



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board July 28th, 2025 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

Select Board: Steve Isham, Frank Empsall, Dennis Smith, Brendan Hughes, Tracy Zschau,
Staff: Chad Whitehead, Joe Kasprzak, Katelyn Bent, Chief Joel Pierce, Officer Shawn Pereira, Officer
Kevin Wilson, Kresten Sterling (via zoom), Stacy Jewell (via zoom)

Public: KATV, Richard Boisseau, Issiah Wilson, Jim Brown, Dana Gray, Don Smith, Iyoung (via zoom),
Gary Roberts (via zoom), Jason Marks (via zoom), Mike Sullivan, Patrick Shattuck, Tony H.

Agenda Amendments:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to add the Reserve request for overhead doors for the Fire Department to the meeting agenda after the warrants are presented. All in favor.

Public Comment:

- Richard Boisseua thanked Chad and DPW on getting Robert Brooke Lane where his property was badly damaged from July 2024 flooding cleaned up. Richard also briefly mentioned FEMA and is very hopeful that ST J will not be forgotten about.
- Another resident voiced his interest in what was happening at the two empty properties in Town. The two properties are the old Post Office on Main Street, and the old Dollar Tree on Railroad Street. Chad informed the resident the two properties are privately owned and has no current update to share on them.

Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to approve the July 14th Selectboard minutes with the noted corrections. All in favor.

Warrants:

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

Bay Doors for Fire Department:

- Chad Whitehead presented an amount request of \$5,750 to be used to pay the balance needed to complete the replacement of the fire station overhead doors which are mostly funded by the Preservation Trust of Vermont grant. The entire cost of the doors including installation will cause expenses to exceed the amount of grant funds the Town received by an estimated \$5,750.00. The

quoted total to replace the front doors, with labor being donated by the installer is \$35,330 plus fuel for the installer and some unknown expenses for miscellaneous hardware. The Reserve Account Balance (prior to request) was \$68,020. Lastly, the grant funds awarded through PTV were \$64,506.43. With \$34,000 being put toward restoration of the windows on the front of the building leaving a balance of \$30,506.43.

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the request of \$5,750 for the overhead doors for the Fire department. All in favor.

Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- None

Beautification Committee Appoint:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to appoint Phoenix Anise to the Beautification Committee. All in favor.

Vermont Community Development Program Scattered Site Housing:

- Joe Kasprzak introduced Patrick Shattuck to present the VTCDP Scattered Site Housing.
- Patrick Shattuck explained what the program is and how it can be beneficial to the Town of St Johnsbury. Patrick explained the program offers grants to rehabilitate or construct affordable housing units dispersed throughout the community. The program would be a great asset for home buyers, and for landlords to help with unit repairs.
- Selectboard member Tracy asked Patrick how the payment process would work. Patrick stated the payment would go to the Town, and then the Town would write a check to Rural Edge. Patrick has asked the Selectboard if they would consider sponsoring this program.
- Joe and Patrick both said there would be a need for a public hearing, and they would come back prepared for the next selectboard meeting on Aug 11th.

Police Department Action Plan:

- Chief Joel Pierce started by introducing new Police Officer Shawn Pereira. Officer Pereira is now fully trained and on his own.
- The Chief stated that staff meetings within the department are going to start taking place weekly, starting this week.
- Chief Pierce also went over numerous updates in the PD Action Plan. Which includes modifying the core values to fit the agency better, increased visibility of offenses which includes bicycle patrol. For crime reduction the Chief mentioned hot spot policing as a response process for safety. There is currently a 140% increase in traffic spots. The Chief has also completed 11 out of 13 modules out of the leadership training he has been attending. Chief Pierce also communicated that the Lieutenant position interviews were just completed last Friday July 25th. The recommendation from the Chief will be given within two weeks.
- Mike Sullivan expressed his concern with the PD Action Plan and asked the Selectboard members what they are doing to support the Police Chief. Chair Steve Islam informed Mike that whenever the police department goes to the board with issues, or concerns, they are there. Steve also reminded Mike that the Police Chief reports directly to the Town Manager.

- Mike Sullivan asked the Town Manager Chad Whitehead what he is doing to help the police be successful in his role. Chad expressed that they have daily contact when they are both on shift, he also is supporting Chief in his current training. Mike also expressed his concern with the Chief's qualifications for becoming the Police Chief, noting the lack of degrees. Chad backed that he was the one who hired Chief Joel Pierce.
- Dana Gray inquired about coffee with a cop, and when that should start happening. Chief Pierce says it is still in the works.

