

**MINUTES  
ST. JOHNSBURY SELECTBOARD  
SPECIAL MEETING – BUDGET WORKSHOP  
MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2010**

The St. Johnsbury SelectBoard held a special SelectBoard meeting – budget workshop – on Monday, January 18, 2010 beginning at 6:00p.m. in the Board Room of the Municipal Building.

***SelectBoard Members Present:*** Chairperson Daniel Kimbell, Bryon Quatrini, Jean Hall Wheeler, and Jim Rust.

***SelectBoard Member Excused:*** Gary Reis

***Others Present:*** Joel Schwartz, Brian Christman, Al Dunn, Danny Scott, Richard Leighton, Priscilla Messier, Diane Beck, Jon Beck, John Nutbrown, Bernie Timson, Sandra Grenier, Tim Angell, Nancy Cohen, Justin Hoyt, Taylor Reed, and Mike Welch.

Chairperson Kimbell called the meeting to order with the Pledge at approximately 6:00p.m.

**2010 MUNICIPAL BUDGET REVIEW** - Chief of Police Richard Leighton was present to review the proposed 2010 expenditure budget with the SelectBoard. The 2010 proposed budget for the Police Department is \$893,695 this is approximately 3.1% or \$26,740 higher than the approved 2009 budget.

Chief Leighton said that he could reduce the new equipment from \$6,600 to \$4,000. The Chief had planned to replace older computers with the additional funding. The Chief said he could also reduce the uniform budget from \$7,000 to \$5,000 as new uniforms were purchased in 2009. Jean Hall Wheeler asked about reducing the equipment budget for vehicle replacement. The Manager stated that there is a balance of \$19,850 in the fund at the end of 2009. If \$15,000 is added in each of the next two years, that is approximately what would be required to replace a vehicle in 2011 and in 2012.

Chief Leighton reviewed revenue from District Court Fines, which have declined from \$37,957 in 2003 to \$18,291 in 2009. Chief Leighton said that officers could step-up enforcement of traffic violations.

John Nutbrown asked how many full-time officers the Department has – and why Lyndonville, a college town, can perform the same work with 3 officers. Chief Leighton said that St. Johnsbury currently has 10 FT officers ( 1 vacant position), and that St. Johnsbury is a very active department with 24 hour coverage. Chief Leighton said that Lyndonville depends on the State Police for a portion of their coverage.

Police Officer Justin Hoyt made a presentation to SelectBoard regarding the start-up of a K-9 program. Justin said that start-up costs for the program are approximately \$5,437. Justin Hoyt said that he has received 100% support from the downtown business community – and believes that he can get the start-up costs and ongoing expenses covered by donations. It was pointed out that Fair Labor Standards require that the K-9 handler be compensated 3 ½ hours per week for taking care of the animal. Justin said that this can be accomplished through comp time, or pay. Justin gave the example of Burlington where handlers receive \$80 per week compensation.

Nancy Cohen asked about the animal flunking out of training. Justin said that the breeder he has spoken to will guarantee certification of the animal. The breeder has also indicated that she would donate ½ of the normal cost of the animal. Brian Christman raised liability issues. Justin Hoyt said that he has not investigated any increased cost for insurance. Justin said that there would be some modification for the car required, including a removal platform. Justin said that the Town can control whether or not the K-9 officer responds outside of the jurisdiction of the Police Department. Justin Hoyt said that there are several other Police Departments in Vermont that have K-9 programs including: Barre, Montpelier (considering), Burlington, Bennington, Lyndonville, and State Police. Following discussion, Daniel Kimbell recommended that members of the Board review the written report prepared by Officer Hoyt, and the Board would invite Officer Hoyt in for further discussion during a future SelectBoard meeting. Daniel Kimbell asked Justin Hoyt to get the Burlington contract language related to K-9 handlers.

