



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Kate Bent, Chief Joel Pierce, Lesley Russ

Public: KATV, Gillian Sewake (via zoom), Don Smith, Dana Gray, Isaiah Willson, Chase Empsall, Cora Lopez, Youth center group, Elizabeth Emmett, Scott Beck, Mike Morin, Mark D., Deb Dolgin, Evan O., Jon Lawler, Shawn Tester, Paul, Randi Devoid

### Agenda Amendments:

- None

### Public Comment:

- None

### Minutes:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the 5:30pm Bylaw Modernization October 14<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes with noted corrections. All in favor.
- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the regular 6:00pm October 14<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting minutes with noted corrections. All in favor.

### Warrants:

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

### Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- None

## September Financials:

Lesley provided a financial report as follows.

- At the end of September 2025, the General Fund revenues were \$1,806,851 and expenses were \$1,851,462 resulting in a deficit of \$44,611. The deficit is due to revitalization expenses of \$56,305, the annual pension payment and timing of special appropriation payments. The delinquent tax balance was \$164,586 at month end (down from \$181,017 the previous month). Operating cash balance was \$3,000,755.
- Special Services Fund revenues were \$451,754 and expenses were \$465,342 resulting in a deficit of \$13,588. The deficit is due to the timing of the annual pension payment and new equipment purchases.
- The Highway Fund had \$1,353,408 in revenues and expenses were \$1,638,960 resulting in a deficit of \$285,552. The deficit is due to the annual pension payment and storm damage expense of \$162,560 from the prior year. To date the Town has received \$250,650 from FEMA towards the storm damage.
- The Water Fund revenues were \$204,638 and expenses were \$334,708 resulting in a temporary deficit of \$130,069. This is due to billing in arrears.
- Sewer Fund reverses were \$290,725 and expenses were \$443,662 resulting in a temporary deficit of \$152,937 due to billing in arrears.
- Parking Meter Fund revenues were \$382.00, and expenses were \$8,893 resulting in a deficit of \$8,511. This is due to a lack of permit sales and parking tickets.
- Recreation Fund revenues were \$32,086 and expenses were \$29,065 resulting in a surplus of \$3,021. This includes the prorated transfer from the general fund in revenue.

## St. J Revitalization Fund Update:

- New Depot Square Commercial Properties: Jon Lawler gave a brief update on the NDSCP project. The fundamental objective of the New Avenue project was for the outset to remove a well-recognized blight at the center of downtown St Johnsbury. By doing so, it would promote the revitalization of the whole business district. The achievement of this objective was well-recognized and appreciated by the community. The pandemic influenced project cost increased just prior to Certificate of Occupancy issuance at the beginning of 2022, that had left their business with fragile cash flow margins for the next 4 years. The grant established a budget to enable the project to continue offering Business Incubation rental rates.
- Scott Beck: R.I.N.K. has used a portion of this grant for two fair market appraisals for the properties on Bay St. owned by Bill Brink and Bruce Ralston. The remainder is uncommitted currently. Scott is working with a 3rd party to acquire both properties for redevelopment, which could include a regional ice and recreational center, as envisioned when R.I.N.K. applied for the grant.  
R.I.N.K. has also purchased boards that are used on the 4-Seasons and Portland St. outdoor ice rinks and purchases 2 liners annually. Scott reported that this project has gone well. Scott will continue to use remaining funds to purchase additional liners until those funds run dry.
- Youth Center: Elizabeth Emmett introduced Cora as the Youth Coordinator. The Youth Center presented a PowerPoint with what the Youth Center looks like. They shared the lobby, music lounge, The Youth lounge, a day in the life at the YC, special projects and events. They also shared

programs and activities including poetry and making bracelets. They hold weekly advisory meetings, and have snacks made by the culinary students. Other community partners go to the Youth Center to speak with the youth about mental health and substance abuse. The space is also being utilized in many ways with other community partners having access. The Youth Center is open 4 days a week, from 2-6pm but closed on Fridays. A special Haunted Open House will be held at the center on Thursday October 30<sup>th</sup> from 5-8pm! All ages are welcome to join. Go get spooked said the Youth!

- Stevens Wood Polish: Mark Desrochers brought in a sample of the polish he has been working. Mark said that the secret formula to the polish was running low and was harder to find. The final product is something that St. Johnsbury created over 100 years ago. This product is usually kept in jars, passed to the user in person. It is a harder product to ship.
- Northern Forest: Mike Morin presented a PowerPoint of the completed 560 Railroad Street Redevelopment for Housing and Arts. Mike stated that the project comes from a dire need for high-quality, downtown apartments for St. Johnsbury workforce, while also adding to revitalization momentum and enhancing the arts community and creative economy. The renovation was primarily interior design to create a mix of nine residential rental apartments and two commercial storefronts. The two storefronts are rotating artists, and a book shop (used or new books)!
- NVRH Workforce Housing Development: Mike Morin also shared a few updates regarding the Transformational Grant that Shawn Tester at NVRH was granted. The project is stemmed around working with the community to help solve the housing crisis. The project is currently still in progress.
- All of St. Johnsbury Revitalization grant awardees thanked the Selectboard for their support.

#### Police Department Update:

- Police Chief, Joel Pierce addressed the board. He indicated that there is a Statewide issue with accessing call data and there will be a training set up to help with this.
- LT. Wilson is at use of force class this week. PD just finished firearms training, so everyone is currently up to date.
- SymQuest did updates on everyone's computers, and they are in use.
- Carson Smires will start being trained in doing the parking enforcement and foot patrol on Railroad. Carson may also be heading to the Police Academy soon.
- Coffee with a cop had low attendance. Chief thinks it was the timing; therefore, Chief is planning a different time in the future for this event.
- The cruisers and EV have been ordered, as well as uniform patches.
- Chief is partnering with the St. Johnsbury school to build a data base to identify individuals with diminish capacity, i.e. Autism, Dementia, Alzheimer's, etc.

#### Town Manager's Report:

- Chad informed the board of the fire at 217 Concord Ave. Chad will meet with Code compliance and the Fire Chief on what the Town's options will be.
- Chad is working with Vermont League of Cities and Towns and other municipal leaders to discuss legislative priorities and what the league can start working on for the next Montpelier legislator

meeting. Priorities include accountability, and less petitioning for arrest and release. Other topics include housing and homelessness, mental health and drug use.

- Chad and Tracy attended the VHC Board tour on Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> along with Patrick Shattuck through Rural Edge joined them and Abby Long from the Collaborative. This included a tour of New Avenue to see the newer apartments there.
- Town staff are working on the first drafts of budgets. The budget should be presented to the selectboard next month.

#### Other Business:

- Steve congratulated the High School Hilltoppers' on their big football win this past Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup>.

#### Executive Session:

- On a motion by Frank and second by Tracy voted unanimously to adjourn. All in favor.

October 27th Select Board Meeting Video:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/VEpxUgH7pTobO8t01zzaOW8r7fSSmUbil6dMGla8sDKOgL8m-Svsv50BBzvZ1E\\_e.kLP61mJ7gd6DZ77z?from=hub](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/VEpxUgH7pTobO8t01zzaOW8r7fSSmUbil6dMGla8sDKOgL8m-Svsv50BBzvZ1E_e.kLP61mJ7gd6DZ77z?from=hub)

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