



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board September 22nd, 2025 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Kate Bent, Stacy Jewell (via zoom), Matthew Walsh, Chief Joel Pierce, Carson Smires, Collin Gillespie

Public: KATV, Jim Brown, Chase Empsall, Jody Fried, Nancy Rivet, Richard Boisseau, Don Smith, Tim Angell

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- Tim Angell asked about what is happening with the Armory Project. Chad said there is another contractor looking at the building for next steps and making review plans. Chad stated it is about 90% done.
- Tim also suggested that the Town look for property that fits all the public safety members.
- Dana Gray asked what happened to the bond that had already passed. Chad responded back that it does not expire but could be a legal question he cannot answer.

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the September 8th and September 15th Selectboard minutes with corrections. All in favor.

Warrants:

- A motion by Tracy and seconded by Dennis to approve the warrants. Frank voted in opposition, with Steve in approval, the motion to approve the warrants passed.

Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- None

Grand List Adjustments:

- First Grand List Adjustment was a decrease of \$2,052.62.
- Second Grant List Adjustment was a decrease of \$21,727.19.
- Third Grant List Adjust was a decrease was \$942.61.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the Grant List Adjustments. All in favor.

St. J Revitalization Fund Update:

- Nancy Rivet, a volunteer from the Animal Shelter, presented an overview of the Micro grant that the shelter was awarded.
- Nancy shared the grant money was used exclusively to assist families who reside in St. Johnsbury. The grant-based program assists animal owners with costs associated with keeping their companion animals in their home.
- Since the Micro Grant from the Town was awarded, the Kingdom Animal Shelter's Community fund has been able to assist 25 families with 48 animals. Including 40 cats, 8 dogs/puppies.
- The fund grants were used to assist in the following ways: medications, providing cat/dog food, exams for animals both wellness and sick animal exams, vaccines, treatment for respiratory infection, treatment for chemical burns, multiple spays and neuters, treatment for injuries, ingestion of a sock, blood work and inappropriate elimination.
- The average cost of treating each animal is roughly around \$115.00.
- Part of this success was being able to treat so many animals was due to Kingdom Animal Hospital that is in Town, granting 50% discount on services provided at this facility.
- Nancy expressed gratitude for the award stating the families, and volunteer of the Kingdom Animal Shelter appreciated the generosity of the grant and thanked the selectboard for the approval of the grant.
- Jody Fried also presented the Catamount Transformational Grant.
- Jody reported that the Catamount Arts used the \$200,000 Transformational Grant awarded by the St. Johnsbury Selectboard for the revitalization of the 105-107 Eastern Avenue property and the creation of the Creative Campus. The funding has had the following direct impacts:
- Leveraged an additional \$2M in funding from private donors & foundations, VT Preservation Trust, ACCD, NBRC, USDA.
- There has been a successful environmental cleanup of the three-acre and four-building Creative campus including completion of Phase one and two assessments and a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in accordance with the State's BRELLEA Program.
- The new roofs and energy-efficiency improvements are currently being installed in all four buildings.
- The engineering and RFP process has been completed for new heat pumps to be installed in all four buildings in the coming months.
- By April 2026, the vacant Carriage House building will be renovated to meet new creative tenants' specifications and tenants will begin their occupancy.
- Jody, on the behalf of the Catamount Arts gave a deep gratitude to the Town of St. Johnsbury for supporting the Creative Campus project and furthering the development of a vibrant creative economy in our downtown.

Zoning Update:

- Matthew Walsh, the Zoning and Planning Administrator, gave a brief update about the permit's issues in 2025. There are 73 permits issues; 16 were within the Design Control District and were sent to the DAC for evaluation before forwarding to the DRB for final consideration.
- An additional 19 were forwarded to the DRB for review, consideration and approval before a permit was issued.
- 27 certificates of zoning compliance have been issued.
- Out of the 73 Permits issues so far, 18 have been for the creation of new dwelling or new construction.
- These 18 do not include the DRB approved "Packard Court Project" which will be add an additional 26 units once finished.
- The Packard Court Project is projected to start in early Spring.

