



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board June 24th, 2024 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak (via zoom), Bradley Reed

Public: Gillian Sewake (via zoom), KATV, Jim Brown, Don Smith, Kerry (via zoom), J. Daloz, Melanie Fox-McGregor, Andrew McGregor, David McGregor, Marilyn McEnery, Steve Kline, Jeff Bryan, Caty Brenhan, Kerin Duff, Stephanie Churchill, Sharon Hearne, Laura Goldberg, Sachiko Yoshida

Agenda Amendments:

- None

Public Comment:

- Stephanie Churchill approached the board regarding the recent closure of the St. Johnsbury Academy swimming pool. She explained that the head master at the academy sent a letter that they do not intend to repair the St. Johnsbury pool which is a huge loss to St. Johnsbury and the greater community. She explained that a pool of patrons are working together and have reached out to the field house and have not heard anything back at this time. She explained that people stand ready to assist and raise funds if needed to keep the pool. She mentioned that she was looking for support from the Town to address the pool before it is a done deal.
- Steve Isham clarified what support she was looking for from the Town. Stephanie said they were looking for help to open the dialogue with the academy and to have some skin in the game.
- Frank mentioned that the pool is considered a community asset. Frank asked if Stephanie had an idea of the number of people that use the pool regularly. Stephanie said that there were around 160 recipients on the email list.
- Dennis suggested that the group work collectively to open dialogue directly with the head master. Collect as many names as possible on a petition. He sympathized with their position but said the board has no say in this situation.
- Steve Isham mentioned that while it is an asset for St. Johnsbury the Select Board cannot tell an independent business what to do.
- Jim Brown suggested they find a champion at the academy to assist them in getting to the ears of the important people. He encouraged them to use their voice and put it before them.

Warrants:

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

Minutes:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Brendan to approve the minutes from the June 10th Select Board meeting as presented. All in favor.

Liquor/Tobacco License:

- Steven Isham presented the following liquor and tobacco licenses and renewals:
 - Caledonia Brewing Company LLC- 1st class
 - Caledonia Brewing Company LLC- 3rd class
 - RL Operating Company LLC- 2nd class
- Tracy disclosed that she was an owner of Caledonia Brewing and abstained. .
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the other liquor licenses as presented. All in favor. Brendan and Tracy abstained.

Town of St. Johnsbury Assessor:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that with the Town Charter Change the Assessor is requesting that the Select Board take action to appoint the Assessor for the Town and recognize that the lister positions have dissolved with the approval of the charter. This gives the Assessor the right to hear grievances and appeals without a board. Chad explained that if residents wish to challenge the rulings of the grievances they will still be able to go to the Board of Civil Authority. He explained that this is just to make sure things are all tidied up.
- Chad mentioned that grievance hearings this year will take place on July 1st from 9 am to 2 pm.
- Tracy confirmed that the recent Charter Change makes this a new change to the Assessor operations. Chad said yes.
- Frank mentioned that it was just cutting out the middle man. Chad said yes.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to appoint the New England Municipal Consultants as the Town Assessor and recognize that the lister positions have dissolved with the Charter change. All in favor.
- Chad took a moment to thank the listers over the years. He personally thanked Don Smith for his continued dedication to the Town as a lister over the years. He mentioned that his efforts over the years have been greatly appreciated.

May Financials:

- Zan Zettler, Finance Officer for the Town of St. Johnsbury provided the May Financials. He explained that not a lot has changed from April to May. Most departments are operating below their budgets for 2023-2024. He highlighted that the Sewer and Water Fund conduct billing in arrears and this will be updated after year end. He mentioned that Sullivan and Powers was on site on June 12th to conduct a yearend audit. He stated he was pleased to announce that he has not heard from them since their visit and assumes everything went well. He said that Sullivan and Powers would be back to conduct a field audit the 2nd week of August. He mentioned that June financials will be delayed as he prepares for the August audit.

St. Johnsbury Energy Committee Appointment:

- Steve Isham explained that Jason Kaiser would like to be appointed to the Energy Committee. He highlighted Jason's relevant background including a bachelor's of science in meteorology and a master's of science in applied meteorology. Jason currently works at Vermont State University in Lyndon as the learning spaces technology specialist. He has attended some Energy Committee meetings and would be a welcomed member.
- On a motion by Frank and second by Tracy to appoint Jason Kaiser to the St. Johnsbury Energy Committee. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided the following Town Manager's Report.
- Tax Sale is scheduled for this Thursday June 27th starting at 10 am at the Welcome Center.
- Construction on the retaining wall on Central Street has begun.
- The Public Safety Task Force continues to meet and work towards encampment clean ups and addressing the substance use abuse in Town. 2 encampments have been ordered to be cleaned up and a few sites were deemed a risk and were cleaned up immediately. Three more sites have been identified and the Task Force is working on the next steps. Substance abuse continues to be a high priority for the Task Force. Working to determine who and what resources are able to help and how to connect abusers with recovery specialists.
- Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager had nothing to report.
- Frank thanked the Public Safety Task Force for their efforts.
- Jim Brown asked if the Town has received any push back by legal means. Chad explained that is why the policy is in place to help deter any push back.
- Jim Brown asked if the Town was concerned that it could be sued over this. Chad explained that nothing is bullet proof. Steve Isham mentioned that the policy the Town adopted has been approved by the ACLU and is used by other Towns in Vermont.

Other Business:

- Jim Brown mentioned that the Planning Commission is moving forward with their public input questionnaire. While it is available online it will also be available in person at the final Friday event this Friday. He explained that he has reached out to NVDA to see if the Planning Commission can still make the May 2025 deadline for the Town Plan. Chad and Matt met with Place Sense recently regarding the bylaw modernization. Possible changes coming with Act 250.
- Gillian Sewake, Chamber Director mentioned that the first Final Friday event for 2024 kicks off this Friday June 28th. She explained that the event will bring food, music, crafts and art to Railroad Street.

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