



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board July 22<sup>nd</sup> , 2024 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak, Police Chief Joel Pierce, Fire Chief Bradley Reed

Public: Gillian Sewake (via zoom), KATV, Kerry (via zoom), Don Smith, Clarke Atwell, Peter Van Straten, Mike O'Hara, Richard Boisseau, Dana Gray, Colleen Morriss, Nicolas Anzalone, Jason Marks

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- Richard Boisseau approached the board regarding flood from Storm Beryl. He explained that in this 50 years of living in St. Johnsbury he believes this was the most disastrous flood. He thanked the residents of St. J Center and complimented the efforts of St. Johnsbury Fire Department. He expressed that he would have liked to have seen one select board member north of Hospital Drive knocking on doors. He explained that a lot of damage was done and there is a lot of clean up that needs to take place. He charged the Select Board to consider what to do with abandon lots post flood, giving an example of Larry Golden Art Studio. He explained that he would love to see it turned back into a park. He mentioned that as businesses start to grow again and things are reimaged that he would like to be a part of that. He encouraged the select board and residents that if there is anything they can do to help please do it.
- Mike O'Hara from Twin State Rail Trail approached the board regarding recent trail happenings. He explained that the rail lines in New Hampshire have changed hands and the new owners are wishing to reestablish railways into Dalton now. The new rail owners are hoping that the dump in Dalton is about to be permitted and that trash can flow north to the dump. He explained that this is an economic opportunity to Towns all along the way. He explained that as things develop in the next 4-5 months that he will come back and let the board know.
- Gillian Sewake expressed her excitement around the community rallying together to help each other after Storm Beryl. She mentioned that St. Johnsbury business owners are coming together to for the residents effected. She commended them for starting Locally Social Gives to help flood clean up.
- Gillian Sewake mentioned that this Friday is the Final Friday event on Railroad Street starting at 4 pm.

- Richard Boisseau asked Chad what FEMA was looking at when they come to town. Chad explained that they are looking at residential damage. He explained that the cost of residential damage across the state can elevate the FEMA response.
- Richard Boisseau urged those that have not reported damage to call 211. Chad explained that the Town continues its outreach and encourages those effected to call 211.

#### Warrants:

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

#### Minutes:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to approve the minutes from the July 8<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting with the noted changes. All in favor.

#### Liquor/Tobacco License:

- None

#### Peter Polly Park Right of Way:

- Clarke Atwell approached the Select Board regarding the right of way to property around Peter Polly Park. He provided the Select Board with some history regarding the property and the developments over the last 12 plus months. He mentioned that a survey in 2016 showed that the driveway was entirely on Town land. He explained the new owners of the School House have agreed to enter into a right of way easement with the abutting property owners. Clarke mentioned that he provided the Town Manager with the relevant documents.
- Steve Isham asked if the blanks on the document had been completed. Clarke so no but it would only take him about 30 minutes.
- Frank mentioned that he felt comfortable moving forward with the right of way.
- Clarke explained with the right of way easement there is potential for 12 new dwellings.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to move forward with the Peter Polly Park Right of Way and authorize the Town Manager to execute the quick deed claim. All in favor.

#### CUD Appointment- St. Johnsbury Alternate:

- Chad explained that Colleen Morris is interested in being the St. Johnsbury Alternate for the CUD. He provided an overview of Colleen's background.
- Colleen Morris introduced herself to the Select Board and expressed what an important initiative the CUD is.
- Nick Anzalone commented that St. Johnsbury is lucky to have her.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Tracy to appoint Colleen Morris as the St. Johnsbury Alternate for the NEK CUD. All in favor.

#### CUD Update:

- Nicholas Anzalone provided the Select Board with an update on activities. He explained that recently the board members voted to merge with CV fiber. A final vote will take place in August

but he doesn't see anyone contesting it. He explained that CV fiber staff are working on a Beede application which could provide over 240 million state wide. Nick mention that he felt there was a good chance it would be awarded to them as they are the most under developed area in Vermont.

- He provided statistics that in 2023 over 200 miles of fiber was built which provided 2,300 people in the Northeast Kingdom with access. This included 111 St. Johnsbury residents in the area of Goss Hollow and Severance Hill Road. The CUD hopes to double that amount for 2024 and touch approximately 30 towns in the Northeast Kingdom.

