



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Kate Bent, Joe Kasprak, Stacy Jewell, Matthew Walsh, Chief Pierce, Chief Reed, Steve Beauregard, Sarah Gagne, Lesley Russ (via Zoom), Kresten Sterling, LT. Wilson, Officer Johnson, Officer Pereira, Officer Anderson, Officer Giesing, Officer Smires

Public: KATV, Jim Brown, Jason Marks, Richard Boisseau, Chase Empsall, Isaiah Wilson, Don Smith (via Zoom), Dana Gray, EL. Burt, David Snedeker, Gillian Sewake, Lonnie, Jeff, and Kris Pette, Debbie Dolgin (via Zoom), Kevin Ignaszak (via Zoom), Andrea Pederse (via Zoom)

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- Jason Marks showed appreciation of the work of the Town staff and the selectboard in preparing the FY 2026-2027 budget. He stated he is submitting this written comment to raise concerns about budget transparency, alignment with Vermont best practices, capital planning, and the effectiveness of recent spending increases, particularly within the Recreation Department.
- Jason said after reviewing the FY 2026-2027 budget document, there is no indication that future budgets will include departmental narratives or a clear separation between operating and capital expenses. The budget is presented almost entirely as tables and does not explain what has changed year after year, which costs are ongoing, or which expenditures are one-time or capital in nature. The concern is directly related to a question raised at the December 8<sup>th</sup> selectboard meeting, when the board was asked whether the town maintains a town-wide, public-facing Capital Improvement Plan to help taxpayers better understand long-term spending and planning. At that meeting, it was stated that the plans are not clearly outlined in the budget, that there is no consolidated, forward-facing capital plan available to taxpayers, and that capital purchases and replacement cycles are not presented in a unified or transparent way.
- Jason ended with 4 questions: Why do current budget documents not include departmental narratives or a clear separation between operating and capital spending, and how does the Town plan to align future budgets with Vermont best practices? Does the Town plan to develop and publish a town-wide, public-facing Capital Improvement Plan? If not, why? Why are existing departmental capital plans not clearly reflected or shared publicly? And how are Recreation budget increases being evaluated against actual outcomes and community impact? Jason stated that improving transparency would not only strengthen accountability but also increase taxpayer engagement in Town Meetings.

- A resident asked if the soil had been tested at the rK miles property. Chad stated no, and Joe added that they are in phase two of testing. The Town has applied for an extension past the 120 days. Once the results are available, they will be made public. Joe suggested creating a rK miles page on the Town website.

Minutes:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve the December 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Meeting minutes. Tracy abstained. The meeting minutes were approved.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve the regular meeting minutes from December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Tracy and Dennis abstained. Steve broke the tie. Meeting minutes were approved.

Warrants:

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

Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- None

Proposed FY27 Budget Presentation:

- Town Manager's office compiles the draft budget for public presentation with the Selectboard at this selectboard meeting, with public input sessions following before adoption by the Selectboard.
- The final budget is then adopted by the Selectboard and sent to the Voters for Town Meeting Day.
- The Selectboard sets tax rates in August after the budgets are adopted.
- General Fund: \$5,992,528
- Special Services Fund: \$1,939,409
- Highway Fund: \$4,295,364
- Parking Meter Fund: \$72,348
- Recreation Fund: \$173,445
- Expenses- General Fund:
- Town Manager's Office: \$646,095
- Town Clerk's Office/ Treasurer's Office: \$203,078/\$170,128.
- Board of Civil Authority: \$6,740
- Assessor's Office: \$117,105
- Economic Development: \$157,530
- Zoning and Planning: \$103,280
- Maintenance: \$93,246
- Code Enforcement: \$125,591
- Public Safety Building: \$42,000
- Dog Control: \$6,000
- Selectboard: \$6,900
- Dispatch Center: \$914,238
- Fire Department: \$1,890,935
- Solid Waste: \$42,500
- Cemeteries: \$26,237
- Pomerleau Building: \$127,700
- General Fund: \$1,260,909

**Total Fund expenses: \$5,940,303**

- Special Services Fund:
- Police Department: \$1,546,234
- Special Service Fund Expense: \$393,175

**Total Special Services Fund Expense: \$1,939,409**

- Highway Fund Expense:
- Highway Garage & Equipment: \$466,434
- Summer Maintenance: \$1,454,201
- Winter Maintenance: \$1,078,465
- Street Safety and Traffic: \$185,526
- Highway Fund Expense: \$1,121,290

**Total Highway Fund Expense: \$4,305,917**

- The budget summary and property taxes raised:
- General Fund: \$3905,872
- Special Appropriations: \$341,350
- Special Services: \$1,581,228
- Highway Fund: \$2,501,168
- The impact on Tax Rates would be:

**Inside Special Services: 3.52%**

**Outside Special Services: 5.72%**

- Municipal Taxes per \$100,000 in value:

**Inside Special Services: \$1,210.66**

**Outside Special Services: \$790.49**

- A motion was made by Frank and second by Tracy to approve the FY27 budget. Brendan was in favor; Dennis did not vote. The motion passed.

