

**Town of St. Albans
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 15th, 2021
6:30 p.m.**

On Monday, November 15th, 2021 at 6:30 p.m., the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met at Town Hall.

Officials and Staff: Chair Brendan Deso, Vice Chair Jessica Frost, Erin Creley, Jonathan Giroux, Bryan DesLauriers, Director of Public Works Alan Mashtare, Director of Operations Corey Parent, and Town Manager Carrie Johnson. Also present was Hunter Gomez, Project Manager for the new Town Hall project.

Staff participating via Zoom: Executive Assistant Jenn Gray.

Public Participation via Zoom: Franklin County Sheriff Roger Langevin, Dr. Jennifer Williamson, Amanda Giroux, VTDigger Reporter Shaun Robinson, St. Albans Messenger Reporter Josh Ellerbrock, Barbara Finch, and Alan Cunningham.

B. Deso called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

General Warrant

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the general warrant dated November 12th, 2021 in the amount of \$112,341.50. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Payroll

MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to approve the payroll warrants dated November 5th, 2021 in the amount of \$20,327.36 and November 12th, 2021 in the amount of \$20,496.72. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Stormwater Utility Warrant

Prior to approval of this warrant, B. Deso explained that C. Johnson did some research and the Town Attorney concluded it was not necessary for the Selectboard to recess the Selectboard meeting and convene as the Stormwater Utility in order to make any motions for the utility. The Stormwater Utility warrant was to pay Aldrich and Elliot for the Tanglewood stormwater treatment design.

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Stormwater Utility Warrant dated November 15th, 2021 in the amount of \$4,301. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Impact Fee Warrant

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Impact Fee warrant dated November 15th, 2021 in the amount of \$130,000. Seconded by B. DesLauriers. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Industrial Development Warrant

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Industrial Park warrant dated November 15th, 2021 in the amount of \$687.80. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Infrastructure Development Warrant

B. Deso explained that the Infrastructure Development warrant the Board needed to approve was different from the one they received in their packets. The pre-buy for propane with Blouin Brothers in the amount of \$40,000 was mistakenly charged to the Infrastructure Development account. The Board made a motion to approve the warrant, less \$40,000 to be charged to the general fund.

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Infrastructure Development warrant dated November 15th, 2021 in the amount of \$256,263.69. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Blouin Brothers Pre-Buy – General Warrant

B. Deso asked the Board to make a motion authorizing the Town Manager and Town Clerk to pay the Blouin Brothers propane pre-buy in the amount of \$40,000 on the general fund warrant as noted in the purchase orders.

MOTION: J. Frost made a motion to authorize the Town Manager and the Town Clerk to pay the Blouin Brothers propane pre-buy in the amount of \$40,000 from the general fund. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Minutes

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Selectboard meeting minutes from Monday, November 1st, 2021 and Monday, October 18th, 2021 and as presented. Seconded by E Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Northwest Communication Union District – Seeking Nominees

This board meetings once a month. J. Frost suggested posting an ad on Facebook to generate interest. C. Johnson volunteered to attend these meetings until the Board appoints someone.

Town Manager's Report

Police Services Update – Roger Langevin – Franklin County Sheriff

Sheriff Langevin came before the Board to provide his monthly update. He explained that the department has received 3 Dodge Durango's and they are waiting on equipment to be added to each vehicle. He did take possession of 2 Dodge Challengers for Town patrols. Those vehicles will be outfitted after the Durango's.

Sheriff Langevin explained some personnel issues the department has had recently. Three deputies lost their fathers all in the same week. Two deputies have gone through the level 2 certification, but then decided patrol work wasn't for them. However, they are staying with the office in another capacity. A couple more deputies made it through the training and are waiting for the final classes through the academy.

Sheriff Langevin explained that there were a couple of medical issues within the department. One employee is working through a cardiac issue and is on light duty. Another had back surgery and is also on light duty.

