

**MINUTES
ST. JOHNSBURY SELECTBOARD
MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2009**

The St. Johnsbury SelectBoard held their Regularly Scheduled SelectBoard Meeting on Monday, December 14, 2009 at 7:00p.m.

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

Others Present: Mike Welch, Priscilla Messier, Ida Rainville, Larry Sharer, Diane Beck, Jon Beck, Bernard Timson, Jr., Al Dunn, Steve Smith, Mary Smith, Sharon Eaton, Rodney Lamotte, Brian Christman, Lisa Briggs, Mike Fortier Jo Guertin, Tim Angell, Will Rivers, Susan Aikin, Charles Bjorklund, Jay Wood, Nancy Cohen, Boy Scout Troop 707: James Cross, Michael Perry, Aren Kellogg, Austin Baesemann, Keaton Cross, Chris Baesemann, Nathan Perry, Brandon Locke, Alexander Grech IV; Sally Cook (Caledonian-Record), and KATV-Channel 7.

WARRANTS SIGNED:

General Fund	Check #63037 - #63113	\$ 89,958.87
	Check #63114 - #63148	1,044,291.06
	Check #63149	2,254,863.17
	Check #63150 - #63185	515,555.30
	Check #63186 - #63245	339,113.15
	Check #63246	17,748.80
	Check #63247 - #63314	100,344.31
	Check #63315 - #63316	342.98
	Check #63317 - #63356	9,792,856.63
	Check #63357 - #63443	559,021.48
Grant Funds	Check #2221 - #2222 (Bike Path)	5,729.52
	Check #2223 (Bike Path)	1,122.01
	Check #2223 (Safe Routes to School)	100.00

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. Chairman Kimbell agreed.

MINUTES –November 23 – On a motion by Jim Rust, seconded by Jean Wheeler, the Board voted (4-1) to approve the minutes of the November 23 meeting. Jean Wheeler abstained because she was not present.

BOY SCOUT TROOP 707 – Dean Cross from Waterford introduced nine members of Boy Scout Troop 707. They were visiting the meeting to earn a Citizenship badge.

WINTER PARKING - Melissa Severino, who had requested time at the meeting, was not present.

DOG POUND UPDATE - Jo Guertin resigned as pound keeper effective January 1, 2010, but agreed to stay on as animal control officer. Mike Welch reported that the North Danville Pet Hotel has agreed to keep dogs for the pound period, until they can be released to the Riverside Animal Shelter for adoption. Jo Guertin said she would work with the North Danville Pet Hotel to assist with animals that need vaccinations, or other issues, and she will be available to help care for the animals. Sharon Eaton, from Riverside Rescue, agreed that the plan seems to be going forward and also agreed to work with the North Danville Pet Hotel in the case of aggressive or unmanageable dogs. Sharon indicated she would still like to see the Corrections Department get involved and perhaps build a shelter near their facility, but has yet to contact anyone connected with the Corrections. Jo Guertin asked the SelectBoard if they would assist with getting the pre-rabies shot for the operator of North Danville Pet Hotel. Bryon Quatrini suggested Mike Welch could start a dialogue with the Corrections Department on the dog pound program.

HEALTH OFFICER INSPECTIONS – Tim Angell reported he had re-visited the apartment at 17 Church Street to address the complaint of silverfish infestation. Tim also said he inspected adjacent apartments and common areas of the building and found there were no silverfish in any other location, and that the apartment in question had one room stacked high with paper and other debris that would attract silverfish and provide a breeding ground. Tim Angell told the complainant that she should get rid of the materials causing the problem. AS of the date of the meeting, she had not done so, but Chairman Kimbell indicated he felt the Town had fulfilled its obligation in having the Health Officer investigate, and it was not a closed issue.

JUNK UPDATE – Priscilla Messier reported that of the 14 locations she had investigated since June, six have complied; one is in foreclosure and sold on December 11. She indicated she will contact the new owners and tell them that compliance with the clean up rule is required before clear title can be issued on the property. Of the remaining properties, only one is of major concern and Priscilla said she will be in contact with human services and the health department to assist with the clean up. Several other locations are in various stages of compliance.

TOWN PLAN 2011 – Priscilla Messier also addressed the upcoming 2011 Town Plan. The first meeting of the committee chairs is scheduled for January 13, and the first open meeting will be held in February. Priscilla indicated the number of sections has been decreased from previous Plans, having combined several sections under the heading of Economic Development; projecting March to May, 2010 for committee meetings, and the summer of 2010 for revisions and suggestions. Projected completion and print date of March, 2011.

LIQUOR PERMITS - Assistant Town Clerk Larry Sharer reported that the State is passing more of the responsibility of issuing liquor permits off onto the Towns, and with that more time and paper work required. The State Liquor Board has granted the Town the ability to have a blanket approval issued by the SelectBoard for all existing liquor licenses, or whichever the Board wishes to approve, and then require a stamp from the Town Clerk when the license application comes into the office for approval, thereby decreasing the time and paperwork involved. Larry reported that at least one establishment – C & S Enterprises LLC – may have their license pulled so they would be on the list of approvals under a contingency. Single events would still be handled on an individual basis.