#### Armory Remediation Contract:

- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager presented the Select Board with a contract for the Armory remediation. He explained that the project is estimated at 2.5 million of which 2.3 million will be funded through grants. He explained the Town received two bids, one from Prism Inc. and one from Costello Dismantling Inc. The bids were reviewed internally and came in around what the cost estimates were. He recommended moving forward with the bid from Costello Dismantling Inc. in the amount of \$1,165,118 and asked the board to authorize the Town Manager to execute.
- Joe explained that the remediation contract could not be signed before some funding falls into place. However time is of the essence in order to stay within the timeline. He is hoping that the final funding falls into place later this week and the contract can be executed.
- He reviewed the proposed timeline with hopes that the remediation could begin onsite in mid-August with a 4 month timeline, with hopes that phase 2 construction could begin in the spring.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to accept the bid from Costello Dismantling Inc. and authorize the Town Manager to execute. All in favor.

#### Recreation Committee Evaluation Consultant:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager introduced Jason Marks and Peter Van Straten part of the St. Johnsbury Recreation Committee.
- Peter Van Straten thanked Jason Marks for all his hard work running the recreation department. He commended on his organization of the program and the diverse program offerings.
- Chad explained that the recreation evaluation would consist of public outreach, identifying assets and programing. He explained that the committee received 3 proposals and the committee agreed to recommend awarding the contract to Impact Consulting. Impact Consulting is ready to step in and work on the study once the contract is signed.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Tracy to enter into a contract with Impact Consulting and for the Town Manager to execute.
- Jason Marks mentioned that two bids were received before the RFP deadline and the first bid didn't cut it. He explained that the third bid was inquired after the RFP closed. The bid received after the RFP closed scored 1 point above the Impact Consulting proposal but was not within the deadline. He explained that the timeline is of the essences and scoring was conducted by 5 of the 12 committee members. He expressed that he thought Barry and Dunn was more professional but was the late bid and that Impact Consulting doesn't have the same resources as Barry and Dunn but is capable.
- Dennis explained that he didn't see a need to award to Barry and Dunn as they submitted a late bid.
- Tracy expressed that it should be done right and there seems to be an urgency to move forward with the consultation.
- Frank expressed that a late bid is a late bid.
- Brendan expressed that it sounded like there was some cloudiness with the committee.

- Peter Van Straten explained that 5 committee members discussed all three bids at length. Impact Consulting is well qualified, the proposal was well written and they are capable of providing the service. The committee voted 5-0 in favor of recommending Impact Consulting.
- Chad explained that the committee asked Barry and Dunn for a proposal so the committee would have something similar to compare the Impact Consulting proposal to.
- Brendan asked if the recommendation of Impact Consulting was best. Peter Van Straten said yes. Jason Marks commented that Barry and Dunn could have provided more down the road potentially.
- Mike O'Hara questioned if a quorum was required and met given only 5 people showed up out of a committee of 12. Chad explained that he doesn't believe it was a requirement.
- The board returned to the motion and voted with 3 ayes (Tracy, Frank and Dennis) and 1 nay (Brendan). Motion passed to award the contract to Impact Consulting and authorize the Town Manager to execute.

#### Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program Recommendations:

- Kresten Sterling, Code Compliance Officer provided the Select Board with a review of the Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program. He highlighted the purpose of the program is to 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. The program provides reimbursement to landlords for capital improvements with a grant maximum of \$6,000 per unit with a 1:1 match. Landlords can be awarded up to 3 grants per year, however only one grant per rental unit. Outreach and applications window was from March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 until April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Once awarded the work must be completed and inspected by the Code Compliance Officer before the grant money is released.
- The Rental Housing Improvement Grant Review Committee has reviewed and scored all 49 submitted grant applications. Kresten provided an overview of the scoring point system. Funding for this grant program comes 2023 Rental Housing Registration fees (\$22,500), previous program balance (\$53,472) and the St. Johnsbury Revitalization Program (\$100,000) for total amount of \$175,974. The committee is recommending 32 projects which will bring 15 new units to St. Johnsbury Rental Housing Inventory. The recommended awards total \$175,974 and supports \$2,128,553 in project costs.
- Kresten commented that the expanded funding has been huge for St. Johnsbury.
- Highlights from 2023 were provided and are as follows:
  - 25 grants were awarded however only 15 projects were completed. Of those 15 projects 12 were new units. In FY 23-24 \$86,736 was awarded in grant funds assisting in total improvements of over \$987,000. 8 units still remain in the process of completing their construction.
- Kresten thanked the board members. He expressed that they put a lot of time and effort into this grant program and thanked them for their work.
- Frank commented that it was impressive.
- Dennis thanked Kresten and the committee.
- Steve Isham mentioned that last year the program leveraged upwards of 1110% and looking at this year it will leverage upwards of 1200%. Kresten explained that he is working with the applicants to try to capture the true costs.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to award the following Rental Housing Improvement Grants as recommended by the Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program Committee. All in favor.
  - 222 summer Street Unit #1- \$6,000