Sheriff Langevin explained that he attended the most recent Police Advisory Committee (PAC) and the policing survey was discussed. The survey did display some quality of life issues, but most residents were concerned with burglaries, noise complaints, and speeding. Some residents had shared that getting in touch with the Sheriff's Office was difficult and Sheriff Langevin explained that they are working on better communication between the residents and Sheriff's office. An open house had been suggested, but with COVID, that is on the back burner. Sheriff Langevin would like to participate in some of the town events held at the Bay Park, like the farmer's market, once or twice a month. He suggested setting up a tent where people can meet different deputies and share their questions or concerns with them.

Regarding the Policing Survey, Dr. Jennifer Williamson explained that some people are complaining about speeding tickets and other people are complaining about speeding. The PAC did discuss with Sheriff Langevin at their last meeting how they could take some information from the community. The PAC can be contacted through the Town's website. Dr. Williamson went on to say that the survey had mostly positive feedback.

J. Frost suggested the PAC do quarterly updates with the Sheriff, a joint update for the Selectboard. Both Dr. Williams and Sheriff Langevin agreed. The PAC would provide updates quarterly and provide information with the Sheriff.

Town Hall Update – Hunter Gomez – Project Manager

Hunter Gomez came before the Board to provide them an update on the Town Hall construction process. Walls are up and trusses will be next. The roof should be on before next in the next couple of weeks. The site work has been put to bed for the time being with grass seed growing. Storm drains in and sidewalks will be in this week. Mr. Gomez continued and said that the windows will be here early next month. All of this will make the town hall weather tight around Christmas.

Mr. Gomez explained that we're doing quite well and are on target with the budget. There were a couple of additions to the contingency line. The vault storage has been secured, but with an overage from when we originally priced it. \$4,000 hit the contingency line for that and \$515 for the security access control contract with Integrity Communications.

Mr. Gomez asked the Board to start thinking of some potential names for the conference rooms by first meeting in December as well as a design for the frosted sliding glass door on the large boardroom. That work would be subcontracted through DEW.

Mr. Gomez stated that by the end of April, 2022 the new Town Hall should be up and running.

Regional Priorities

C. Johnson explained she was looking for consensus from the Board regarding regional priorities for the Town. Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) and FCIDC have generated a list of priorities for the region. C. Johnson asked the Board what priorities they wanted to see on the list. C. Johnson stated that we need to add St. Albans Bay Wastewater project to the list. J. Frost suggested revamping the Stone House into a year round event space. E. Creley stated that she didn't see anything on the list for regional bike/pedestrian and public transportation. C. Johnson explained that when she spoke to Cathy Lavoie regarding projects, Ms. Lavoie suggested adding projects that have already been studied or things we have actually received some information on. J. Frost pointed out that we do already have the Route 7 Study. E. Creley asked if there was another list they curate that has more long term, like 10 or 20 year plans or goals for the regional. C. Johnson stated that she was not aware of anything, but that this was progress, trying to work together with our regional partners. She continued by saying she will add that the Town supports a regional initiative of long term plans and goals.

Industrial Park Street Light Discussion

C. Johnson explained she met with Tim Smith to discuss the FCIDC grant to install more lighting in the Industrial park at the entrance to Ben and Jerry's. The electrician had suggested to Mr. Smith that he reach out to the us to see if we would be interested in putting in additional lighting. They are putting in more than 20 lights after the Ben and Jerry's entrance, in the new section. From the entrance of Ben & Jerry's to the rotary, there are no lights at all. The electrician suggested 10 lights between the rotary and the new gate.

C. Johnson explained that the estimate is about \$3,500 per light, without labor. We do have an industrial park account with \$20,000 that we can use. We can also bill back to the industrial park tenants if we choose to install more lights. B. Deso suggested identifying the scope, how many lights we want to do and exactly where, and then get a hard quote. The Board suggested 6 lights added to the small section of the industrial park. C. Johnson stated that she will ask the electrician if he would be willing to install 2 or 3 lights in the section that leads out to Nason Street while he's doing the lights for the section near Ben and Jerry's.

Belongingness, Equity, and Inclusion Consideration

B. Deso explained that the recommendation from staff was to hire a consultant to address deficiencies and develop a plan on how to fix them. He went on to explain that in the last draft budget there was \$5,000 under the Selectboard section for special projects. B. Deso stated that he and J. frost have a meeting Friday, November 19th with the Vermont Partnership on Fairness and Diversity, led by Curtis Reed.

