

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2002
7:00 PM – MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

A regular meeting of the St. Johnsbury Selectboard was held Monday, October 28, 2002, at 7:00 PM in the boardroom of the municipal building. Present were Chairman Reg Wakeham, Elwin Cross, Gib Handy, Bryon Quatrini, and Dale Urie. Also present from the Town were Town Manager Mike Welch, Zoning Administrator Priscilla Messier, Town Clerk Sandra Grenier, Economic Development Coordinator Joel Schwartz, Downtown Coordinator Alison Meaders, Student Representative Shawna Wakeham, Police Chief Paul Devenger, Fire Chief Troy Ruggles, Recording Secretary Ida Rainville, and newly appointed Recreation Director Eric Berry.

Those attending in the audience included: Amy Livingston, Kendall Farrell, Russ Hutchins, Darlene Ahrens, Doug Bengtson, Louis LaCroix, David Rowell, Penni Cleverly, Len Gerhardi, Lauren Jarvi, Mitch Gordon, Pam Smart, Kim Achilles, and the Channel 7 news team.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wakeham at 7:00 PM. After the flag salute, the minutes of the meeting of October 14 were approved as presented (Handy/Quatrini).

Dale Urie introduced Eric Berry, the newly appointed Recreation Director, who will take over upon the retirement of Michael Johnson in December.

Zoning Bylaws – Priscilla Messier

Zoning administrator Priscilla Messier presented three areas of proposed zone changes that had previously been reviewed by the zoning board and discussed at public hearings.

1. West side of Old Center Road – change to Commercial, from North property line of the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery and following westerly property line of same, and former Boardman Farm, to its intersection with so-called Hospital Connector including Farm Stand. The Board voted unanimously to adopt the zoning revision as presented (Handy/Quatrini).
2. East side of Old Center Road – in a 4-1 vote, the Board voted to adopt the changes as presented. Dale Urie voted no. This includes from the intersection with Memorial Drive to the existing highway commercial parcel owned by Cohens. Concern centered around the use of the lower field abutting the Passumpsic River, and future flooding of said area.
3. Passumpsic Street at the corner of Tremont, to St. John Street, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the change in commercial zoning to include the so-called Thurston Homestead, with the minor adjustment to the new zone retaining approximately 10,000 sq. ft. adjacent to the Rowena Drown property as R-B. (Handy/Quatrini). The remainder of the description was accepted as presented.

Zoning Bylaw update – Concerning some specific changes that have been proposed for the zoning bylaws, the Board discussed the necessity of specifying “back yard” for storage of registered boats, trailers, or motor vehicles. A side yard might be just as appropriate, as long as the storage was not directly in front of the house. Gib Handy suggested inserting a variance that would cover “within property lines”. No vote was taken on the matter. Priscilla also reported that some changes in zoning have come into effect from state regulations, which added sections to cover convenient stores, mini marts, etc. Also, on-site sewer systems will have mandatory changes due to new state regulations.

The Design Review Committee is proposing to expand the design control district.

Priscilla presented copies of maps that have been prepared to reflect some zone changes, and to show where zone lines have been placed to follow property lines to avoid confusion in designating zones for specific properties.

Vermont Community Development Program

Planning Grant – Joel Schwarz, Alison Meaders, and David Weed presented a planning grant application to cover the expenses of a downtown coordinator for the year 2003. The position would operate from the St. Johnsbury Works program, a non-profit 501C3 designation that has been developed to promote the organization, economic development, promotion and design of the designated downtown area. The Town is requested to commit \$10,000 matching funds to help support the St. Johnsbury Works program. On a motion by Gib Handy and seconded by Bryon Quatrini, the Board voted unanimously to commit the \$10,000 funds from the Town and approve the grant application.

St. Johnsbury Athenaeum Implementation Grant

Mr. Welch presented a request from the Athenaeum for the Town to apply on their behalf for an implementation grant of approximately \$40,000 that will allow them to install an elevator inside the building and make it completely handicap accessible. The Board voted unanimously to support the application (Quatrini/Urie).

Tenant self sufficiency program – NEKCA

Pam Smart and Mitch Gordon reported to the Board that NEKCA needs the support of the Town in applying for grant monies to support the tenant self-sufficiency program. This program is designed to assist disadvantaged people in finding and keeping an apartment, with the help of follow up visits and assistance in caring for property and keeping a job that will allow them to maintain independent living. The Board was assured that NEKCA does not extend this financial support to homeless and unemployed persons from other states or areas outside of the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. After extensive discussion of how this program will work, the Board indicated they would review each grant application and express their support for individual applications based upon how the program is progressing.

Needle Exchange Program – VT Cares

Mike Welch presented a memo from Paul Bengtson indicating he is currently working on answers to all the previous questions the Board presented on the needle exchange program.

Kendall Farrell, Penni Cleverly and Amy Livingston indicated to the Board they are setting up more informational meetings with the local PTG, NVRH Board, Community Health Commission, other health groups, churches, local organizations, etc. Members of the Board indicated they are still concerned that the informational meetings are coming “after the fact”. Reasons were reviewed for choosing St. Johnsbury for this project. The Board raised the question of number of patients (7 or 8, including one from New Hampshire and one from Orleans County); the rate of people using or seeking treatment, statistics issued from the State and how they affect the overall perception of the Northeast Kingdom, Does this program replace other strategies, and why? They also wanted to look at the effects of a purely one on one exchange, and look at other local programs and how they have worked.

Russ Hutchins – Possible Australian Ballot on budget.

Russ Hutchins presented a request for Australian Balloting for all budget issues, rather than the current town meeting format. Mr. Hutchins suggested that some of the perceived voter apathy is the result of inability to attend the town meeting when held in the evening. The meeting time is unavailable to people who work nights, elderly who are unable to travel after dark, and young parents who would need to get baby sitters. General discussion centered around whether the Town’s charter would allow for a change in voting, and how the change could be accomplished. It was suggested that particular wording of a petition should come from the Secretary of State’s office.

Gib Handy observed that, if the entire budget issue were voted with a yes/no vote on Tuesday, there would be no opportunity to discuss line items and revise any section of the budget. If the budget were voted down, it would take some time and money to revise and bring the matter to the voters a second time. Sandy Grenier indicated agreement with Mr. Handy, and noted that attendance at Town Meeting will vary from 400 to 800 attendees, and that is the only time the public has the opportunity to actually change the budget. General consensus was the Board needs more input to decide on putting the question on the ballot. Mr. Welch said he would put it on the agenda for the next meeting, and Town Clerk Sandy Grenier said she would try to get more input from the Secretary of State’s office.

Manager's Report

Mr. Welch reported that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, November 12, 2002, rather than Monday because of Veterans' Day.

Several employees currently have mandatory withholding from paychecks, which costs the Town to accommodate. On a motion by Elwin Cross, seconded by Dale Urie, the Board voted unanimously to charge the employees with mandatory withholding a \$5.00 per month fee for this service.

Mr. Welch reported that there has been controversy over the first three parking places on the East Side of Pearl Street at the corner of Eastern Avenue. He indicated that the first space has been removed from service, and John Gebbie from St. Jay Hardware had requested that the other two spaces also be removed from service, as it minimizes the amount of space for backing out of his parking lot at the store. After some discussion, on a motion by Elwin Cross, seconded by Dale Urie, the Board voted unanimously to take the first parking space out of service, but keep the second and third space in service.

Dale Urie reported on activities that the "Community of Concern" has been organizing, and that the organization will be celebrating its first anniversary at the December 2 meeting.

Respectfully submitted _____, Ida W. Rainville, Executive Secretary