the May 27th Select Board meeting to Tuesday May 28th at 6 pm.

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