

ST. JOHNSBURY BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2013

The St. Johnsbury Selectboard met in the Pomerleau Building, 1<sup>st</sup> floor on Wednesday, February 27, 2013 at 7:40 p.m. for the Regular Meeting of the Selectboard. Present were: Chairman Jim Rust, Rodney Lamotte, Bernard Timson, Kevin Oddy, Vice Chairman Alan Ruggles, and Interim Town Manager Merelise O'Connor.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:40 p.m.

**PUBLIC ATTENDANCE**

Ray Labounty, Jr., Tom Moore, Robert Desrocher, Mark Finn, Jim Moore, Mike Fortier, Tom Walsh, Bruce Corrette, Warner Heidemann, Susan Dugan, Celina Wright, Tim Person, Susan Cherry, Bob South.

**PRESS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Tom Moore questioned if the selection for the new town manager will wrap up before the Town Meeting. Chairman Jim Rust said that they are still waiting for more information.

Susan Cherry asked about the CILD grant, and Chairman Jim Rust said that the board doesn't have enough information, but will bring it up at the next meeting.

Bob South said that he noticed a public safety concern regarding 2 street lights out at the construction area on Railroad Street, and witnessed a pedestrian almost hit because it was too dark for the cars to see them. Vice Chair Alan Ruggles asked if perhaps a blinking light could be temporarily put in place at the intersection. Chairman Jim Rust asked the Interim Town Manager to work with the director of public works on a solution. Susan Dugan suggested if a solar flood light would be acceptable.

Ray Labounty said he was skeptical when the Interim Town Manager came on board, but now he's no longer skeptical of MRI or the Interim Town Manager and thanked her. He said comments like "beyond my control", or "the way it's always been done" need to be turned into action. The audience recognized the Interim Manager with a round of applause.

Chairman Jim Rust said that he has been happy with the things that have been done, to include: zero increase in water/sewer rates, completed bike path, Depot St., Cliff St., Old Concord Rd., and Railroad St. improvements are moving along. He said he rates himself and the board a "C", and would not apologize to anyone for the decisions he has made. He said that communication needs to improve and he welcomes discussions that take more time than what the meetings allow, and need to have these discussions outside meeting times. Citizens need to work together and there are spots available on the

planning commission. He thanked staff and employees, and said it's been difficult, but they have accomplished a lot while moving forward. He said he is very comfortable with the budget, and proud of the board's accomplishments.

Mike Fortier said he would like to see unanimous votes and less split votes. Warner Heidemann commented that he didn't object to how the votes were split between the members, but did object to being talked down to or labeled. He said it's not the decisions made, but the manner in which they are communicated that makes him feel resentful.

### **MINUTES**

Oddy moved to table the last meeting minutes. Chairman Jim Rust commented that the board should have a short meeting to approve the minutes before the Town Meeting. The motion was seconded by Ruggles and unanimously approved.

### **WARRANTS**

Lamotte made a motion to pass all warrants, seconded by Timson and unanimously approved.

### **LIQUOR AND CATERING LICENSES**

Oddy made a motion to grant the liquor licenses, which was seconded by Lamotte and unanimously approved.

### **CALEX**

Selena Wright extended her thanks from CALEX to the Selectboard for providing them the opportunity to present to the residents.

### **LISTER RESIGNATION**

Donald Pinard has resigned from the Board of Assessment. Chairman Jim Rust would like to thank him for his service to the town. The Board of Assessment now has 2 openings on a 3 member board. The DRB has vacancies that need to be filled also. Oddy asked if the Town Manager could post these positions publicly.

### **ASSESSOR CONTRACT**

Chairman Jim Rust asked if they could table this discussion until after the executive session. Oddy made a motion to postpone the discussion after the executive session, seconded by Lamotte and unanimously passed.

### **FEMA LETTER**

Chairman Jim Rust said that more information from Community Action is needed on where the numbers are coming from, and still need a signature on a letter from the acting zoning administrator. Interim Town Manager Merelise O'Connor said that town had received a structural integrity report. A motion was made by Lamotte to have the acting zone administrator to sign a letter, seconded by Oddy and unanimously passed.

