

MINUTES
REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2011, 7:00
MUNICIPAL BOARD ROOM

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

Also present: Town Clerk/Treasurer Sandy Grenier, Kevin Oddy, Forrest “Tony” Greenwood, Secretary Ida Rainville, Dan Scott, Al Dunn, Gary Lunderville, Mary Lunderville, Robert Veilleux, Becky Baldauf, Werner Heidemann, Bill Thurston, Bill Merrow, Randall Northrop, William Jewell, Lisa Carrere, Joanne Brown, Bradley Reed, Andrew Ruggles, Kevin Montminy II, Kathy Pelow, Sean Jewell, Gary Reis, Don Bostic, Pam Smart, Bob South, Robert Wilkins, Mike Fortier, Annie Angell, Erin Quatrini, Brian Christman, Stacy Perkins, Nancy Cohen, Andrew Fisher, Clara Fisher, Jennifer Howland, Diane Beck, Alan Ruggles, Russ Hutchins, Peter Whitney, Bruce Corrette, Tim Persons, Taylor Reed and the News 7 crew.

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

Public Comment – Joanne Brown asked about the status of two men to be cut from Public Works. Mr. Nelson replied that the two employees who he said had expressed an interest in taking early retirement had declined to do so. Therefore, the two men in the public works department with the least seniority were laid off in accordance with the Union contract – Michael Davidson and Daniel Smith. In reply to Tony Greenwood’s question of giving notice to the employees, Jim Rust indicated he had spoken with the Union’s attorney; it had been over a week since the mandate was issued to cut the two positions, and the process was handled legally.

Brian Christman was allowed to distribute and read from copies of what appeared to be a “letter to the editor” in which he (Mr. Christman) made thinly veiled accusations of misappropriation of Town grant funds, directed at Joel Schwartz, the office of NCIC, Mike Welch, Daniel Kimbell and the Passumpsic Bank, and Town Attorney Ed Zuccaro. He also claimed that the Town Clerk’s office had withheld information that he had requested for his personal investigation. After Mr. Christman distributed his letters, Jim Rust said the Board had no comment to his accusations because the matter comes under the HUD investigation.

There were no minutes of previous meetings available for approval.

Warrants – On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Bernie Timson, the Board unanimously approved and signed the following:

Accounts Payable -	Check #66008	\$ 73,256.00
	Check #66009	\$ 70.00
	Check #66010 – 66034	\$242,896.26

Liquor Licenses – Daniel Kimbell asked to table until later in the meeting, as he had not had the opportunity to review.

Budget – After the budget was passed at the previous meeting, Ralph Nelson said he was concerned about maintaining grant compliance with the time strains put on the town offices. He suggested funding the work under contracted services. It would not change the total budget, just re-distribute the budgeted figures. Jim Rust said the budget was created with the town clerk and treasurer slated to handle the grant compliance. Daniel Kimbell said both Ralph and Sandy had said they would need help with this grant compliance if Linda Bunnell was not replaced in the office. Sandy said she thought Linda may have spent upwards of 70% of her time on the grant compliance and accounting for the Town Manager’s office, and 30% of her time on clerk/treasurer duties. Sandy said her department could absorb the clerk/treasurer duties. Jim Rust’s opinion was that Mr. Nelson was trying to get around the issue of hiring an assistant for his office. Sandy pointed out that the office is working with the same number of people as in 1988, with many more jobs to be accomplished. Rod Lamotte questioned why Lyndonville could handle the same office with 2.75 people, to which Sandy replied the Clerk’s office handles some of the assessor’s records, billing and collecting on parking meters; water/sewer and tax collection for more than twice as many people as Lyndonville, as well as a high volume of birth/death records because St.

Johnsbury is a hospital town, and time consuming work like notarizing and assisting people with genealogy . There are two 6-foot shelves full of grant binders, along with daily work. Mary Lunderville questioned the possibility of getting interns from the college to fill in. A general discussion of how to get the grant compliance done by the Clerk/Treasurer's office or Manager's office, ensued with no definitive conclusion. Sandy said she would continue to do her job to the best of her ability.

Resolution – Welcome Center – Ralph Nelson distributed a copy of the proposed resolution for possible inclusion on the March ballot, to fund a \$1.4 Million renovation of the Welcome Center, to house the municipal offices and still have several offices for lease. Because the building is an historic structure, the Board thought funding from state and federal agencies might supplement the Town's bond. Support has been offered through Senator Sanders office. Gary Reis indicated there is no money available from the State. On a motion by Bernie Timson, seconded by Rod Lamotte, the Board voted unanimously to put the question on the ballot.

Ballot Questions – Personal Property Tax and Downtown tax of \$500 per property owner to pay off parking lot – The Selectboard reported that the elimination of personal property tax would be approximately \$181,000 per year. It is a tax that cannot be overseen with a great deal of accuracy, and by eliminating the personal property tax, St. Johnsbury would be more attractive to new business. The balance of the parking lot loan could be paid off by \$47,000 that may be found in the reserve fund from 2010, and again would encourage business to locate downtown. On a motion by Daniel Kimbell, seconded by Rod Lamotte the Board voted unanimously to put the question on the ballot for March 1, 2011, to eliminate the Personal Property Tax. On a motion by Rod Lamotte, seconded by Bernie Timson, the Board voted unanimously to put the question on the ballot for March 1, 2011, to pay off the parking lot loan with town funds to eliminate the \$500 per property tax on the downtown property owners. Jim Rust reported that some of the information in the Charter needs to be corrected and re-written. Some of the procedures put on the ballot this year could affect a charter change and Mr. Zuccaro intends to review the Charter and re-write correctly after any other changes might be made.

Warning – Ralph Nelson reported that for the final warning, the water filter plant project should be placed on the ballot as a separate issue, but it will delay the final warning until later in the week for a re-write. Friday being the deadline, there is sufficient time to amend the ballot before approval by the Board, but it would require the Board to meet later in the week to vote on approval of the Ballot. Red Dufresne indicated he felt the Town has bond authority now, but the percentages need to be worked out.

Transportation Path – Mr. Nelson reported that the request for qualified construction services has been put together by the State and will be advertised for February 15. The bids could be reviewed and the project awarded within 2 to 3 weeks after that date, with a projected completion time of November, 2011. All the preliminaries are complete and the construction consultant will be selected on March 7.

Town Manager's Report – Mr. Nelson reported no change in the budget from the previous meeting, and the estimated taxed based on previous grand list should effect a reduced tax to a \$150,000 home in the special services district of \$193, and a home outside of the special services district reduction of approximately \$182.

Other Business – Bruce Corrette said he hoped the Town and School board could work together at the informational meetings so the Public would get answers all at the same meetings.

Joanne Brown was concerned that minutes were not available from the January 17 and 18 meetings, and they were not recorded. She suggested all meetings be recorded.

Mike Fortier asked about the discrepancies raised concerning the Caucus. Jim Rust stated that it had all been resolved and was not an issue.

Liquor licenses were approved on a motion by Bernie Timson/Rod Lamotte.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ida W. Rainville
Executive Secretary