- 80 St. Mary Street Unit #3- \$6,000
- 560 Railroad Street Units 101,102 and 201- \$6,000 each
- 399 US RT 2B Unit 1 and 2- \$6,000 each
- 496 West Hill Road Unit 1, 2 and Common Area- \$6,000 each
- 76 Highland Ave Unit 1 and 2- \$6,000 each
- 450 Portland Street Unit 1,3 and Common Area- \$6,000 each
- 118 Costa Ave- \$6,000
- 373 Spring Street Unit 4- \$5572
- 373 Spring Street Common Area- \$6,000
- 273 RT 2B Common Area- \$6,000
- 322 Summer Street Unit 2- \$6,000
- 65 Church Street Common Area- \$6,000
- 65 Church Street Unit 2- \$912
- 65 Church Street Unit 3- \$4789
- 27 Orient Street Unit 1 and 2- \$6,000
- 141 Mt. Pleasant Street Common Area- \$3,680
- 95 North Ave Unit 1- \$6,000
- 322 Summer Street Unit 1- \$6,000
- 99 Pearl Street Common Area- \$1390
- 76 Highland Ave Common Area- \$6,000
- 376 Lafayette Street Common Area- \$3,631
- 373 Sprint Street Unit 5- \$6,000

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- He highlighted the cover article about St. Johnsbury in Seven Day. Mentioning it was a good article and congratulated St. Johnsbury businesses and the Chamber.
- Food Truck Tuesday is tomorrow night at the Three Rivers Trailhead Pavilion.
- Provided an overview of the events that occurred as a result of Storm Beryl. He highlighted that the Emergency Operations Center opened late Wednesday night due to the flash flood warning. It wasn't until Thursday that most of the flooding happened. The Sleeper River level rapidly increased along with the Passumpsic and reached its peak around 1:30 pm. This caused 6 road closures and DPW quickly organized help from contractors to begin repairs. By end of day Friday all roads were back open. He explained that while roads are open crews still have a lot of erosion and debris to clean up. Chad thanked the contractors who assisted the Town.
- Roll of dumpsters for flood related debris have been placed at the Old Ames Building, in East St. Johnsbury and at the St. Johnsbury Center Post Office until Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Scrap metal from the flood should be brought to the scrap metal department at the dump.
- FEMA will be in town on Wednesday to assess the damage in the area.
- Gilman Ave construction will resume when the contractors have completed flood repair. Currently they are busy helping communities.
- State closures are listed on 511 and seems pretty accurate and in real time. Hopefully RT. 2 will be open by Wednesday.
- The Public Safety Task Force is holding a public outreach next Monday July 29<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm at the Welcome Center. All are invited to attend.

- Don Smith asked about the Town Emergency Alert system. Chad explained that currently the Town uses a program called Nixel but is looking into VT Alerts as well.
- Don Smith inquired about notifications for the water main break during Storm Beryl. Chad explained that the Town utilized many different ways to get the message out including Nixel, Facebook, Front Porch Forum, Town website, the local radio station and notices were placed on doors of all those who were effected.

Other Business:

- Richard Boisseau expressed concern for residents water bills due to the clean-up from Storm Beryl. He asked what relief was planned for those spikes due to the flood. He asked if it would be possible to have water bills adjusted back to the average usage. Chad explained that there is already a policy in place to address this and suggested residents complete a form if this is the case when they get their water bill.
- Steve Isham thanked everyone for coming.

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

July 22 Select Board:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/pMaBri8ukwmAnwc11aHH4Q4L8Tun826t7xsglL6s3XGTxrleCpb0w-kFq-LVEJc.HDsHHm9134N40eBT>

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