



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board November 10th, 2025 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Kate Bent, Joe Kasprak, Lesley Russ, Stacy Jewell, Rachel Waterhouse(via Zoom), Matthew Krajeski (via Zoom)

Public: KATV, Isaiah Willson, Alan Langmaid, Lonnie Waterman, Jim Brown, Rep Debbie Dolgin, Jason Marks (via Zoom), David Pacun (via Zoom), Abby Bruzas (via Zoom), Gillian Sewake (via Zoom), Richard Boiseau (via Zoom), Allison Low, Liam Abate; Chris Dussealut; Finn McGuire

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- Jason Marks asked the Select Board if there was any consideration about implementing capital spending. Something to forecast the Town's spending in the next 5-10 years for major expenses that must be made. Chad states there is an opportunity for that.
- Alan Langmaid also stated he thought the Town already had that. Chad explained that there are several based on individual departments

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the October 27th meeting minutes. All in favor.

Warrants:

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

Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- On a motion by Dennis, second by Frank, to approve the First-Class Liquor License for the business, The Kinder Onion, LLC. All in favor. Brendan abstained.

Grant List Adjustments:

- 2025 #09 decrease of \$763.58
- 2025 #08 decrease of \$29,013.62
- 2025 #10 decrease of \$798.18
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank, the Board accepted the Grand List Adjustments. All in favor.

The Assessor, Matthew Krajeski, presented the Error and Omission Request 2025 as follows:

- 2025 Assessment (not part of 2025 Grand List): The current parcel is not a part of the 2025 Grand List. The State of Vermont sent a revised utility valuation spreadsheet to the Town after the Abstract Grand List was already lodged. The parcel, as mentioned above, was added and is classified as additional assets, owned by VELCO. The assessor requests the addition of the parcel to the 2025 Grand list. The 2025 requested revision is 48,500.
- Paul and Christine Bengtson Parcel 111048 at 728 Rocky Ridge Road. The 2025 Assessment is 654,500. This parcel is currently being assessed, comprising 84.16 acres of land, along with a dwelling. The Assessor stated that it was brought to his attention that the parcel mentioned above has been recorded in a survey depicting a total of 81.67 acres. The Assessor requests that the acreage be adjusted for the 2025 Grand List. The 2025 Requested Revision is 648,200.
- On a motion by Steve and second by Frank to approve the Error and Omission Request's. All in favor.

October Financials:

Lesley provided the following financial report:

- Property taxes are prorated in governmental funds, as well as interdepartmental and reserve transfers in all the funds.
- General Fund: At the end of October 2025, the General Fund revenues were \$2,478,180 and the expenses were \$3,175,669, resulting in a deficit of \$697,489. The deficit is due to revitalization expenses of \$61,640, the annual pension payment, and the purchase of a new fire truck. Lesley states it would be essential to remember that the funds for the new first trucks were received during the last fiscal year; however, the expense is in the current fiscal year.
- The delinquent tax balance was \$150,487 at the end of the month (down from \$164,586 the previous month). Operating cash balance was \$2,985,174.
 - Special Service Funds: Special Service fund revenues were \$638,359 and expenses were \$610,391, resulting in a surplus of \$27,968. The surplus is due to the staffing shortage in the police department.
 - Highway Fund: The Highway Fund had \$2,198,946 in revenues and expenses were \$2,237,465 resulting in a deficit of \$38,519. The deficit is due to the annual pension payment and storm damage expense of \$306,399 from the prior year.
 - To date, the Town has received \$664,307 from FEMA towards the storm damage. We are still due \$2.2 million in FEMA funds; however, half of that will be used to pay off the temporary bridge loan.
 - Water Fund: The Water fund revenues were \$311,837 and expenses were \$462,314, resulting in a temporary deficit of \$150,477. This is due to billing in arrears.
 - Sewer Fund: Sewer Fund revenues were \$546,044, and expenses were \$577,411, resulting in a temporary deficit of \$31,367 due to billing in arrears. The sewer fund did receive a \$38k insurance reimbursement from the July 2024 flood.
 - Parking Meter Fund: Revenues in the parking meter fund were \$392, and expenses were \$11,822, resulting in a deficit of \$11,430. This is due to a lack of permit sales and the issuance of parking tickets.
 - Recreation Fund: Revenues in the recreation fund were \$39,790, and expenses were \$42,071, resulting in a deficit of \$2,281.

