



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

---

51 Depot Square, Suite 1

St Johnsbury, VT 05819

802-748-4331

[www.stjvt.com](http://www.stjvt.com)

## Special Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board Aug. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 @ 09:30 am

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Rachel Waterhouse, Joe Kasprzak, Fire Chief Bradley Reed, Stacy Jewell

Public: Richard Boisseau, Diane Boisseau, Dana Gray, Scott Beck, Erin Douglas

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- Steve Isham thanked the community for coming to the Special Select Board meeting.
- Richard Boisseau thanked Chad for coordinating the work and energy to put everything back together. He commended him on his outreach to services and assistances during the flooding events. He thanked St. Johnsbury for their love and support during this difficult time.
- Steve Isham said he was sorry about the damage done to their property and garage.

### Approval of Property for FEMA Buyout:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager explained that FEMA offers a buyout program for property damaged as the result of flooding. The program allows property owners the opportunity to sell their homes at a pre-damaged appraisal rate. Through the program the Town would gain ownership of the property but with that comes deed restrictions. He explained that deed restrictions would be imposed permanently for the property, such as the need for the property to remain structure free. All costs with clean up and remediation of the program would be eligible through FEMA but the program does take time. He explained that the first step is to submit an application of intent to enter into the program.
- Tracy asked if Chad has had an experience with the program previously. Chad explained that he has been involved once when he initially came to the Town and the process took about 2 years.
- Dennis asked if Chad had a number of applications or those potentially interested in the program. Chad said so far 4 property owners have expressed interest.
- Steve Isham asked if FEMA would assist in covering the cost to convert the property to green space. Chad said that would be a Town expense.
- Steve Isham confirmed that if the properties are turned over to the Town that they would be removed from the grand list. Chad said yes.

- Steve Isham confirmed that if the properties were just abandon that the Town could eventually inherit them and would then be responsible for the clean-up costs. Chad said yes.
- Brendan explained that in theory by doing the buyout it is saving the grand list from future damage.
- On a motion by Tracy and second by Dennis to authorize the Town Manager to assist residents with and submit pre-applications for the FEMA buyout program. All in favor.

#### Approval of bond language for purchase of firetrucks:

- Chad explained that the Town has two options with the firetruck purchases, they could lease the trucks or bond them. He explained that by bonding the trucks the Town usually gets a better rate. Chad read over the bond language for the November ballot.
- Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk explained that as long as she can get the language to them by Friday it will be printed on the ballot.
- Steve Isham asked Chief Reed to speak to the need.
- Chief Reed explained that the rescue truck has been out of service for several months now as it has a broken frame and is unable to be repaired. The rescue truck is due for replacement in 2025. Engine 1 has had its frame repaired twice at this point and is out of its service life. It should have been replaced in 2021.
- Brendan asked if there was a market for retired fire trucks. Chief Reed explained that sometimes you can sell them and get something but he was not entirely sure what exactly. He explained that it may be difficult to get a lot from them as the rescue has a broken frame and Engine 1 has had its frame repaired twice. But that the Town would try to sell them anyway.
- Chad explained that the last fire truck the Town sold they got around \$24,000 for it.
- Steve Isham asked if this was for the two trucks that were approved last year and were around \$300,000 cheaper. Chief Reed explained that it was for those two trucks. He mentioned that the Town was able to secure two demo trucks are pricing from two years ago saving the Town around \$250,000.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve the bond language for the purchase of the firetrucks for the November ballot. All in favor.
- Stacy Jewell mentioned that the board needed to approve the mailing for the general election ballot as well.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve the mailing of the general election ballot. All in favor.

#### Storm Damage Update:

- Chad Whitehead, Town Manager provided an update regarding the recent storm and damage the Town sustained. He explained that in the early morning hours of Tuesday July 30<sup>th</sup> the Local Emergency Operations Center opened due to the flooding. Four swift water rescue teams were deployed to the area to assist in evacuations. The Town received over 8 inches of rain in a three hour period causing isolated damages. He mentioned that Cliff Street alone had over 9 feet of standing water. This storm resulted in around 25-28 road closures which DPW continues to work on. He explained the criteria for a road being open as Emergency Services vehicles can get through and no one is isolated. Early estimates over the last 10 days with 7 crews working is showing costs upwards of 2 million dollars for equipment, materials and labor. Employees have been instructed to track their time they are working on flood related items with hopes of being reimbursed from FEMA. However the Town will have to carry the burden for a while but the Town is in a good cash flow to do so.

- Zan Zettler, Finance Officer and Stacy Jewell, Town Clerk agreed that the Town was in good standings with cash flow.
- Chad explained that removal of flood debris has proved challenging as the transfer station on High Street received damage. Casella has reopened the transfer station as of yesterday with the exception of e-waste. Currently the Town is directing those with e-waste to Western Ave. Press Releases from the Town continue to go out daily via social media outlets, the Town website, radio and Caledonian Record. The goal is to try to keep everyone update. DPW continues to address road needs. The Emergency Operations Center continues to meet and has had a Meteorologist coming to the meetings to give weather updates. We have been advised to brace for rain from hurricane Debby as it moves north. Town officials will continue to work with Meteorologists as the weather for the end of the week develops.
- Frank asked if the drains would be vacuumed out. Chad said yes they are checking and cleaning them out as they can.
- Steve Isham mentioned that East Village Road has pot holes that are getting bigger and people continue to speed digging up the road. He explained that he understands they are concentrating on getting roads back open but also need to consider getting roads winter ready. Chad explained that once roads are open getting them winter ready will be their secondary response. Steve Isham mentioned that the pavement just starting to buckle.

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