

MINUTES
REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 25, 2010 – 7:00 PM
MUNICIPAL BOARD ROOM

ATTENDANCE: Chairman Jim Rust, Rodney Lamotte, Bryon Quatrini, Bernard Timson, Daniel Kimbell and Town Manager Ralph Nelson.

Also present: Secretary Ida Rainville, Tim Persons, Jon Beck, Diane Beck, Russ Hutchins, Brian Christman, Gary Lunderville, Howard Bennett, Jackie Bennett, Melvin Ash, Joe Fox, Michelle Fox, Bill Rodd, Larry Sharer, Peter Whitney, Mary Keach, Ruth Bijolle, Barb Bessette, Al Dunn, Peggy Pearl, Sean Jewell, Lisa Carrere, Kathy Goslant, Carol Koukoutsis, Jim Impey, Nancy Cohen, Mike Fortier, Bruce Corrette, Taylor Reed and the News 7 crew.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge at 7:00 pm.

Public Comment – Peggy Pearl, representing the St. Johnsbury History and Heritage Center, explained the need for space to house the St. Johnsbury collections, possibly on Main Street. The group was considering the Armory building as a possibility. It is a non-profit organization, operated by a board of 10 citizens.

Nancy Cohen presented a picture to Town Manager Ralph Nelson, of the Portland Street Memorial Bridge during its original construction in August, 1941, including the bomb shelter level.

Approval of Minutes – On a motion by Bernard Timson, seconded by Rod Lamotte, the minutes of October 11 and 14 were approved by a vote of 4 – 1. Daniel Kimbell abstained because he was not at the meetings.

Warrants – There were no warrants to approve.

St. Johnsbury Academy Street Light – Dennis Smith of St. Johnsbury Academy presented a request for a street light near the entrance to Fuller Hall. General consensus is that it is a very poorly lit crossing and a street light would provide safety to students and the public. Permission is required by the Town because it will be located in the Town's right of way. On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to allow a new streetlight in front of Fuller Hall.

St. Johnsbury Academy/Recreation Department Memo of Understanding – Ralph Nelson and Tom Lovett discussed the revised MOU and both said they felt the final draft was a good working agreement between the Academy and the Town. The final draft included a provision for a 5-year agreement with option for 5 more, a guarantee of employment for Joe Fox at the Academy Field House to direct the program, the establishment of a Citizen Advisory Board, and agreement by the Academy to offer at least the same programs as currently available, if not more. Ralph Nelson advised that in order to accomplish the change in operations of the Recreation Department the Board must repeal the town ordinance which states that the Town will provide a recreation department. On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Bernard Timson, the Board voted unanimously to repeal the Recreation Department ordinance.

On a motion by Bryon Quatrini, seconded by Daniel Kimbell, the Board voted unanimously to authorize Ralph Nelson to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with the St. Johnsbury Academy, on behalf of the Town.

Health Care Benefits – Ralph Nelson reported he felt the health care benefits will be the lynch pin for

the union contracts to build upon and he has received quotes from all three healthcare providers in the State of Vermont – MVP from Poulos Insurance, Cigna from VLCT, and Blue Cross directly from Blue Cross Blue Shield. Mr. Nelson proposed to discuss the health care contract matter with the Board in Executive Session.

Amendments to Grand List – Peter Whitney presented several amendments to grand list, mostly from homestead declaration errors, acreage corrections, and land use grievance settlements. On a motion by Rod Lamotte, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board unanimously approved and signed the amendments.

