

**MINUTES
ST. JOHNSBURY SELECTBOARD
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2009**

The St. Johnsbury SelectBoard held their Regularly Scheduled SelectBoard Meeting on Monday, November 23, 2009. The meeting began at 6:00p.m. with National Incident Management System (NIMS) Awareness Training conducted by Fire Chief Troy Ruggles.

Present for NIMS Training – Chairperson Daniel Kimbell, Bryon Quatrini, Jim Rust, Gary Reis, Troy Ruggles, Richard Leighton, Danny Scott, Sandy Grenier, Priscilla Messier, Joe Fox, and Mike Welch.

The regular SelectBoard meeting began at 7:00p.m.

SelectBoard Members Present: Chairperson Daniel Kimbell, Jim Rust, Bryon Quatrini, and Gary Reis. Board Member excused: Jean Hall-Wheeler

Others Present: Mike Welch, Sandy Grenier, Priscilla Messier, Danny Scott, Ida Rainville, Diane Beck, Jon Beck, Bernard Timson, Jr., Al Dunn, Steve Smith, Mary Smith, Lallie Mambourg, Sandra McHugh, Russ Hutchins, Carol Easter, Patricia Mitchell, Sharon Eaton, Thomas Cole, Larry Sharer, Bruce Ralston, Joanne Brown, Taylor Reed (Caledonian-Record), and KATV-Channel 7.

A Utility work order was signed for Fairbanks.

Liquor Licenses were approved for Sodexo for catering.

CALL TO ORDER – Chairperson Daniel Kimbell called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00p.m. with the Pledge.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Chairperson Kimbell asked if there was any public comment not relating to articles listed on the Agenda. Bernard Timson asked if any speaker would please give their name and place of residence before speaking. It was generally agreed by the Board that this would be a good idea.

MINUTES – October 26 and November 18 – Jim Rust indicated said he had two corrections to make on the October 26 minutes. Referring to the “Three Rivers Transportation Path”, Mr. Rust said he was quoted as saying that “his research has shown that no bike path has spent as much money for such a short distance”. He would like that amended to read, “. . . no bike path has spent as much money per tenth of a mile”. Also under the Three Rivers Transportation Path, Mr. Rust indicated information furnished by Maurine Hennings did not include the fact that she stated, “the Bike Path would attract 80,000 people per year to shop, eat, and stay over in St. Johnsbury.” It was moved by Jim Rust, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, and voted (3-1) to approve the Minutes as corrected from October 26 and as presented from November 18. Gary Reis abstained because he was not present at the meetings.

THOMAS COLE – Reappraisal Concern – Mr. Cole addressed the Board concerning property he owns on Lafayette Street that increased in the recent reappraisal from \$1600 to \$28,000 assessed value. He realized the Board had no authority to change the situation at this time. He had been told that the assessor had “followed state statute” in the assessment procedure but said he felt there was no common sense used in the reappraisal process, and Town Employees should be trained to deal with the public better.

DOGS & SHELTER – Mike Welch presented a proposed contract from Sharon Eaton of Lunenburg that Ms. Eaton had developed for taking stray dogs into her care at Riverside Rescue after they have been held at Animal Control Officer Jo Guertin’s home for 10 days. Mr. Welch also reported that some additional dog houses have been constructed by the Work Camp and are ready to be delivered to Jo Guertin’s. Sharon Eaton reported that in addition to her business, Riverside Kennels, Riverside Rescue is a non-profit organization that operates out of her business to care for stray animals and they will always take in strays or products of puppy mills for no charge. The organization also cares for sick animals and would start taking them in immediately. Bryon suggested the Board sign the agreement for a year and see how it works out.

Several people in the audience spoke about conditions for animals in the current situation. Lally Mambourg, wife of Joel Schwartz, Director of Economic Development in St. Johnsbury, indicated she had personal knowledge of poor living conditions for the dogs at Jo Guertin’s, having adopted two animals that were sick and thin from her, and driving past her home on a daily basis. Ms. Mambourg described the conditions under which the dogs were kept, and challenged the Board to sign the agreement with the Riverside Kennels to take in the dogs from day one.

Sandra McHugh from East Burke, who works at the Western Avenue Animal Hospital said dog houses and chains are not sufficient care for animals, especially in this climate.

Mary and Steve Smith questioned some of the charges listed in the Town Report under animal control, and how much of the expenses are paid to veterinarians. They had also visited the Animal Control Officer’s facilities and found them lacking.

Carol Easter from Victory and Pat Mitchell, president of the Elizabeth Brown Humane Society from Victory, both indicated their familiarity with the conditions under which dogs are currently kept at the Animal Control Officer’s. Carol Easter identified herself as the writer of a letter to the editor of the Caledonian Record about a dog she named “Bella” and her experience with trying to adopt and/or pay for care for the animal held at Jo Guertin’s. Ms. Mitchell agreed with the previously described poor conditions and indicated that summer time can be as bad or worse than winter time for animals kept in dog houses or barrels, given the insects and sun, and lack of adequate water furnished to the animals.

