

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2003
7:00 PM – MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

A regular meeting of the St. Johnsbury Selectboard was held Monday, February 24, 2003, at 7:00 PM in the boardroom of the municipal building. Present were Chairman Reg Wakeham, Elwin Cross, Bryon Quatrini, and Gib Handy. Present from the Town were Town Manager, Mike Welch, Town Clerk Sandra Grenier, Economic Development Coordinator Joel Schwartz, and Recording Secretary Ida Rainville. Dale Urie was excused from the meeting. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wakeham, who led the assembly in the pledge of allegiance.

Also present were Marlene Rock, Rep. David Clark, Rep. Don Bostic, Sen. Robert Ide, Paul Bengtson, Kim Allen, Bob Dufresne, Bruce Corrette, Jen Varatti, Marie Turgeon, Kim Achilles, and the news team from Channel 7.

Liquor Licenses approved and signed:

St. Johnsbury Community Food Co-op, d/b/a/ Kingdom County Market
Moose River Lake & Lodge
VFW
Loyal Order of Moose (Liquor/Tobacco)
Odessa Corp. d/b/a/ Champlain Farms (Liquor/Tobacco)
Lamplighter Lounge

Sodexo Vermont, Inc.
Capital Pizza Huts

The minutes of the meeting of February 10 were unanimously approved, on a motion by Gib Handy, seconded by Bryon Quatrini.

Water Damage on Jones Street

Jen Varatti and Marie Turgeon presented the Board with a list of items damaged from the flooding of the basement of their apartment building on February 7. According to Mike Welch, the Town's insurance declined the coverage because the Town was not found to be negligent from prior knowledge of the event that caused the damage. Even though the Town had been aware of previous problems in the Arlington area, they were not related to the frozen and broken pipes that caused the flooding of the apartment building. Ms. Varatti did not ask for full compensation of the lost items, but felt that someone should be responsible. The Board promised the Town would look into other areas for assistance, including the possibility of setting up a fund for future personal disasters such as this one.

Community Health Commission (Paul Bengtson)

Mr. Bengtson suggested that the public might respond voluntarily to help out, if asked. Kim Allen suggested the Academy could use the funds from a "variety day".

NVRH Chief Operating Officer, Paul Bengtson, reported on the activities of the Community Health Commission (CHC). Since the formation of the Commission, they had worked on the question of the Needle Exchange Program (NEP), and are now ready to move on to other topics of concern in the Town Plans of 1996 and 2002. The Commission is working from information in the "Social Well Being of Vermonters in 2002" and the Vermont "Health Status Report for 2002". Both pamphlets include statistics compiled from the State Health Department, schools and the census. The next meeting of the group is March 6, and the three broad areas the Commission felt were important to concentrate on at this time are: Obesity (adult and childhood); Smoking (reduction; cessation; avoidance); and Mental Health (particularly for children). Mr. Bengtson pointed out there is a lot of material already available in these areas. The Commission intends to coordinate information and try to make it more available to the public.

Legislative Issues – Representatives Clark and Bostic

David Clark and Don Bostic discussed several issues that are before the Legislature. The Budget Adjustment Act, which the Board had previously signed in support, had passed the House, but it was doubtful it would pass the Senate in its present state. They both indicated there would be some change in

the legislature to go along with the change in administration. Originally, when Act 60 passed, there were only 60+ “gold towns”. There are now 202.

Act 250 – they are working to simplify Act 250, to eliminate some of the permitting process and hearings which over-lap jurisdictions, and still keep the intent of the law intact.

Act 179 – will affect regional and local planning and zoning, and could consolidate some of the permitting process for development.

The 10-acre exemption septic bill, which will become effective in 2005 or 2007, will affect municipalities in that someone will have to enforce and take care of fees. VLCT suggests the deadline for construction permits be extended to 2005 instead of taking effect November 2002. Also wish to suggest if parcels are sold off for building, homestead septic should be left alone, not forced to comply with new regulations.

Extensive re-financing has caused an overload of recording for town clerks. Question if \$7.00 per page is too much for the property owner to pay in recording fees, while it seems not enough to cover town clerk's expenses. Future changes could include digital recording to take up less room in the clerks' offices. Sandy Grenier mentioned H-31 suggests template recording (which would refer back to a single recording of the financing institution). Sandy does not favor this method of recording because of the difficulty in controlling, and responsibility of keeping information current on all of the financial institutions. These change often as mergers and buy-outs are made by larger institutions. The \$7.00 recording fee is not a wide spread tax, but a users' fee, imposed only on those who would be recording.

Representatives Clark and Bostic also asked the Board for their opinion on the State of Vermont purchasing the Connecticut River Dams.

Questions for the Representatives: Marlene Rock asked why the bike path in St. Johnsbury has not been started when other towns seem to be going forward with theirs. Mr. Clark said that the bike path has been progressing; it's been a matter of getting environmental and property owner approval.

St. J. Center Fire District – Bob Dufresne

Bob Dufresne from Dufresne Engineering presented a map of St. Johnsbury Center with the assumed outline of the Fire District drawn in. He pointed out the map had been created from written description and using the water tank locations as approximate boundaries, and included all who use the system. Some within the outlined area are already on the town water system. There was some concern as to how people within the district could vote fairly, how a tax would be levied to repay the bond required to hook onto the town system, and how to bill the fire district and/or those already hooked onto the system. It was suggested the existing fire truck barn could house the pump. On a motion by Bryon Quatrini and seconded by Elwin Cross, the Board voted unanimously to authorize Town Manager Mike Welch to sign the resolution establishing the boundaries of the St. Johnsbury Center Fire District, subject to the approval of the Town Attorney.

Breezy Hill condition

Len Hychauk of Breezy Hill addressed the board about the rise in the road which obscures the vision of on-coming traffic near his home.

Article 13 Ballot Demonstration

Town Clerk Sandy Grenier presented a large-scale ballot that included Article 13 (the proposed charter change to Australian ballot for town and school budget). This was perceived to be confusing, and Sandy explained the question and demonstrated the proper method of filling in the ballot.

Tax Stabilization – Micro Data

Joel Schwartz presented the request from Micro Data for tax stabilization on the Route 5 property they are proposing to purchase. The stabilization to be based on property value rather than taxes, being held at current value through 2008. Personal property tax to be held at current value through 2012. Projected tax savings over the next ten years of \$29,027 on property tax; \$17,670 on personal property. The Tax

Stabilization Committee approved this proposal. A copy of the proposal is attached to these minutes. On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Elwin Cross, the tax stabilization for Micro Data was unanimously approved as presented.

Deputy Health Officer

On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Elwin Cross, the Board voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Fire Chief Troy Ruggles as deputy health officer for 2003.

Bruce Corrette questioned if the Recreation Department's deficit would be carried over again. Chairman Wakeham explained that the Board is giving new director, Eric Berry, the opportunity to work through any deficit spending and employ some projects to bring the Rec. Department budget back into balance.

After asking if there was any further business, the board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:00 PM (Handy/Cross).

Respectfully submitted _____, Ida W. Rainville, Executive Secretary