

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2003
7:00 PM – MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

A regular meeting of the St. Johnsbury Selectboard was held Monday, January 13, 2003, at 7:00 PM in the boardroom of the municipal building. Present were Chairman Reg Wakeham, Elwin Cross, Gib Handy, Bryon Quatrini, and Dale Urie. Present from the Town were Town Clerk Sandra Grenier, Economic Development Coordinator Joel Schwartz, and Recording Secretary Ida Rainville.

Also present were: Russ Hutchins, Lorna Higgs, Gail Stein, Charlie Browne, Marlene Rock, Evan Smith, Buffy Heggarty, Jim Presson, Jay Wood, and Ken Gordon.

Chairman Wakeham called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special Appropriations

Various representatives of organizations that request special appropriations from the Town made presentations.

Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Evan Smith. Mr. Smith thanked the town and local businesses for their generous support. The Association is asking for \$750.00, the same as 2002.

Caledonia Home Health – Buffy Heggarty. Ms. Heggarty reviewed the work that the Caledonian Home Health Agency covers, in Caledonia and southern Essex counties. In 2002 they served 457 clients, totaling 16,981 visits. The agency covers 26 towns, and assists older Vermonters with non-reimbursable services and clients without insurance. They have reduced their 2002 appropriation by 5%, to \$20,425 for 2003.

Northeast Kingdom Human Services – Jim Presson. Mr. Presson reported that the NE Human Services has expanded their hours to evening to help in emergency situations, They have also requested a 5% cut from their 2002 appropriation, to \$6825 in 2003.

CALEX Ambulance Svc. – Jay Wood. Mr. Wood reported that the ambulance service began in 1984, has grown a great deal in the last seven years with five full time employees. They cover many towns in Caledonia/Essex counties, and are primary back up for Lyndon and Danville rescue. Increased services include having four paramedics on staff, integrating with NVRH to provide critical care transport, reacting to an increase of 13% in calls over the past five years, particularly in the elderly population. He reported that the state average cost for ambulance service is \$10 per capita. CALEX is holding its cost at \$7.00. They will request a 5% reduction in appropriation for 2003, at \$42,460.

St. Johnsbury Athenaeum – Lorna Higgs. Ms. Higgs reported the Athenaeum will comply with the requested 5% reduction from 2002 to \$85,500 in 2003. She reported that the renovations are moving ahead, with the move to the former Summer Street School nearly complete. She also pointed out that none of the taxpayers monies will be spent for the renovations, but will be directly from grants. Average state per capita rates for most libraries is \$18 to \$25. The Athenaeum is holding their per capita rate at \$11. Less than 25% of their operating expenses are covered by town appropriations.

Area Agency on Aging – Ken Gordon. Mr. Gordon reported that the Area Agency on Aging service 184 clients in 2002, age 60 and over, with a total of 1760 hours served. The agency tries to focus on fuel and pharmacy assistance, and other existing programs such as meals on wheels and assistance with family caregivers. They are requesting a 5% cut from 2002 of \$7,200 to the amount of \$6480 in 2003.

Fairbanks Museum – Charlie Browne. Mr. Browne reported that the Museum currently employs 20 people. In taking the 5% cut from previous appropriations, the town's contribution to their operating budget is approximately 6% (\$47,500 of their overall budget of \$840,000).

Public Hearing on Budget – Town Clerk Sandy Grenier

Sandy summarized the budget hearings and in response to a question from Russ Hutchins, reported that the 5% reductions in appropriations amounted to approximately \$12,000 from the overall budget. The total special appropriations for last year were \$272,133. Chairman Wakeham asked if there were any further questions from the floor. Hearing none, the public hearing was closed.

Manager’s Report

In the absence of Town Manager Mike Welch, Town Clerk Sandra Grenier presented the time schedule for the search for St. Johnsbury Works Director. Also, on the advice of Town Council Ed Zuccaro, Sandy asked the Board if they would sign a letter of appeal to the State Board of Property Valuation and Review on the coefficient of dispersion for the equalized education property value. This would be a safety measure to have in place. On a motion by Gib Handy, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to authorize Chairman Wakeham to sign the letter of appeal.

Sandy presented the Board with a resolution which was endorsed by VLCT for the Legislature to “take the necessary action to increase the education block grant or reduce the statewide property tax rate in an effort to reverse the trend of increasing school property tax.” (See attached resolution). On a motion by Bryon Quatrini and seconded by Gib Handy, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

Information on the purchase of the Wells River/Newport Railroad by the State of Vermont was distributed to the Board.

Under new business, Sandy asked the Board to sign an amendment to the Grand List which would adjust the taxes paid on the parking lot behind the Peter Glenn Shops to exclude the property from the tax bill that is currently being rented by the Town for the skateboard park. The Board members signed the amendment.

On a motion by Gib Handy, seconded by Dale Urie, the Board voted unanimously to enter into executive session to discuss a real estate transaction. Joel Schwartz was invited to join the executive session.

The Board emerged from Executive Session at approximately 8:00 PM. No further business was transacted and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted _____, Ida W. Rainville, Executive Secretary