

**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2010**

The St. Johnsbury SelectBoard scheduled a Special SelectBoard Meeting for Monday, March 16, 2010 beginning at 7:00a.m. in the Board Room of the Municipal Building.

SelectBoard Members Present: Chairperson Jim Rust, Bryon Quatrini, Daniel Kimbell, Bernard Timson, and Rodney Lamotte.

Others Present: Gary Lunderville, Brian Christman, Richard Leighton, Claude Donna, Werner Heidemann, Claude Caron, Mike Fortier, Elwood Cohen, Nancy Cohen, Sean Jewell, Matt Kieffer, Linwood Smith, Larry Sharer, Sandra Grenier, Mike Welch, LSC-TV, and several other people.

Chairperson Rust called the meeting to order at 7:00a.m. with the pledge.

**DISCUSSION – SCHEDULE & ADVERTISING OF REVOTE:** The Manager provided the Board with an updated expenditure summary and line item General Fund Budget \$2,323,000 Expenditure Budget requiring General Fund property taxes of \$1,722,590 - detailing the budget adjustments approved by the Board at the special meeting held on Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>.

Chairperson Rust stated that he attend the School Board Meeting held on Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup> – and that the members of the School Board have scheduled another meeting for Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:00p.m. to discuss a revised School District Budget. Chairperson Rust said that the members of the School Board are going to try to prepare a revised budget in time to schedule a revote for the Town General Fund and School Budget for Tuesday, April 13, 2010. The SelectBoard will discuss further at their regular meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** SelectBoard member Rodney Lamotte said that he wanted to make a motion to amend the General Fund Budget adopted on March 10, 2010 by adding the following items:

- 1) The elimination of the Office of Economic and Community Development;
- 2) The reduction of hours to the Office of Zoning & Planning Administrator to 24 Hours (Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday);
- 3) Department Heads with salaries greater than \$50,000 will take an extra 3% reduction to make a total reduction of 6% effective 4/1/10.

SelectBoard member Bernie Timson seconded this motion. Rodney Lamotte said that following the piece in the paper he received a lot of calls from people who felt that the general fund budget reductions that had been approved by the Board were not enough,

that is why he is offering this amendment. SelectBoard member Bernard Timson said that he has heard from many people that the cuts proposed were not enough.

SelectBoard member Daniel Kimbell said that we heard loud and clear by many people last week that this is the wrong time to eliminate the Economic Development Office. Daniel Kimbell said bringing this up now is not fair to the public.

SelectBoard member Bryon Quatrini said that he did not feel that this was the time to reduce either of these positions.

Chairperson Rust asked for comments from the public. Werner Heidemann cautioned the Board that reducing hours for a position below 30 hours may impact availability of benefits.

Brian Christman said that on March 2<sup>nd</sup> we made history in St. Johnsbury. People want change – now is the time to effect these changes. It is time to start a new direction.

Nancy Cohen said she reviewed the budget very carefully, and the Planning & Zoning Office only generates \$2,400 in fees – and the Economic Development Office is \$0. Nancy Cohen stated that she represented an LLC that had plans for a major expansion on the Cohen property off from Hospital Drive, and that Danny Scott was the only person with enough information to let the developer know that there were bottlenecks in the sewer system that would make it impossible for additional development to occur. Nancy Cohen said that her plans are now on hold, and Mr. Scott has advised her that the new construction of the West Side Improvement may help to reduce flows sufficiently to enable her project to go forward. Nancy Cohen said that she was disappointed in the response she received from the Economic Development Office. She said working on this project was a frustrating experience. Nancy Cohen stated that the Passumpsic Land Trust was also interested in this project as land would have been set aside for wildlife habitat. Nancy Cohen said that she has never beat the drum before – but we have to restructure government to make it work. Nancy Cohen suggested that the Planning Office & Economic Development Office should be restructured and the Town should hire a Senior Planner.

Mike Fortier said that the Board has only cut \$70,000 from the Budget. Mr. Fortier said that this is not enough. Mike Fortier said that the Board should be going back to the Department Heads demanding reduced budgets.

Claude Donna said that you have to stop the fire truck from chasing the ambulance. Mr. Donna said that when the fire department showed up at his house for a medical call he locked the door on them.

Claude Caron said he intended to vote against the budget as proposed the cuts are not deep enough.

Linwood Smith said he was not impressed with his property taxes going up \$1,000. Mr. Smith said get rid of the positions that haven't done anything for St. Johnsbury for years.

Sean Jewell said he would like to see deeper cuts. Mr. Jewell said salaries should be reduced 10%. Mr. Jewell said people in this Town have seen their jobs and benefits cut, and if they are on unemployment, they are about to run out of benefits. Mr. Jewell said the people are looking for decreases. You have to divide up the budget into what you need, and what you want – the wants can not happen right now. Mr. Jewell said he can not afford the tax increase that he saw last year. Mr. Jewell said he would propose a furlough of 1 week. He said that could represent a 2% pay cut – if people are on a week long furlough they are eligible for unemployment. Mr. Jewell said he didn't like going on a furlough at his job, but he understood that it needed to be done. Mr. Jewell said that contributing \$10,000 - \$12,000 into someone's retirement fund is ridiculous. This type of retirement benefit is out of line with what is going on in St. Johnsbury. Mr. Jewell suggested that contract negotiations be opened up now, and not wait until the end of the year when the agreements expire. Mr. Jewell said he agreed with the comments about the Fire Truck and when his son had an accident with his dirt bike, CALEX came and did an excellent job. Mr. Jewell said that the taxpayers should not be paying firefighters to watch the helicopter land and take off at the hospital.