Fire Department Union Contract:

Town Manager Chad Whitehead presented the Fire Department Union Contract updates as proposed:

- Tentatively Agree to minimum staffing requirements.
- Add an extra personal day off for Juneteenth.
- Increase all back to 4 hours.
- Living requirement within 15 miles travel time.
- Compensatory Time in lieu of overtime pay shall have a cap of up to 40 hours in the employee's compensatory time bank.
- Each employee shall be allowed up to 120 hours of overtime pay to attend approved training while off duty during the duration of this agreement.
- The Town proposes the following: Compensatory Time earned in lieu of overtime pay shall have a cap of up to 40 hours in the employee's compensatory time bank.
- Election of this payment in lieu of premium benefit shall not restrict or limit the employee's rights to conversion to the Town supported program under COBRA coverage. If an employee elects conversion or late coverage under the Town program, a pro-rated portion of the cash payment shall be returned to Town by the employee. Eligibility chart: Single \$2,000. 2 Person \$3,000. Family \$4,000.
- Retirement Benefits- To add VMERS D beginning with any employees hired after July 1, 2026 with the following: Any employee enrolled in VMERS C who chooses and qualifies to transfer to VMERS D Plan must notify the Town in writing by March 1 of the year the employee wishes the change to become effective.
- Effective July 1, 2025 increase base pay by 4%
- Effective July 1, 2026 increase base pay by + 1% with a lower limit of 2.5% and upper limit of 5%.
- Effective July 1, 2027 increase base pay by + 1% with a lower limit of 2.5% and upper limit of 5%.
- On motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve Fire Department Union Contract. All in favor.

Town Manager's Report:

- Grievances were wrapped up on July 18th and the process will continue for those seeking next steps.
- Tax Sale is scheduled for August 21st. Letters have been sent to property owners.
- Sarah Gagne, the new Rec. Director, has a Rec tab on the Town website. Sarah will be attending the next selectboard meeting on Aug 11th to discuss the new program that is underway and what to expect in the Fall.
- Chad discussed the Situation Table has been completed and is formally active. The Table Situation occurs every Thursday. Chad informed everyone the meetings were confidential because the

meetings involve agencies collaborating to develop plans for individuals and families at risk of violence and mental illnesses.

- Chad gave an update on dispatch. The Vermont Criminal Justice Information Services in compliance has been completed.
- Chad also mentioned the Rental Housing Improvement Grant program has been received, reviewed and is expected in the near future. Chad reminded everyone of the upcoming audit during the first week of August.
- Chad also discussed briefly still working on the replacement of a 2015 explorer to replace with EV with a grant the Town received. The EV is long range but still believed within grant timeline.
- Chad provided updates on Department of Public Works projects, including Goss Hollow Road expected completion of early fall. Concrete on the road at Goss Hollow bridge was completed last week. The guardrails are currently still under construction. The bridge is supposed to be completed by the end of the week.
- The 443 Railroad Street project is currently delayed but is scheduled to be picked up by the end of next week.
- Chad gave an update to the Selectboard about the Emergency Health Order that Fire Chief Reed and Code Compliance Kresten Sterling went to on Friday July 25th at 251 Portland Street. The order will be presented to the selectboard at the next selectboard meeting date set for Aug 11th.
- Chad provided updates on several town projects, including the wastewater and water treatment facilities, which are under review at the state for final upgrades.
- Chad talked briefly on the Arson incident that took place at Legion Field on Monday July 21st.
- Chad also gave an update that testing plans for the water treatment plant are ongoing, with challenges related to a pipe issue being addressed.
- Selectboard member Dennis asked Chad about the Waterford appraisal. Chad briefly explained that they came back with the estimated amount of 8 million dollars. It would be 75% of the land value.
- Chad provided updates on FEMA reimbursements, noting that most submissions for both storms have been processed, though some home buyout applications are still pending. He mentioned that repairs to roads and infrastructure are nearly complete, with only a few weeks of work remaining. Cathy DPW Admin Assistant should have more information by the end of August.

Other Business:

- Selectboard member Brendan Hughes publicly wanted to defend Police Chief Joel Pierce from the prior question resident Mike Sullivan asked the selectboard what they are doing to be supportive of the Police Chief. Brendan commended Chief Pierce on the work he is doing and the type of man he is. Brendan recognizes there is a need for improvement, but working together to have the community improved together, rather than criticizing what someone does.

Executive Session:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Dennis that there was a need for executive session. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to enter executive session and invite the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan to exit executive session.

- The chair had nothing to report.

On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank voted unanimously to adjourn.

July 28th Select Board Meeting Video:

[On Demand | Kingdom Access TV](#)

Passcode: Program Category- St Johnsbury Select Board

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