**ENERGY AUDIT & HISTORIC PRESERVATION** – Joel Schwartz was present to update the Board on the status of the energy audit required for submission of the energy grant for the municipal building. Joel said that NVDA has agreed to pay \$2,000 from their funds for the energy audit, and he has a consultant lined up to perform the work. Joel said that as part of the requirement for submission of an application, he will need to have an historic preservation consultant prepare a report related to the proposed improvements for the building, including storm windows, heating system upgrade, and replacement of overhead doors. Joel said that he has found a consultant in Concord who can perform the work, it is estimated to cost \$1,000 and the cost is not grant eligible. SelectBoard member Jim Rust said that if the local match for this grant is \$10,000 and we have to spend another \$3,000 maybe it would make more sense to just spend that money on energy improvements without getting into all of the requirements that will come along with acceptance of the grant funds. SelectBoard member Rust also expressed concerns in adequately sizing the heating system if an addition to the municipal building were made in the future. Joel said that he would have the energy audit back in time for the SelectBoard to review the recommendation before submitting a grant application – but we could not wait on the historic preservation consultant – if the Board has any interest in pursuing the grant application. Bernie Timson discussed window improvements – and asked to be included when the energy consultant inspected the building. Following discussion it was moved by Jean Hall Wheeler, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, and voted (4-0) to move forward with the energy audit, paid for by NVDA grant funds, and contract with an historic preservation consultant for up to \$1,000, to prepare required historic preservation report.

**2010 MUNICIPAL EXPENDITURE BUDGET (Continued)** – The Town Manager reviewed expenditure accounts with the Board that had not yet been considered as follows:

	2009	2010
Municipal Building	\$53,425	\$53,910
Community Center	\$49,150	\$32,000

The Manager stated that this is the first budget year that the building has been closed. The Manager stated that he included \$30,000 as a “building fund” to provide some funding for review of other options for a recreational facility. The Manager stated that even though the building has been mothballed, there will be some costs associated with removal of snow, and electricity. Following discussion, members of the Board agreed to change “building fund” to “contract services” and reduce the amount from \$30,000 to \$15,000. This adjustment will bring the 2010 Community Center Budget from \$32,000 to \$17,000.

Dog Control	\$10,400	\$10,400
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Jean Hall Wheeler asked about reducing contract services. The Manager stated that the Board may want to continue to level fund this budget as there is still ongoing discussion about an improved pound for St. Johnsbury. There will be some additional costs associated with the use of the North Danville Pet Hotel for a dog pound.

Board of Selectmen	\$6,900	\$7,300
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Adjustment was for allocation of workers compensation cost.

Health & Welfare	\$1,000	\$1,000
Solid Waste	\$33,300	\$33,300

The Manager reviewed the costs associated with recycling (\$1,135 per month), household hazardous waste days (\$5000-\$6000 per event), and Green-Up Day (\$3,000).

Community Justice Center	\$85,000	\$89,800
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The Manager said that the increased cost is for rental payment, as the Justice Center is no longer located in the Community Center. \$85,000 of the budget is covered by a state grant, which is shown in the general fund revenue.

Welcome Center	\$0	\$42,410
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The Manager stated that in 2009 the expenses for the welcome center were being recorded under “Railroad Street Expense”, but a new account had been established to

conform to the Town Chart of Accounts. The Manager reviewed the operating expenses for the Welcome Center and stated that there is a revenue amount of \$30,000 included in the General Fund Revenue for rental from the Chamber of Commerce and Senator Sander's Office. The operating budget does not include any major capital improvements to the building.

General Fund Expense	\$179,725	\$171,025
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The Manager stated that the Town Clerk's Office has significantly reduced printing costs by bringing the printing and preparation of the Town report in house. Members of the Board recommended that printing be reduced from \$3,000 to \$2,000. The Manager said that the County Tax has been reduced from \$63,050 to \$57,200. Interest expense on current loans is based on the amount borrowed and the rate in effect at the time. \$10,496 in interest was charged to the general fund for 2009. Sandy Grenier said that the interest amount would need to be paid, whatever it is. Members of the Board agreed to reduce the budget for general fund interest from \$20,000 to \$16,500. These reductions will bring the General Fund Expense account from \$171,025 to \$166,525. A reduction of \$4,500.