Matt Kieffer said that the cuts are not deep enough. Matt Kieffer said that the average income in St. Johnsbury is \$36,000 and he felt that the wages of Town employees should reflect the average income in the area. Matt Kieffer said you need to get serious about cuts and what has been proposed is not close to what needs to be done.

Werner Heidemann said he has been here for 30 years, so he is not a newcomer. Werner Heidemann said that we should not take a sledge hammer and destroy what has been built up. Werner said that there have been mistakes, but there has been a lot done correctly. Werner said that the Fire Department saved his house from being destroyed while he was away. Werner said that these people risked their lives to save his house. Werner asked where are the people who will want to take a job risking their life. Werner told the Board you are hearing the point of view of some people – the budget was only defeated by 9 votes.

Gary Lunderville said he was a volunteer firefighter and EMT he risked his life for no pay – so there are people willing to do those jobs.

Claude Caron said you can have the best town government around, but people still have to be able to afford it.

Elwood Cohen said we are talking about two different issues. Mr. Cohen said he was not opposed to the fire department; he is opposed to the fire department responding to medical calls. Elwood Cohen said at the last meeting the public was asked not to use names when talking about positions – but the cheerleaders who were not residents of St. Johnsbury used names.

Sean Jewell said he is not looking to dismantle the Fire Department. Nancy Cohen said that she spoke with Mr. Lacroix, who works for CVPS, and he wanted the Board to know that their union members contribute 25% of the premium to their group insurance. Mike Fortier said that it cost more than \$3.00 to run the fire truck to an ambulance call.

SelectBoard Member Daniel Kimbell said that when we last met we had good representation for the Town – and that is not what we have today. SelectBoard member Kimbell said this meeting is not properly warned for taking further action on the budget. Daniel Kimbell said that he believed that there are a lot of people in Town who feel that the cuts being proposed here are irresponsible. Daniel Kimbell said that he did not feel that the department heads should be singled out for further reductions in pay.

SelectBoard Member Rodney Lamotte said that he believed that the people here today represent more of a cross section of how the people of the Town of St. Johnsbury really feel. Rodney Lamotte said that wage increases have always been given the same way, across the Board, he did not feel it is right that someone making \$50,000 gets the same pay adjustment as someone making much less.

SelectBoard member Bryon Quatrini said I thought we agreed on a budget, and I am here to talk about the schedule for a revote, if we are going to rehash the budget – I want to see what other people have to say.

SelectBoard member Rodney Lamotte said he has already heard a lot of support for further cuts in the general fund budget.

SelectBoard member Bernard Timson said that he has heard from people who pay much more into their medical cost than Town employees do – and they will not vote for the budget.

Chairperson Jim Rust said that he had reviewed Roberts Rules of Order and he said it will take a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> vote of the Board to decide whether or not to bring up further amendment to the General Fund Budget that was approved on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Rodney Lamotte moved, Bernard Timson seconded, and it was voted (3-2 Quatrini and Kimbell opposed), to allow amendment to the General Fund Budget approved on March 10<sup>th</sup> to be considered.

Chairperson Jim Rust called for a vote on SelectBoard member Lamotte's motion to amend the General Fund Budget adopted on March 10, 2010 by adding the following items:

- 1) The elimination of the Office of Economic and Community Development;
- 2) The reduction of hours to the Office of Zoning & Planning Administrator to 24 Hours (Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday);
- 3) Department Heads with salaries greater than \$50,000 will take an extra 3% reduction to make a total reduction of 6% effective 4/1/10.

The motion passed on a vote of 3-2 (Quatrini and Kimbell opposed).

Chairperson Rust asked if there was any other business.

Werner Heidemann said that he did not think the meeting was properly warned for further reductions in the budget, and that people should have a chance to know what is going to be discussed at the meeting. Werner Heidemann said you could find the decision challenged.

Linwood Smith said it is about time that the SelectBoard finally got some courage. He said he felt the Board did a better job today listening to the people, and not just supporting what has been going on in Town for the last few years.

Chairperson Rust said that if he had known in advance that SelectBoard Member Lamotte intended to actually present this amendment, then he would have asked that the Agenda be amended to warn the discussion. Chairperson Rust said that he did not know for sure whether this amendment was going to be presented or not. Chairperson Rust said if the decision is challenged, we will see what the outcome is.

Having no further business or requests, it was moved by Rodney Lamotte, seconded by Bernard Timson and unanimously voted to adjourn at approximately 8:05a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Welch  
Town Manager