St. Johnsbury/Lyndon Revolving Loan Fund Report (Jay-Lyn Fund) – Ralph Nelson reported that he had been contacted by a HUD investigator and the files that were returned by Joel Schwartz will remain sealed in the Town vault. Mr. Nelson named three points he considers key to the continued investigation – 1) Maintain a low key investigation. 2) Follow HUD instructions, and 3) Not convene the collections committee until the HUD investigations is complete. Jim Rust confirmed that he hopes the HUD investigation will be resolved quickly, and the Board will work from HUD recommendations. Mr. Rust said the mission statement of the collections committee needed to be changed to reflect additional work that he felt needed to be done. Daniel Kimbell said he thought it was premature to develop a new mission statement when the Board did not know what the outcome would be from the HUD investigation, and what the recommendation would be. The original Mission Statement adopted on September 29 read as follows:

To review all outstanding loans granted through the St.Jay/Lynn fund and the St. Johnsbury Office of Economic Development. Also, to develop procedures for billing and repayment to bring all accounts current.

Jim Rust proposed the following new Mission Statement for the Jay-Lyn fund committee:

To review all outstanding loans granted through the St.Jay/Lynn Fund and the St. Johnsbury Office of Economic Development to bring those loans current. Also, to develop new procedures for applying, reviewing, granting, billing and repayment of all accounts present and future to acceptable standards.

Brian Christman wanted to know if the HUD investigation would be just for Jay Lyn funds, or for any other practices that he (Mr. Christman) perceived as questionable on previous funding.

Mike Fortier agreed with Daniel Kimbell that it would be premature to adopt a new mission statement before the investigation is complete.

Russ Hutchins stated his appreciation of the media coverage of the Jay-Lyn Fund saga.

Tim Persons questioned Mr. Kimbell on his vacation to Florida. Among other things, Mr. Persons mentioned that Florida is a state where people often hide assets. Mr. Kimbell responded that if Mr. Persons would like to discuss such matters, he should contact him directly.

Mel Ash wanted clarification on the HUD funds that were issued at the time of the Railroad Street fire.

Bryon Quatrini questioned if this Jay-Lyn review committee will consist of the same members previously appointed.

On a motion by Bernard Timson, seconded by Rod Lamotte, the Board voted 2 in favor (Timson, Lamotte) and 2 opposed (Quatrini, Kimbell) to adopting the new mission statement. Chairman Jim Rust

voted in favor and the motion passed.

Manager's Report – Ralph Nelson reported that construction will begin on the Union Bank handicap ramp on October 30. The Northeast Kingdom Chamber office requested a reduction in rent of their space at the Pomerleau Building, which will be discussed as a contract matter in Executive Session.

The Portland Street Bridge construction is going forward with the additional \$175,000 federal funds to complete the additional problems which were discovered after the stimulus funds were awarded. Mr. Nelson questioned whether or not the work would be completed before cold weather, or may have to be continued in the spring.

Ralph also reported that the Town would be applying for a grant to completely upgrade the dispatch office equipment on Friday, October 29. If the grant is received, there would not be enough room in the current location for the new equipment and space would have to be addressed.

Mr. Nelson also reported that the first meeting with the Fire Department to exchange contracts will be Friday, October 29, with the Public Works and Police Department contracts to be addressed starting next week.

There are some extra funds in the Welcome Center budget to have Black River Design looking at the roof situation, with the promised help of Senator Bernie Sanders. Ralph expected a report from Black River later this week.

Mr. Nelson said that Town Agent Ed Zuccaro has indicated that the Town Ordinances need to be updated. Mr. Nelson suggested the Policy and Procedures Committee, which was approved on July 26, 2010, could also work on the Ordinance update. General consensus was to place an ad in the Caledonian Record for members to serve on the Policies and Procedures committee.

Other Business – Kathy Goslant from Mucca's Place on Eastern Avenue, reported that she was told that loan funds were not available when she contacted Joel Schwartz in 2006. Ms. Goslant continued to say she questioned the accounting procedures used to list the outstanding loans. General agreement came from Mike Fortier and Howard Bennett on the bookkeeping practices.

Nancy Cohen questioned the practices of the firm which has audited the Town books for the last several years.

On a motion by Bernard Timson, seconded by Rod Lamotte, the Board voted to go into executive session at 7:50 p.m. to discuss personnel, contract and legal matters

On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board adjourned at 8:15 with no further business conducted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ida W. Rainville
Executive Secretary