## **UNION CONTRACT**

Timson made a motion to accept the contract today for 1 year. It was further agreed that by April 15<sup>th</sup>, the parties would begin working on a long term contract in conjunction with the new personnel policy, seconded by Lamotte and unanimously passed. The contract was passed for board member signatures.

## **WATER/SEWER BUDGET**

Interim Town Manager Merelise O'Connor said that the W&S revenues were based on historical amounts. The USDA requires the budget to be split 50/50 between water and sewer.

Mike Fortier asked why the rate is the same. Chairman Jim Rust replied that water/sewer users were paying for things that should have been under the highway budget, but now that is fixed which made room for new projects to be done that improves the infrastructure.

Susan Dugan mentioned concerns about the Passumpsic Fire District rates, and Chairman Jim Rust replied that they need to have the same rate as St. Johnsbury.

Timson started that the Town Clerk's office needs to document how much actual time the staff takes to work on water issues, and the budget is too high. This year the department of public works is documenting employee's time spent separately on water and sewer work. A method of tracking needs to be done as two separate accounts. Chairman Jim Rust agreed. Discussions continued regarding the water/sewer budget line items between the director of public works and the board.

Ruggles moved to have Town Clerk Stacy Jewell as an alternate authorized signer on reimbursement request from the state, seconded by Oddy and unanimously passed.

## **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

Construction easements are down from the original 80, with only 6 to left execute, with 5 hopeful signing and 1 refusal to sign because of a sidewalk/pole issue.

Bob South commented that the state bid amounts were coming in very low. The more you wait, the more you will pay for a contractor with the skills you need due to other projects coming up.

Oddy moved to put out for bid approved by USDA and town attorney, seconded by Lamotte and unanimously passed.

Interim Town Manager Merelise O'Connor asked the board if they wished to authorize an additional \$781,000 to support the Westside North project, and then questioned if we should borrow the money or reduce the scope of the project. Chairman Jim Rust mentioned a letter regarding this during Nelson's time, and said that this was the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> request for this, and wants to hear more from our town attorney on borrowing authority.

Interim Town Manager Merelise O'Connor asked the board to appoint her Chair to the Retirement Committee, in order to help guide the work on the plan documents.

Capital Improvement Plan was discussed in detail. Oddy made a motion for the board to commit to move forward to initiate a CIP, seconded by Ruggles, but not voted on. Chairman Jim Rust said that the board needs to resolve current issues before adding more, and that the Planning Commission was already charged with developing the master plan to include a CIP, as well as selecting a committee and presenting names to the board.

Oddy made a motion for the board to commit to endorsing the idea of moving forward with a CIP and said it's a good idea. Chairman Jim Rust said that the board didn't have enough information, the voted failed on a 3-2 vote.

Regarding disposal of a homemade trailer owned by the town, Gilbert Roberts wants to buy it for \$350. Lamotte made a motion to approve the purchase, seconded by Timson which unanimously passed.

Other business included an offer of a 23 pound stuffed turkey and an 8 point mounted deer head to be donated to the Pomerleau building. Lamotte made a motion to say thank you, but no, seconded by Ruggles and unanimously passed.

CIRD Program for Rural Community was discussed in detail, with comments from Jeff Moore, Tim Person and Maureen Henning asking for an additional \$7,000 to supplement funds already within the economic development part of the budget. These funds will support the National non-profit Institute of Rural Design's consultants up to a value of \$42,000, with their involvement to include providing experienced people to help with the project by delivering more comprehensive plans and educating the community. It will also look at neighborhood infrastructure.

Oddy made a motion to obligate the town to match the \$7,000 cash for CIRD and to receive \$42,000 of value from the IRD consultants, seconded by Timson and unanimously passed.

At 10:30 p.m., Timson moved to go into executive session, seconded by Oddy and unanimously passed.

Approved 03/25/2013