



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board August 25th, 2025 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Kate Bent, Chief Bradley Reed, Lesley Russ, Stacy Jewell, Kresten Sterling, Matthew Walsh, Chief Pierce, Lt. Wilson, Lester Cleary, Steve Beauregard

Public: KATV, Richard Boisseau, Issiah Wilson, Jim Brown, Bobbi Lepine, Don Smith, Cathe (via zoom), Gillian Sewake (via zoom), Scott Beck, Deb Dolgin, Mike Morin, Jody Fried, Tim Angell, Bernie L., John Ling, Alan Langmaid, Scott Campbell, Dana Gray, Peter S.

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the Aug 11th Selectboard minutes with the noted corrections. All in favor.

Warrants:

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

Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- None

Beautification Committee Appointment:

- Chad made the recommendation on bringing Vanessa Allen to the Beautification Committee.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve Vanessa Allen to the Committee. All in favor.

VT ACCD Downtown Vibrancy Fund Grant:

- Gillian Sewake presented the VT ACCD Downtown Vibrancy Fund grant to the selectboard.
- Gillian shared how the Municipality would understand that the Downtown Organization will receive \$25,000 in State Funding through the Vibrancy Fund.
- Gillian also wanted the Selectboard to acknowledge and agree that this funding will supplement, and not supplant, any funding traditionally provided to the Downtown Organization by the Municipality.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Dennis to approve the grant. All in favor.

Set Special Services Tax Rate:

- Stacy presented the new Special Service Tax rate, which would be now 0.4218.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the new Special Service Tax rate. All in favor.

Interim FEMA funding extension:

- Stacy gave an update that Passumpsic bank has approved to extend the loan until April 2026.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the extended loan. All in favor.

DPW Winter Sand:

- Steve Beauregard, director of Department of Public Works, showed the selectboard members two different samples of sand.
- Steve presented using the sand for a trial run for a year to see if the newer sand he is asking to switch to is better.
- The newer sand is more expensive, but they would be able to use less of it than the one they currently have been using.

DPW Equipment Loan:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve DPW Equipment Loan. All in favor.

FHS Holdings LL (former rkMILES location) Purchase and Sales Agreement:

- Chad and Joe Kasprak presented to the selectboard that the Town has an opportunity to acquire the properties owned by FHS Holdings at 258, 249, 256, and 145 Bay Street, otherwise known as the former site of rkMILES.
- Both explained that their legal team has reviewed the purchase and sales agreement, which gives the Town four months to conduct our due diligence, including completing environmental phases I and II, that way the Town can understand any potential environmental impacts that may come with the property.

- Funds are in place from EPA assessment funds for the Phases I and II work, and Montross Environmental is prepared to begin the work and has indicated that they can complete this in this time frame.
- Joe explains this property has the potential to enhance our downtown, provide recreational opportunities to our residents and visitors, support State-wide efforts, and ensure that visitors to the Lamoille Valley Trail are brought into St. Johnsbury's Downtown.
- Joe also explains we are also engaged with the Northern Forest Center to conduct public input meetings to help understand the best end use for the properties.
- The St. Johnsbury Town Plan emphasizes the importance of riverfront development as part of it broader goals for economic growth, recreation, and conversation.
- Some Key initiatives include:
 1. Recreation and Tourism
 2. Economic Development
 3. Conservation
- From the 2017 Town Plan is includes:
 1. Riverfront Task Force Initiatives
 2. Land Use Policy
 3. Housing, Neighborhoods, and Recreation Policy
 4. Economic Development Policy
 5. Riverfront Renewal Plan
 6. Community Visit 2015
 7. Municipal Planning Grant
- After an hour of residents, attendees and the Town sharing concerns, questions, and some positive feedback, the decision was made to table the decision for another two weeks.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to table the rkMILES property for another two weeks. All in favor.

St J Revitalization Fund Update:

- Chad provided an overview on the current St Johnsbury Revitalization Fund update which included the total allocation being \$2,139,419.67 and the remaining unobligated funds being \$215,925.67.
- Chad also shared that he and Kate Bent have been working on sending an invitation out to all the grantee's inviting them to come and present/ share their grant projects with the selectboard with the dates being offered on the 2nd selectboard meeting in September or the first selectboard meeting in October.

251 Portland St Update:

- Chief Reed gave an update on the 251 Portland St property stating on Monday Augst 25th 2025 Deputy Town Health Officer Kresten Sterling and I met with the clean up contractor.
- He stated they conducted an inspection to check on the progress and to determine if a public health hazard continues to exist.
- After completing the inspection, they were able to determine that there was no longer a remaining public health hazard associated with this property, and the building is vacant.

- He also stated that the contractor advised them that the only remaining areas that need to be cleaned out are the basement, and a small pile of trash on the east side of the porch and the basement.
- The contractor anticipates having the structure fully secured with plywood and lumber by Friday August 29th, 2025, and the remaining trash will be moved by Thursday September 4th, 2025.
- Neither the remaining trash nor security needs pose a public health threat as there are no occupants within the structure.
- All ignition sources have been controlled and the remaining items that need to be discarded contain no food waste that would attract pests.
- Chief Reed states that in his view, the threat to surrounding properties and the public has been eliminated.
- It was Chief Reed's recommendation that the Selectboard terminate the current Emergency Health Order.
- Dennis asked Chief Reed if they could keep giving updates to the selectboard as the process with the property continues.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve to eliminate the Emergency Health Order at 251 Portland St. All in favor.

Police Department Update:

- Chief Pierce introduced Lt. Wilson.
- Chief Pierce showed new updated systems to run plates.
- Policies are being worked on to be updated between Lt. Wilson and Chief.
- Lt. Wilson and Chief completed the Leadership training and will be actively looking to get some other courses completed.
- Officer McKendrick and Lt. Wilson are going to armed training.
- Chief is currently looking into quotes on two new police cruisers.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad mentioned how LT. Wilson has been introduced.
- Chad talked about the Table Situation training completed.
- 251 Portland St update has been given.
- RHIGP grants have gone out.
- Chad Spoke about hiring another person for the Wastewater Treatment Facility which name is Derek Moody, and he will begin to start working on September 2nd.

Other Business:

- None

Executive Session:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank that there was a need for executive session. All in favor.

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to enter executive session and invite the Town Manager. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to exit executive session.
- The chair had nothing to report.

On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank voted unanimously to adjourn.

August 25th Select Board Meeting Video:

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Passcode: Program Category- St Johnsbury Select Board