Chairperson Daniel Kimbell stated that the Board would vote on the proposal before it, and address the situation in a future meeting after they have had an opportunity to review the information. Bryon Quatrini indicated the Board has tried to work with separate entities to develop a proper shelter for stray animals, but it appeared separate groups are at odds with one another and have not been able to come to an agreeable solution.

Sharon Eaton said she appreciated all the people who would volunteer to deliver stray animals to the shelter in Lunenburg, but advised it would not be a safe alternative, since volunteers are not prepared to handle possibly aggressive dogs and could be bitten or otherwise injured in the process. Sharon indicated working with the Work Camp still seems to be the best solution.

Diane Beck said she had heard all of this information before, and challenged the Board to personally investigate the conditions under which the animals are being cared for at Jo Guertin’s home.

On a motion by Bryon Quatrini and seconded by Gary Reis the Board voted (4-0) to accept and sign the proposal presented from Sharon Eaton to move dogs to the Riverside Rescue in Lunenburg after the ten day waiting period at Jo Guertin’s.

TOWN REPORT WAGE INFORMATION – Russ Hutchins tried to clarify his request to have salaries made public in the Town Report. He asked if the salaries could be grouped by service, include overtime, and years of service, that would show the experience of current employees. Gary Reis suggested that Mr. Hutchins could get together with Mike Welch to come up with a format.

TAX COLLECTION REPORT – Sandy Grenier reported that property tax receipts are about on par with last year. The deadline for property taxes was November 20, and as of Monday, November 23, 95.57% of taxes have been collected as opposed to 96.45% in 2008. Sandy stressed again that the Town accepts a legible US post mark, but not a metered mailing date. Sandy also pointed out that some people who request a payment service through their bank to pay taxes on the due date, do not have the benefit of a US post mark, and any of those payments that arrive after the due date are considered late. Daniel Kimbell asked if the Town has considered taking payments electronically, and Sandy replied that the Town does have the ability to have funds transferred directly from individual accounts if the taxpayer fills in an authorization form. However individuals must keep track from year to year if they want to continue to have the taxes paid from specific accounts, or they have to notify the Clerk in writing to change.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANT – Joel Schwartz was unavailable for this presentation, but Mike Welch said it is still in the works.

SNOW REMOVAL – COMMUNITY CENTER – Mike Welch reported he had two quotes, one for \$800 per occurrence, and one for \$1200 per occurrence. Mr. Welch said he would discuss this matter more with Classen Crane and the structural engineers to see if they can project how many times they may need to clear the roof.

THREE RIVERS BIKE PATH AMENDMENT – Mr. Welch provided the previously- approved amendment to the Cooperative Agreement for the Bike Path, raising the cost to \$2.35 Million, which would mean a local cost of \$230,000. A majority of the Board signed the amendment. Kevin Russell was present to update the Board on the Right of Ways. Kevin indicated offers have been made to all abutting property owners and he is currently working with commercial owners in the Bay Street area. Though he felt that the current deadline of November 30 may be “tight”, and he could not promise agreements in place before then, Mr. Russell was confident that agreements would be met.

2010 MUNICIPAL BUDGET DISCUSSION – Mike Welch said that the budget draft included in the SelectBoard meeting packets had been reviewed with the Budget Committee, and the Committee suggested the Department Heads should review their budgets and come up with level funding in 2010. The Committee intends to meet with the Department Heads to discuss it further. Al Dunn wanted to know if vacating the Community Building is saving a significant amount of money from water and sewer and insurance. Mr. Welch indicated he didn’t think it would be significant, at least for insurance. Welch said that in the current budget, direct savings from not operating the building were budgeted to start a building fund.

MANAGER’S REPORT - Mike Welch reported that the Development Review Board has received a request to turn a building into transitional housing by NEKCA, located on Route 2, just east of Maple Grove. The hearing is set for December 8 at 7p.m.

Mr. Welch said a review of the recent review of the town-wide reappraisal met State criteria, and now the BCA reviews of grievances are going well.

OTHER BUSINESS: - Joanne Brown said she is still very concerned with what she described as a silver fish infestation at Colonial Apartments, and other code violations. She said Town Health Officer

Tim Angell had visited her apartment and said he felt it was a “nuisance” problem and not serious. Bryon Quatrini suggested Tim Angell should visit the building one more time and check other areas of the building. Gary Reis said if Ms. Brown felt there were code violations, she should contact Dinah Yessne at the Community Justice Center for assistance.

On a motion by Gary Reis, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to go into executive session to discuss a real estate option, and labor relations agreements with employees. Bruce Ralston and Kevin Russell were invited to join them.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:55p.m. On a motion by Jim Rust, seconded by Gary Reis, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at approximately 8:55p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ida W. Rainville
Executive Secretary