



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board May 13th, 2024 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Jim Brimblecombe, Chief Bradley Reed

Public: Gillian Sewake (via zoom), KATV, Jim Brown

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the minutes from the May 13th Select Board meeting with the noted correction. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- None

Tax Sale Town Representative:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that Tax Sale is scheduled for June 27th at 10 am. He mentioned that he needed a representative from the Select Board to be there to potentially bid on properties on the Town's behalf.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Tracy to appoint Dennis Smith as the Tax Sale Representative for the Tax Sale scheduled on June 27th at 10 am and authorize him to act on behalf of the Town at Tax Sale. All in favor.

Authorizing Representative for the EPA Multipurpose Grant:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that the Town of St. Johnsbury was successful in obtaining the EPA Multipurpose Grant in the amount of 1 million dollars. The funds will be used to target the Somerville neighborhood.
- He mentioned that he needed a motion from the Select Board to authorize Joe Kasprzak to represent the Town, sign the documents and execute the award.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to authorize Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager to represent the Town for the EPA Multipurpose Grant and the execute the award. All in favor.

Northwest Regional Planning Commission Loan and Grant Approval and Authorization:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager discussed the loan and grant from Northwest Regional Planning Commission. He explained that the loan is in the amount of \$162,000.00 and the grant from Northwest Regional Planning Commission is in the amount of \$162,000.00. The loan is being offered at 0% interest for 15 years. The first payment would not be due until next year. Both of these pieces would mean that the Town has fully secured all the funds to clean up the Armory.
- Chad read the resolution highlighting that by signing the resolution the Select Board accepts the Brownfield Clean-Up revolving loan fund loan of \$162,000.00 and the grant in the amount of 162,000.00 from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. The Town agrees to the term of the loan and grant agreement and authorizes the Town Manager to execute the loan and grant documents on behalf of the Town of St. Johnsbury.
- Frank asked if it was normal for a loan and grant resolution to have so many stipulations. Chad said yes those stipulations come from EPA. He explained that the resolutions are very boiler plate.
- Dennis asked if there was a cost share requirement. Chad explained that it will be managed by the consultants. However the Town is in a position to carry interim finances if needed based on cash flow projections.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Dennis to approve the loan and grant agreements for the Brownfield Clean-Up Revolving Loan Fund Loan and Grant from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission as presented and to authorize the Town Manager to execute the loan and grant documents on behalf of the Town of St. Johnsbury. All in favor.

Public Safety Task Force:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that Public Safety of the community is of utmost importance. Select Board members and residents have voiced concerns about safety. Chad explained that he has spoken with many other Town Manager's and this situation is not specific to just St. Johnsbury but most other Towns as well.
- He mentioned that a Task Force will discuss public safety issues in St. Johnsbury. The committee consists of Chief Bradley Reed, Chief Joel Pierce, Collin Gillespie, Kresten Sterling, Steve Isham, NVRH, Northeast Kingdom Human Services, NEKA and Chad Whitehead. The goal is to discuss public safety in general. However the first topic will be about the concerns over crime and safety behaviors around mental health and substance abuse. The committee will reach out to businesses to get their input. These behaviors continue to be of concern and a top priority. The committee will update the Select Board periodically.
- Tracy mentioned that she was glad to see this being done.
- Jim Brown mentioned that safety is a big topic for the Town Plan. He sees that the town is working on it diligently.
- Steve Isham mentioned that it is important topic and hopeful that residents see us working on it.

Town Encampment Response Policy:

- Chad Whitehead provided an overview of the proposed Town Encampment Response Policy. He stated that it was a non-involvement approach. Meaning when an encampment is reported the Town will respond to inspect it for health and safety in sensitive areas. This policy will give staff guidance on what is ok and what is not ok. He mentioned that sensitive areas include wild life areas, river corridors, flood plains, Town parks including the Knob Property and Town Forest.
- Once notified of an encampment staff would respond to inspect the area for any health and safety violations and would notify the individual residing there if needed.
- Northeast Kingdom Human Services and NEKA will be the first point of contact for an encampment health and safety concern. The individual(s) will be given the opportunity to move and if they choose not to the items will be removed. Chad explained that municipal requirements mandate that the Town store the property for 60 days. He mentioned that the storage container has been ordered and items will be stored here for pick up.
- Chad mentioned that the policy is very similar to the city of Montpelier's which has been reviewed by the ACLU of VT. Northeast Kingdom Human Services and NEKA have also reviewed the proposed Town policy.
- Dennis asked about sanitation requirements even if just camping these folks are using the woods as a bathroom. Chief Bradley Reed explained that the Town ordinance prohibits waste being dumped on the ground. The health officer would have to work on this if addressed as it is a public health hazard.
- Steve Isham inquired if 1 was the minimum number of tents to consider it an encampment. Chad said yes.
- Steve asked if the policy would apply to the Welcome Center porch as well. Chad explained that currently a situation like that is under review in the superior court of Oregon. He explained that if someone is just sleeping on the porch that is not considered an encampment.
- Steve Isham asked about the pavilion and the incident that was mentioned at a previous Select Board meeting. Chad explained that yes the Bay Street pavilion would fall into a town park and encampment would not be allowed. Chad also explained that the pavilion on Bay Street is actually closed at night and the Police have been actively involved in making sure people move along.
- Steve Isham confirmed that camping was not allowed there. Chad said yes.
- Steve Isham confirmed that camping was also not allowed at the Knob. Chad said yes, that was part of the land management documents.
- Jim Brown asked if the encampment policy would be posted on the website or if it could be emailed to the Planning Commission. Chad said yes it would be on the website.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Tracy to approve the encampment policy. All in favor.

Water/Sewer Budget Presentation:

- Chad Whitehead asked the board to table the Water/ Sewer Budget Presentation as there was something in the budget that he needed to explore a little more.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to table the Water/Sewer Budget Presentation. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.

- Construction at the Water Treatment Plant is moving along. Completion date depends on the delivery of the membranes. However the project is scheduled to be completed by December.
- Town Manager's Office along with Department Heads have been focusing on Public Safety and the Encampment policy.
- Joe successfully obtained the EPA Multipurpose Grant in the amount of 1 million dollars.
- Recruitment in the Police Department is still a struggle but continue to diligently work at it.
- DPW summer help will be on boarded in the next two weeks.
- Zan Zettler the new Finance Officer has started. He has been working with Lesley and will be at the next Select Board meeting to present the financial report.
- Frank inquired about the mowing in front of the Armory and at the triangle on Hastings Hill. Chad said he would look into it.

Other Business:

- Dennis asked for an update on the St. Johnsbury Revitalization Grants. He highlighted specifically St. Johnsbury Development, Elevate 802, Tru Temper/ NVDA and NVRH. Chad explained that everything is moving along and that Tru Temper was part of the 1 million dollar EPA Grant.
- Frank mentioned he would like an update as well. Chad said he would work on getting updates for the Board.
- Jim Brown summarized his understandings of where the NVRH project and Elevate 802 project stand.

Executive Session:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis that there was a need for an executive session to discuss a contractual matter where pre-disclosed public knowledge could put the Town at substantial risk. All in favor.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to enter into executive session and invite the Town Manager. All in favor.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis to exit executive session.
- The Chair had nothing to report.

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