December Financials:

- Lesley gave the following Financial Update:

**General Fund:**

At the end of December 2025, the General Fund revenues were \$3,207,644, and expenses were \$4,087,472, resulting in a deficit of \$879,828. The deficit is due to revitalization expenses of \$61,640 and the purchase of a new fire truck.

The delinquent tax balance was \$119,118 at month end (down from \$142,322 the previous month). The operating cash balance was \$1,097,328; however, we are still waiting for reimbursement from FEMA and the State.

**Special Services Fund:**

Special Service Fund revenues were \$935,423, and expenses were \$953,242, resulting in a deficit of \$17,819. We are awaiting grant revenue for the electric vehicle program, which will eliminate the deficit.

**Highway Fund:**

The highway fund had \$2,863,218 in revenues and \$2,925,976 in expenses, resulting in a deficit of \$62,758.

The deficit is due to storm-damage repair expenses of \$308,817.

To date, the Town has received \$814,706 from FEMA towards the storm damage. We are still owed \$2 million in FEMA funds; however, half of that will be used to repay the temporary bridge loan.

**Water Fund:**

The Water fund revenues were \$645,148, and expenses were \$874,300, resulting in a temporary deficit of \$229,152. This is due to billing in arrears.

**Sewer Fund:**

Sewer Fund revenues were \$939,464, and expenses were \$1,078,137, resulting in a temporary deficit of \$138,673 due to billing in arrears.

**Parking Meter Fund:**

Revenues in the parking meter fund were \$24,732, and expenses were \$18,375, resulting in a surplus of \$6,357. The surplus is due to permit sales.

**Recreation Fund:**

Revenues in the recreation fund totaled \$57,195, and expenses were \$70,463, resulting in a \$13,268 deficit.

NVDA EPA Cleanup Grant Application for 575 Concord Ave:

- David Snedeker with NVDA shared that it is a requirement to apply for the grant and then have it put on a public agenda and meeting.
- NVDA worked with the Town planning commission years ago to create a designated area. Phases one and two have been completed. NVDA is ready for the cleanup stage. To receive the grant, they must own the property. Therefore, NVDA will own 575 Concord Ave until the cleanup phase is done.
- The selectboard did not need to make any motions for the Grant Application.

NVDA Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives for 575 Concord Ave:

- Kevin Ignaszak gave a brief presentation of the site plan of 575 Concord Ave, including reviewing the map of the property.

NVDA 575 Concord Ave BRELLA Application:

- David Snedeker reviewed the 575 Concord Ave BRELLA Application to the selectboard.

192 Railroad Street BRELLA Application:

- Brendan excused himself due to his involvement with the property.
- David gave a brief review of the 192 Railroad Street BRELLA Application.
- Chair Steve Islam thanked NVDA for all that they do for the Town of St. Johnsbury.

Police Department Update:

- Chief Pierce gave a presentation that started with a quote reading “Visualize a desired outcome, proactively shape circumstances to meet it, while adaptively accounting for chance and friction.”- Adaptive Strategic Planning. Lt. Wilson selected this quote because it best aligns with the department's goals.
- Chief also read off the PowerPoint STJPD value statements and STJPD mission statements.
- Current training courses that have been completed are Taser, less lethal munitions instructors, field training officer, communications training officer, Vermont emergency first responder, and EMS/LEO active shooter training. There are currently 2026 training sessions scheduled.
- On-going Initiatives are bicycle patrol, police athletic league, citizen advisory committee, conduct leadership AARs, recruitment, situation table, governor highway safety program, multi-disciplinary team for child protection, policy review, and coffee with a cop.
- The current roster at the Police Department includes Chief Pierce, LT. Wilson, Sgt. Cleary, Sgt. Johnson, Sgt. Hartwell, Detective Murphy, Officer Johnson, Officer Pereira, Officer Anderson, Officer Smires, and Officer Giesing.

Town Manager's Report:

- Ice rinks are up, but Chad reported staying off the ice due to the warm temperatures.
- The new Sidewalk Plow has arrived.
- Joe Kasprzak stated he is currently busy with grants.

Other Business:

- None

Executive Session:

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

January 12<sup>th</sup> Select Board Meeting Video:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/Uh0ZF2syhfGMW\\_gKW6BDQZTx\\_a9rGjoZuEeya2u3W4vhAbgZM9aU\\_Gp0EsczXt2Uo.bylyLr97PTT5pshB?from=hub](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/Uh0ZF2syhfGMW_gKW6BDQZTx_a9rGjoZuEeya2u3W4vhAbgZM9aU_Gp0EsczXt2Uo.bylyLr97PTT5pshB?from=hub)

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