



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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## Meeting of the St. Johnsbury Select Board February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 6:00 pm

Present-

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

Staff: Chad Whitehead, Kate Bent, Joe Kasprak, Stacy Jewell, Matthew Walsh, Lesley Russ (via Zoom), Kresten Sterling (via Zoom)

Public: KATV, Jim Brown, Richard Boisseau, Chase Empsall (via Zoom), Issaiah Wilson, Don Smith, Dana Gray, Gillian Sewake, Debbie Dolgin (via Zoom), Bruce, Kevin Ignaszak (via Zoom), Mrs. Emerson (via Zoom), Ben Haith (via Zoom), Tessa Yip VT DEC (via Zoom), Mike Morin

### Agenda Amendments:

- Add Tessa Yip to the Tier 1B about water mark signs. On a motion by Brendan and second by Tracy to approve adding Tessa Yip to the Tier 1B agenda.

### Public Comment:

- Jim Brown made a joke that if Chad wants to leave his hat on, he should be able to.

### Minutes:

- On a motion by Brendan and second by Frank to approve the January 26th meeting minutes with a noted minor correction. All in favor.

### Warrants:

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

### Liquor Licenses/ Tobacco Licenses:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Frank to approve the Liquor Licenses, the next morning, when Stacy can get unlocked out of the account. Brendan abstained. The motion passed.

### January Financials:

• Lesley gave the following update on January Financials as follows-

Property taxes are prorated across governmental funds, as are interdepartmental and reserve transfers in all funds.

- **General Fund-** At the end of January 2026, the General Fund revenues were \$3,557,235, and expenses were \$4,572,444, resulting in a deficit of \$1,015,209. The deficit is due to revitalization expenses of \$81,640, the purchase of a new fire truck, fire truck repairs, interest payments on the

new fire trucks, and several annual payments (pension, county taxes, and principal on the Pomerleau building).

The delinquent tax balance was \$107,125 at the end of the month (down from \$119,118 the previous month). The operating cash balance was \$2,008,177, and property taxes are due in March.

- **Special Services Fund:** Special Services fund revenues were \$1,131,043 and expenses were \$1,114,476 resulting in a surplus of \$16,567. The surplus is primarily due to lower benefit expenses due to staffing shortages.
- **Highway Fund:** The Highway Fund had \$3,532,471 in revenues and expenses were \$3,308,905 resulting in a surplus of \$223,566. The surplus is due to grant payments, quarterly state payments, and a small FEMA fund.

To date, the Town has received \$885,133 from FEMA towards the storm damage. FEMA recently obligated \$1.4 million, and we should start receiving those funds in the next few weeks.

- **Water Fund:** The Water fund revenues were \$768,466, and expenses were \$991,728, resulting in a temporary deficit of \$223,262. This is due to billing in arrears.
- **Sewer Fund:** Sewer Fund revenues were \$1,093,599, and expenses were \$1,205,111, resulting in a temporary deficit of \$111,512 due to billing in arrears.
- **Parking Meter Fund:** Revenues in the parking meter fund were \$44,304, and expenses were \$21,029, resulting in a surplus of \$23,278. The surplus is due to permit sales.
- **Recreation Fund:** Revenues in the recreation fund were \$67,457, and expenses were \$81,469, resulting in a deficit of \$14,012.

#### Former rkMILES Properties Opinion of Probable Cost for Environmental Cleanup:

- Kevin Ignaszak, through Montrose Environmental, reviewed the opinion of the probable cost for environmental cleanup with the selectboard.
- Kevin announced that he was pleased to report that we received the opinion of probable cost (OPC) for the cleanup of the former rkMILES properties along Bay Street, with minimal findings, with the total cleanup cost of \$388,427.00 for all four parcels.
- The Town has secured approximately \$600,000 in EPA Multipurpose grant.
- The EPA Multipurpose Grant the Town received can be used for cleanup activities.
- This means that if the Town acquires the former rkMILES properties, they can begin cleanup activities and are likely to be prepared to use the parking parcel this spring.
- The retail space of rkMILES can be used, as there were no significant findings.
- Joe thanked Montrose Environmental for all their work.

#### Discover St. Johnsbury Annual Update:

- Gillian Sewake, Discover St. Johnsbury Director, presented the Select Board with the Downtown Reinvestment Statistics for 2025, highlighting the significant investments in properties and businesses within the designated downtown area.
- Gillian goes over the year, net positives or negatives, growth or loss regarding new businesses, full-time jobs, part-time jobs, and housing. There are 27 new jobs in Town.
- Gillian does the outreach to see how those can improve their properties and their businesses.
- Gillian worked with Joe and Chad on the spreadsheet that she had gone over. Gillian is focusing solely on the highlighted yellow lines, which indicate full-time and part-time jobs.
- This year, the Town has a negative number for net businesses, which is the first time in 10 years. The Town has seen significant growth in businesses since the pandemic.

- Gillian has 10 years of data to go off of, with 2020 being when she started.
- Brendan asked if the fire that happened on Railroad Street was tied to the loss of net businesses, as there were 2 businesses there. Gillian confirmed yes, that is correct, and one was a net business.
- Gillian highlighted that the next big Discover St. Johnsbury event is the Kingdom Maple Festival, which is coming up!

#### Tier 1B:

- Tessa Yip spoke briefly to the selectboard about the water mark signs.
- There is no fee for the signs; the only cost to the Town would be for the post the sign goes on and the installation of the sign/post. There is no timeline for a final decision, but it is expected to occur within the next year.
- Matt Walsh spoke briefly about Tier 1B, in which the municipality is requesting to have the Downtown Center, Village Center, and Planned Growth Area mapped for Tier 1B status.
- On a motion by Brendan and second by Dennis to table the Tier 1B resolution until after Chad and Matt have their meeting this week.

#### Town Manager's Report:

- 217 Concord Ave, where a fire happened, has a demo happening, and the site will start being cleaned up. The Town is not paying for the cleanup; it is currently unknown who is responsible, but it is expected to be the mortgage or insurance company.
- Another fire happened at 448 Main Street, where South Main Auto Body was last Thursday. The building is a total loss.
- There were two main water breaks last week, and the DPW was able to get them fixed during frigid temperatures without having to close any main roads down for one of them. The second one had only temporary road closures. Chad stated in all of his experience working with the water system in Town, we always joke that water breaks come in threes, so cross your fingers that he is wrong.
- Annual Town Report has been completed and will be electronically posted before Town Meeting Day.

#### Other Business:

- Jim Brown asked about the Armory building and what the plans are for a safety building moving forward.
- Joe mentioned that the Armory is at a slow pace and mentioned at previous select board meetings that he is working with a different consultant to find out the next steps.
- Chad added that the safety building topic is currently at a standstill for now.
- Dana Gray asked if there were any new updates on Police Chief Joel Pierce and asked if the Chief was on payroll or medical. Chad stated that the Chief is not on payroll.

#### Executive Session:

- On a motion by Dennis and second by Brendan, voted unanimously to adjourn. All in favor.

February 9<sup>th</sup> Select Board Meeting Video: <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/W3qJEp9FT6avUx91HDV-Tjnox8HWuJXghtJplFE7xwuQa8ZplwqMhCRZeWQh3U-p.v5besews420Vnhff>

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