On a motion by Gary Reis, seconded by Jean Wheeler, the Board voted (5-0) to adopt the new method of approving liquor licensing. On a motion by Jean Wheeler, seconded by Gary Reis, the Board voted unanimously to approve the list of liquor licenses presented by Larry Sharer, except C & S Enterprises if its license is revoked by the State.

THREE RIVERS TRANSPORTATION – Mike Welch reported that Kevin Russell’s contract would be coming up for renewal since he has reached the end of the funds originally allotted, plus the revision, because of the number of hours he has had to put into getting easements. General agreement that the remaining easements could be worked out and obtained with local talent and there is no further need for Mr. Russell’s services, and no more money available to pay him. Gary Reis moved to discontinue the contract with Kevin Russell. Discussion ensued on other options to lessen the expense to the Bike Path. Jim Rust suggested if the Town has to continue the project, it could be revised to include just the area adjacent to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, and with that connection the Bike Path could be maintained in conjunction with the Rail Trail. Jim said that Congress is voting monies to support infrastructure and job creation, so they may be willing to drop a small bike path project. He suggested the Board should at least attempt to pull out again without having to reimburse the total \$1 Million expense to the State and Federal governments. So far the expense to the Town has been around \$100,000. But according to all previous discussions and reports, if the Town dropped the project they would be on the hook for the entire \$1 Million, which the Town cannot afford. General feeling among those in attendance was to try again to bring this to the attention of Vermont State Senators and Representative to drop the project and ask forgiveness of the monies spent so far. Larry Sharer suggested the request could be voiced to the congressional representatives in a way to encourage their support in light of the current economic crisis that the country is in. Additional issues discussed concerned local infrastructure (Bridge 46 and Bridge 47) and projected long term maintenance on the path once it is constructed.

Jim Rust pointed out that the State was supposed to issue a status report at least every ten years, which it has not done. At the end of the first ten years when the State was still managing the project, there should have been a full report issued. The State claims it was not necessary because the project did not have any easements in place at that time. Jim Rust felt this was a possible way to get around having to pay the full amount of anything expended after the first ten years. It was not known exactly how much money that would entail.

Gary Reis again voiced his motion to discontinue the contract with Kevin Russell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, and voted in the affirmative (4-1). Jim Rust abstained.

2010 BUDGET PROCESS – Mike Welch reported that the Finance Committee is recommending to the Board of Selectmen that the Town level fund for 2010. Mr. Welch pointed out that some payroll expenses are locked in by contract in salary and benefits. Reducing the budget to level fund could cut services in other areas. Chairperson Kimbell directed Mr. Welch to take the suggestion to the Department Heads and go from there. Public is invited to attend budget meetings.

PROPOSED INCREASE OF WATER/SEWER RATES – Mike Welch included very rough drafts of proposed increase of water/sewer rates. Mr. Welch reported that the rates that became effective on January 1, 2009, should be been charged in 2008 but were delayed. The water usage has seen a greater decline than anticipated and therefore reduced revenue. The first draft would increase water rates alone by about 25%, with a net increase in combined water/sewer rates of approximately 11%. With reduced usage other options may need to be enforced to make up the deficit. Suggestions included a surcharge on non-water users, hydrant fees, etc. This will be examined at a future date.

PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES – PILOT. Some tax exempt organizations in town could be approached to make a payment to the Town in lieu of taxes. The Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (NVRH) has approached the Town with a possible offer. Other areas to look at could include St. Johnsbury Academy, NEK Human Services, and others. It was noted that the current tuition for the St. Johnsbury Academy is reported to be \$500 to \$1500 less than some surrounding schools, including Danville. It was established that, if a property is donated to the Academy, such as the motel and

restaurant on Hastings Street, the portion that houses the students is tax exempt, but the business portion of the restaurant is not.

USDA BOND RESOLUTION – PHASE II WATER – On a motion by Gary Reis, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted (5-0) to sign the \$775,000 USDA bond resolution for Phase II of the water projects.

LABOR NEGOTIATIONS 2010 – Mike Welch reported that the Board should be setting up a labor negotiations team. Daniel Kimbell and Bryon Quatrini volunteered to serve on the committee for 2010.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT - Mike Welch reported that the lease is up for the year for Senator Sanders office at the Pomerleau Building. Mr. Welch said that Senator Sanders office had approved a 2.5% increase in rent to \$738. On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Gary Reis, the Board voted (5-0) to amend the lease to \$738

Mike Welch referred to proposed pay rates for non-union employees. Mr. Welch reviewed the raises built into union contracts and indicated that previously the non-union employees (which includes administrative and department heads) had received the same rate of increase as the best of the union contracts, which would be 3.5% in 2010. Mr. Welch reminded the Board that the non-union employees will also be contributing 2% of their salary to the pension fund, and paying 14% of the BlueCrossBlueShield premium as opposed to 1% to pension and 12%. The overall increase in the cost of insurance premiums to the employees is approximately 10% due to the increase in monthly premium. In 2009 the administrative employees received 3.5% and department heads 2%. Bryon Quatrini suggested looking at all the figures more closely before making a decision.

Mike reported that Senator Leahy's office had managed to push through the pilot program for overweight trucks to use the interstate system in Vermont. Also, the building committee will be meeting on December 15 to look at the Fire Department's presentation.

On a motion by Gary Reis, seconded by Jean Wheeler, the Board adjourned at approximately 8:50p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ida W. Rainville
Executive Secretary