J. Frost explained that she had met with Mr. Reed about a year ago and he explained a little bit about the process of working with a municipality. It is a long term plan, a 10 year plan. You start with creating the Town's Mission and Vision Statement. Once the Selectboard agrees to work with the consultant, we stay out of it and let the community lead it. Through that whole process, they make the Mission and Vision Statement, there is training, and then they make a strategic plan. They set the standards that benefit the entire community. The community drives the work. J. Frost said that Mr. Reed explained to her a committee is crucial to make sure this work is seen through. There has to be some sustainable methods set up for a committee to follow.

J. Frost shared some statics from Amy Brewer, who works in Public Health at Northwestern Medical Center regarding youth in the community. One of the questions asked was, "Do you feel like you matter to your community"? 60% of heterosexual high schoolers said yes. Only 25% of LGBTQ high schoolers said yes. This age group is more likely to attempt suicide. J. Frost went on to say that some people would argue that this is a school issue or that this is not a role for the Town. Our job is to make this a community a place where people want to move or people want to stay. As a Town, we need to think about why people feel they don't belong, why they feel that they need to leave, and if that doesn't speak to the Board, you can also think about the economic driver. The fastest growing population in this county is youth and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). We want them to come here, start businesses, stay here, and contribute to the Town.

J. Frost finished by saying that she feels this is something very important and it is something we should work on. She stated that there needs to be a committee, but we need to decide on when to put the committee in place and how to set it up so the committee will be successful for the long run.

E. Creley asked J. Frost, with talking to Curtis Reed, or whoever, if we go forward with a consultant, wondering if they can provide some initial guidance on how to best support and start a committee. The guidance may be something we use for any future committees and help us learn how to foster engagement and longevity with a community group. J. Frost agreed to ask that at her meeting on Friday. She also encouraged others to join the meeting on Friday, November 19th at 9am.

B. DesLauriers read a prepared statement. "Discussing equity and equality can be a very emotional topic to speak about publicly. This can make it difficult to truly listen to others' perspectives, especially when someone hears just a single piece of information that differs from their opinion and then assumes that person's ideas must be the polar opposite to their own. If we are going to make progress on any issue, we must listen and consider different options that best fit the Town of St. Albans".

"I believe both personally and that the sentiments of the a lot of the Town residents that he has spoken to want St. Albans to be an inclusive community that creates a sense of belonging. Of course this makes sense from an economic growth standpoint, but even more importantly, it is the ethical, right thing to do...to be inviting and inclusive".

"While I, and likely all of us agree that we ought to focus on creating an even more inclusive community, we may disagree on how best to accomplish this. Before we automatically assume the only answer is a new committee, we ought to explore the expected work of a committee and explore alternate options for creating solutions. Before we can design a specific solution, we need to identify what the problems with specificity. What are examples of specific inequities and bias that are in purview of the municipal government? I am not saying that there are none. However, we need specifics, so we as a Selectboard can discuss and design an effective solution. That solution may include a dedicated long term committee or it may not".

"If there were a committee, how would the committee operate? Would it be reviewing the work of the other committees? Would it be advising/reviewing decisions of the Selectboard? What types of questions would it be trying to solve"?

"If we need our zoning laws and ordinances reviewed for any existing bias, would a new committee be most effective? Could it be more effective to have existing and new members of the Planning Commission review those laws if we were directed to do so? If we need new development and future development reviewed for existing bias, wouldn't existing or new members of the DRB be more effective if directed to do so"?

"What issues that are actually in the purview of the municipal government of the Town would the committee plan to tackle"?

"Would it be more efficient for residents of the Town to join existing committees and get their input and perspectives directly in those committees? I would hope that residents who are willing to do the work of a BEI committee would also be willing to offer their time, efforts, and valuable perspectives to the important existing committees, many of which need more members".

"No matter what the direction of this Selectboard decides to pursue next, I would recommend that we discuss adopting some kind of Declaration of Inclusion similar to the declaration adopted in the Town of Franklin. Further, I would strongly encourage any resident to join any existing committees that have open seats".