Computer/GIS	\$24,025	\$25,290
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The Manager reviewed expenses for ½ of Peter Whitney's time to manage the GIS program. The internet & e-mail contract, ArcView program updates, and contractual services for regular website updating.

Fiscal Agency	\$156,885	\$106,175
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The Manager stated that the \$44,425 budgeted for Railroad Street Expense in 2009 is now included in the Welcome Center line item. There is \$88,715 included in this account to fund that portion of the Recreation budget that is not covered by other revenue. The Manager stated that 2009 was the last year that \$35,510 was to be raised to eliminate the Recreation Fund deficit. The Manager said that there is still a Recreation Fund deficit of \$17,460 due to deficits accumulated over the past three years. The recreation fund did not incur any additional deficit in 2009.

Special Appropriations	\$282,191	\$290,161
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These articles will be considered separately by the voters, but are included in order for the Board to see the potential property tax impact. There are some agencies that will petition for additional funding, or for funding that was not approved in 2009.

Beatification Committee	\$10,000	\$10,000
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This account covers beautification efforts including holiday decorating, plantings in parks and public property, tree care, and St. Johnsbury Works plantings downtown. The Manager stated that there has been some discussion about transferring some amount from

beautification to Recreation – as Joe Fox is currently coordinating the maintenance for parks and trees.

Parking Meters	\$43,600	\$43,100
Downtown Improvement	\$21,500	\$21,500

The Manager said that the full amount of this downtown district assessment fee (\$500 per parcel) is applied to the interest and principal amount on the loan for the Railroad Street parking lot. This loan should be paid off in 2013.

**Pension** – Daniel Kimbell said that the Town has approached the actuary about pension computation for 2010 and whether or not we can adjust the 20% contribution level currently in the budget. The Manager said he did get a response back from the actuary on Monday 1/18/10 and the recommendation is that the budget amount should not be reduced. The Manager said he did calculate the reductions if we reduced the Town pension contribution from 20% to 18% as follows:

General Fund	(\$21,165)
Highway Fund	(\$10,660)
Special Services	(\$10,000)

**Reserve Funds & Undesignated Fund Balance** – The Manager provided the Board with information prepared by Town Clerk Sandra P. Grenier that details the unaudited fund balances for year-end 2009 as follows:

General Fund	\$284,003
Highway Fund	\$62,996
Special Services	\$56,477

The Manager stated that the Town Charter authorizes the SelectBoard to reserve up to 5% of the budget as fund balance. The Manager stated that the Board may want to consider a special article for the voters relative to the set-aside of some balance toward the Municipal Building Reserve – as discussions continue about the Municipal Building/Fire Station.

Nancy Cohen said that the SelectBoard has to get serious about addressing the cost of employee health insurance benefits and pension in pending labor negotiations.

Diane Beck said that she did not believe that there is any business or organization in this area paying 20% of employee wages into a pension program.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Water Consumption** – SelectBoard member Jim Rust asked for clarification on the historical Water and Sewer consumption information included in the packet. SelectBoard

member Rust stated that the Board still needs to review the operating budget for the water and sewer department. The Finance Committee is scheduled to continue discussions on Water/Sewer rate structure on Wednesday, January 20, 2010 beginning at 5:45p.m.

***Town Meeting*** – Chairperson Daniel Kimbell asked members of the Board if they reviewed the Town Plan committee meeting schedule. SelectBoard members Bryon Quatrini and Jim Rust indicated that they would be participating in the Town Plan process.

***Budget Workshop*** – Following discussion, members of the Board agreed to schedule a Special SelectBoard Budget Workshop on Friday, January 22, 2010 beginning at Noon in the Board Room of the Municipal Building. The SelectBoard will need to approve municipal budgets before the Warning for the Town Meeting can be printed and posted. Sandra Grenier stated that the Warning for Town Meeting has to be posted on or before Sunday, January 31, 2010. The next regular selectboard meeting, after the budget workshop, is scheduled for Monday, January 25, 2010.

Having no further business or requests it was moved by Jean Hall Wheeler, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, and voted (4-0) to adjourn at approximately 8:15p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Welch  
Town Manager