Police Department Update:

- Chief Joel Pierce gave a few updates. The department is down one police officer due to personal issues so, Chief has stepped in to do some night shifts.
- Coffee with a Cop is planned for October 1st from 9am-11am. The official advertisement posters have been requested.
- The training with Disability Rights of Vermont was completed on September 17th and the Armorer's course.
- Chief gave a brief update on the follow up of the Hard Wired, the mounts have been shipped.
- On September 22nd there was a mistake in a previous reported 'quarterly report.' The end of September will be the first report. Reports will be made for January-March, April-June, July-September and October-December.
- Chief has also been working on quotes for facility upgrade.
- Chief introduced new hire Carson Smires that will begin working as a Community Resource Specialist for the Town. Carson will also ride along, and parking enforcement. In the future, Carson will be attending the St. Johnsbury Police Academy as Carson wants to become a Police Officer.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad expressed excitement in acknowledging the Town has its own team now per the new Rec department.
- Falls' sports and activities are underway, and Sarah Gagne has begun planning efforts for winter offerings. Information can be found on the Town Website.
- Applicants from the Rental Housing Improvement Grant program, approved by the board have been notified and several projects are being completed, with some projects that are already completed.
- Kresten has started working with Rural Edge for the completion of the Scattered Site Implementation Housing Grant.

- Montross Environmental initiated work on the rkMiles properties.
- The Town will begin planning activities with the Northern Forest Center in the next few weeks. If anyone is interested in joining the River District Planning Committee to assist, please reach out to Chad.
- The Audit is nearly completed. The Town is expecting to hear from the Auditors to set a presentation date for the Selectboard within the coming weeks.
- Department of Public works have completed paving at multiple streets and roads in Town.
- Alliance Construction has begun at the Goss Hollow Road for slide repairs.
- The construction section is currently closed. The Town anticipates the repair will take 3 weeks to complete.
- Paving is anticipated on Concord Ave (Portland to Higgins Hill) and Assiqua Ave in the upcoming weeks.
- DPW is also currently working on Vtrans Grant in Aid project for Old Concord Ave for drainage improvements.
- The new grader has been received and is currently grading around Crepault Hill and Lawrence.
- A leak has developed under Bonzai bridge, and the Town is seeking to find a contractor that can help with the repair, as it will be a little difficult to navigate.
- All the kinks have been worked out at the Water Treatment Facility and the final performance testing is underway. There will be a future update when completed.
- The Town is scheduled for a wastewater system evaluation with the State of Vermont at the end of this week in preparation for renewal of our Wastewater Discharge Permit.
- Chad also gave an update on the Fire Department stating the Town and State is currently under a Burn Ban until we see more precipitation.
- The FD is finalizing Preservation Trust Grant for the restoration of windows. Window work is nearing completion and the last of the restored windows this week.
- The overhead door work is scheduled to be completed this fall.
- The FD currently sent 4 members to training and we now have 4 Swiftwater technicians within the Fire Department.
- Members from the FD are going to Louisiana for the final inspection on the first fire engine in the next two weeks.
- The second engine is anticipated to be completed prior to winter.
- We anticipate receiving notice regarding the SAFER and AFG grants this week.
- Chad gave a brief update on the PD department. The PD has recently welcomed Carson Smires to the Police Department. Carson will be with the department as a Community Resource Specialist.
- PD computer installation is now complete.
- Chad also gave a brief update on Dispatch.
- Simalcast radio project construction phase is complete. Our vendor is working on final programming. The result will be in broader capabilities for Radio coverage and service area.
- Dispatch Director Collin Gillispie is working with Spectrum Communications on a phones system upgrade for the department.

Other Business:

- There will be Selectboard Public Hearing about the Bylaw Modernization on Tuesday October 14th at 5:30pm.

Executive Session:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy voted unanimously to adjourn. All in favor.

September 22nd Select Board Meeting Video:

<https://u.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=XZtume5ZCiKq62sESAzE8bm9XLYwASILHx97>

Passcode: Program Category- St Johnsbury Select Board

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