E. Creley stated that if we do end up working with a consultant in come capacity, the questions that B. DesLauriers had asked are questions that a consultant can help us navigate because we are not the first town to consider those questions.

J. Giroux stated that he really wants to make sure that this is done right. We should put out an RFP (Request for Proposal) to get different views from different consultants. B. Deso stated that we need to identify costs and then cost will inform timeline. C. Parent stated that the funds would be pulled from the "Engineering/Consulting" line (under the Town Manager's budget).

J. Frost stated that one of the first steps will be to craft the Mission and Vision Statement, or making a statement for the Town. Even if we don't have an official committee started, we can ask people to start sending their names to Carrie Johnson now, just to start a list of people who might be interested. That way, when we start going on this, we'll have people ready to call in. C. Johnson asked that people send Jenn Gray letters of interest to her email.

This topic will be added to the agenda for the December 6th meeting.

**Act 250 Permit Amendment
Pizzagalli Properties, LLC**

Informational only, no action required.

Sand Pile for Residents

C. Johnson explained to the Board that we used to allow residents to get sand from the sand pile at the old salt site. We don't want residents doing that now, in the current situation because it's not safe. We are proposing to put some concrete blocks near the entrance at the former Department of Public Works (DPW) garage and putting a private sand pile and stockpile of sand. People could

pull off the side of the road and fill a bucket. This way we won't have people wandering around an active construction site, or a commercial site.

B. DesLauriers asked if there was another access to the DPW site if the blocks are at the main entrance. C. Johnson stated that there is access from the site of the new town hall that DEW is currently using. We may put a small roof over the pile to keep the rain off of it.

B. Deso asked if there was any cost to setting the sand pile up. A. Mashtare said that the blocks won't cost us anything. Harrison Concrete used them for bracing on the new town hall and gave the blocks to use. If we do a little shed roof, it would be a few 2 x 4's and some tin. Haven't priced it out yet, just wanted to know what the Board was thinking about this.

B. Deso wondered if the fire department would be able to access the former DPW site if there was a fire. A. Mashtare stated that they can access the site from Wharf Street. C. Johnson stated that we can ask Bob Cross (Fire Chief) before putting the blocks in. A. Mashtare explained that the whole idea was to avoid from having people pulling onto the site and dumping stuff. He's already had 5 people asking when they can pick up sand.

J. Giroux asked why we wouldn't put the sand pile on the Brigham Road. C. Johnson stated that we didn't want it out front where there is a manicured lawn and a large sign. People were trained to go to the old DPW site to the salt shed. J. Giroux stated that he just sees it as another spot for people to put stuff, back right in and throw some junk out. C. Johnson stated that they didn't think the Board would want a large pile of dirt in front of the new garage. J. Giroux suggested putting the sand pile next to the new salt shed. C. Johnson stated that we don't want people in front of any of the bay doors. We just found an abandoned car there a month or two ago. J. Giroux stated that we should just keep everything in the same spot. C. Johnson stated that we don't want people driving past the office area of the new garage and blocking the bay doors or in the salt/sand shed for insurance and security reasons.

The Board was in consensus to do the proposed sand pile at the former DPW site for this year.

Schedule

The next regular Selectboard meetings are Monday, December 6th and Monday, December 20th at 6:30 p.m. Budget meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 22nd at 5:30 p.m. Public hearing on the VTrans grant same night.

Chair's Report

None.

Other Business

None.

Executive Session

MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to go into executive session at 8:06 p.m. to discuss legal, contractual or personnel issues where premature general public knowledge of the subject matter would place the Town (or person involved) at a substantial disadvantage. It was further moved to enter into executive session to discuss legal, contractual or personnel issues under the provisions of Title 1, section 313(a)(1) of Vermont Statutes and to invite in Town Manager, Carrie Johnson. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: J. Frost made a motion to come out of executive session at 8:18 p.m. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Adjournment

MOTION: B. DesLauriers made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 8:35 p.m. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenn Gray Executive Assistant