



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board September 23rd, 2024 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

Select Board: Steve Isham, Frank Empsall, Brendan Hughes (via zoom)

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Chief Bradley Reed, Chief Joel Pierce

Public: KATV, Jim Brown, Gillian Sewake (via zoom), Richard Boisseau, Anita Steenson, Ariel Kittredge (via zoom)

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- Anita Steenson from the Small Business Administration- Disaster Resilience Team mentioned that she was deployed to the area due to the disaster declaration for the July flooding. Her program is at the federal level and includes low interest loans for renters, home owners, local businesses and non profits. It is a resource partner with FEMA. She explained that while FEMA's maximum grant is \$42,000 most are awarded around \$2,000. Her team can provide people with low interest loans up to 1/2 million dollars. She explained that this program can be a viable alternative with interest rates around 2.6% for up to 30 years. She stressed that the deadline to apply is the same deadline as FEMA and is fast approaching. If one does not apply they can never come back and apply again. She explained that it is critical that people preserve the option to apply as you never know what could happen in the future.
- Steve Isham asked what evidence one would have to give to qualify for the loan. Anita mentioned that only three things are needed and people can apply right online. The area where those applying live must be in a disaster declared area, damages must be related to the disaster and people must have the ability to payback the loan. She highlighted that no credit score is required to obtain a small business loan, the loan also have no interest the first year and interest doesn't accrue.
- Richard Boisseau asked if there was a date in which people had to apply by. Anita said Oct. 21st was the last day to be able to apply, highlighting that the FEMA deadline is also her deadline.
- Richard Boisseau asked where the office was located. Anita mentioned that the office was embedded with the FEMA office in Lyndonville.
- Richard Boisseau asked if there was a way to make the program more accessible for St. Johnsbury residents. Anita offered to schedule an event in St. Johnsbury to help with accessibility. Chad explained that he could help coordinate an event in St. Johnsbury.
- Richard Boisseau asked if the applications were for the July 10th and July 12th flooding events. Anita said that was correct.

Minutes:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to table the minutes from the Sept. 9th meeting. All in favor.

Warrants:

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

Liquor and Tobacco Licenses:

- None

Grand List Adjustments:

- Steven Isham presented Grand List # 2024-#3. He highlighted that it was a decrease in \$1,823.40. Grand List #2024- #4 in the decreased amount of \$357.59.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to approve Grand List adjustment # 2024-#3 and Grand list adjustment # 2024-#4 as presented. All in favor.

August Financials:

- Zan Zettler, Finance Officer provided the following August financials.
- He explained that the following report is for the second month of the fiscal year.
- At the end of August the General Fund had a surplus of \$15,519,767 prior to any due to due from budget transfer and payment of the required educational property tax liability by the Town.
- The Special Services Fund had a temporary cash flow shortage of \$213,736 due to delay in transfer of property tax revenue.
- At the end of August the Highway Fund had a temporary cash shortfall of \$1,748,671. This was the result of unbudgeted material, labor, and contract services costs associated with the July 10th and July 29th flooding events.
- The Water Fund at the end of August had a surplus of \$5,286.
- At the end of August the Sewer Fund had a deficit of \$ 99,465 due to the quarterly billing cycle. Zan explained that the billing cycle is delayed 6 to 8 weeks.
- The Parking Meter at the end of August had a surplus of \$1,193.
- Zan highlighted that the construction in progress and the fix assets roll forward will be forward to Sullivan, Powers & Co., P.C by September 27, 2024. Positive progress is being made in terms of reconciling grant programs related to the prior fiscal year. Hoping to have the end of year audit completed by the end of the week.
- Steve Isham asked if the Town has had to dip into the line of credit yet. Zan said not to his knowledge has the line of credit been needed yet.

Fire Truck Bond:

- Chad presented the Select Board with the Fire Truck Bond for the ballot in November. He outlined the timeframe for the warnings as follows:

- Warning posted in Caledonian Record on Tuesday Oct. 15th, Tuesday Oct. 22nd and Tuesday Oct. 29th.
- Public Hearing scheduled for Oct. 28th prior to the regular Select Board meeting at 6 pm.
- Public Hearing Warning placed in the Caledonian Record on Oct. 17th.
- He read the bond warning language, highlighting that bond is in the amount of \$1,654,000 to pay for acquiring two fire trucks. Voting on this article will take place on November 5th, 2024 at the Town Offices from 8 am until 7 pm. He presented the Select Board with a Declaration of Intent for the Town of St. Johnsbury to reimburse certain expenditures from proceeds of indebtedness related to the bond.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to approve the Fire Truck Bond Warning as presented. All in favor.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to adopt the declaration of intent Town of St. Johnsbury to reimburse certain expenditures from proceeds of indebtedness related to the Fire Truck purchase. All in favor.