St. J Revitalization Fund Presentation:

- On a motion by Brendan and seconded by Frank to table the St. J Revitalization Fund Presentation. All in favor.

Observatory Knob Committee Update:

- David Pacun and Tracy Zschau are on the Knob Committee.
- David provided an overview of the map, the Conservation Easement, which allows for farmland, forest management, recreation and trails, educational uses, community uses, and structures (with approval) of certain types/uses.
 - Requires public access for hiking, skiing, hunting, birdwatching, etc.
 - Goal for the development of a management plan with community input.
 - Prohibits commercial and residential development, mining or excavation, trash dumping, commercial signs, and subdivision and transfers.
- Completion of work by the committee to date includes an open meeting with Town to update progress and gather input. (15 in attendance), public walk of the property (Fall Foliage weekend, 2024).
- STJA Sophomore Stewardship Day (5/25): Academy students installed water bars to prevent erosion.
- Received \$30K Grant from Northern Forest Center for property assessment and planning.
- Hired Arrowwood Environment via a grant.
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board tour of Knob (October 25).
- Ongoing: Knob Committee meets monthly on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5:30 pm.
Upcoming events and work include:
 - Northern Forest Center meeting 11.17.25 to work through the Arrowwood Management plan.
 - Scheduling a walking tour of the new trail design with Arrowwood.
 - Open meeting with the Town, Sophomore Stewardship Day presentation (December date tbd).

Caledonia Trail Collaborative Town Forest Agreement:

- Chris Dusseault and Finn McGuire gave an overview of the Caledonia Trail Collaborative Town Forest Agreement.
- Chris shared that in 2022, they were awarded \$25,000 from the Northern Forest Center. They executed that grant the same year, and hand-built a trail called the Little Wing in the Town forest.
- They were able to replace the bridge and complete other work on the trail.
- Sarah Gagne, the Rec Department, will be the liaison contact on behalf of the Town.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan, the Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to execute the agreement and to accept Sarah Gagne as the liaison.

Draft SWIP Pre-Approval Review:

- Abby Bruzas of Casella presented an overview of the SWIP draft. There needs to be two public meetings before approval.
- Abby will be back on November 24th for the second public meeting, at which the Select Board could approve the draft SWIP plan.

Findings of No Significant Impact Hearing- Wastewater Treatment Facility:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to table the Findings of No Significant Impact Hearing- Wastewater Treatment Facility. All in favor.

Commercial Appraisal & Litigation Assistance Program Appraisal Request:

The Assessor, Matthew Krajeski, indicated that the program appraisal request would be a good fit for the Town to apply for, though there is no guarantee of receiving it. It would be a good way to offset some of the Town's costs.

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank, the Board approved applying for the Commercial Appraisal & Litigation Assistance Program Appraisal Request. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Allison and Liam from NVDA gave a presentation on Tier 1A and Tier 1B, which are part of the Town-wide flood hazard and river corridor bylaws. There would need to be a regionally approved municipal plan. The approval date would need to happen before April of 2026.
- The Truck for the Water Filter Plant is totaled, waiting on the insurance to get a replacement.
- WTF is online. Decommissioning of the old plant is underway.
- The Manager presented the board with an Emergency Safety Order issued by the Health Officer/Fire Chief for 217 Concord Ave.

Other Business:

- None

Executive Session:

- None
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis, voted unanimously to adjourn. All in favor.

November 10th Select Board Meeting Video:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/xEMHPYStl3E4E4A48jxilbwTq4Y60eOHGLEnmbjRyCD78Q49K3AshJHfm9XhtW5f.jD9UQEs5ilbls28z?from=hub>

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