Public Safety Enhancement Team (PSET):

- Chad explained that the Public Safety Task Force continues to meet. More and more Town entities have joined the efforts on addressing community concerns. An encampment policy has been developed and the Public Safety Task Force continues to monitor and clean up encampments.
- Recently the Town of St. Johnsbury was approached by the Commissioner about the state's Public Safety Enhancement Team (PSET). The PSET program through the state of Vermont prioritizes long term violence prevention, policies and systems and supports local police departments. They have begun evaluating St. Johnsbury's crime data and have begun providing resources. PSET is another level of assistance to help the Town of St. Johnsbury. Previously they have worked with Springfield, Brattleboro and Rutland.
- Nothing is official at this time but St. Johnsbury is in good standings to get the assistance from PSET.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following report.
- Submitted pre applications for the FEMA buyout program. To date the program has received 5 residential applications and 2 business applications. There is no deadline to the program and applications can be submitted at any time.
- The Town submitted a letter requesting party status regarding the building of the Biomass Plant on the Lyndonville side of the Industrial Park.
- Town will be attending a job fair on Friday in Lyndonville. Recruitment continues in the Police Department.
- Work is underway at the Armory for the EPA clean up.
- Construction continues at the Water Treatment Facility and the Gilman and Pleasant Street project.
- DPW continues to work on flood response repairs and preparation for winter.
- There are no large mitigation projects as the result of the flooding at this time.
- Goss Hollow Road is ready to go to bid as the project has been approved by FEMA. This will be a substantial project that will hopefully be completed prior to winter.
- DPW continues to work on road repairs and prepare for winter.

- The Town of St. Johnsbury recently participated in Capital for the Day-NEK. Staff attended meetings with the governor and his staff. The Public Safety Task Force was able to express frustrations and concerns regarding public safety, homelessness and mental health. He explained that the Town was likely in line to receive assistance in evaluating the data and determining next steps.
- Richard Boisseau mentioned that the FEMA Office in Lyndonville has been pre registering people for the second flood. He urged those that were effected to go to the office and get pre registered.
- Tracy asked if the Town could get that information out via the paper or an email list. Chad explained that the Town since the beginning has been instructing people to call 211 and 211 has been sending people to FEMA.
- Steve Isham mentioned that FEMA has been at the Farmers Market and around Town.

Other Business:

- Frank asked if Chad could please talk with Deb Thorton on Cliff Street as she would like to see something done before winter.
- Jim Brown mentioned that the Planning Commission is working on some important and critical pieces. He explained that the bylaw modernization is moving forward and the Planning Commission recently heard back from Place Sense. The next steps are to look at scheduling public hearings. Most likely looking at November for Planning Commission Public Hearing. Jim asked if the Public Hearing meeting for the Select Board would need to be 30 days following the November Planning Commission hearings. Chad said he didn't think so but he would get with Matt and look into it.
- Jim Brown mentioned that the Planning Commission may not have enough time in the next 5 months to complete the Town Plan. He mentioned that he spoke with NVDA regarding this tight deadline. There are other options but they are not as desirable.
- Anita Steenson returned to let the Select Board know that SBA could absolutely do a day in St. Johnsbury.
- Jim Brown asked when FEMA will be looking at accepting applications from the July 30th flooding. Anita explained that it is in process but she does not know when it will be declared. Steve Isham explained that the president still needs to declare the flooding from July 30th as well.
- Brendan asked Chad to speak with Green Mountain Power about street lights on Concord Ave. He also asked if Chad could have them remove the shoes off the power lines behind Dunkin Donuts.

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

September 23th Select Board Meeting Video:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/FGh4hLr2R9e1oFPp63N4NI_89mXPWP374F16pkkC_69Ln1IQSDWvkcroRmZwh2k1.xGy9B82CdMTyxjdv

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