

**Town of St. Albans  
Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
6:30 p.m.**

On Monday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 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, Facilities Manager John Montagne, and Town Manager Carrie Johnson.

**Staff participating via Zoom:** Director of Operations Corey Parent, Town Clerk Anna Bourdon, and Executive Assistant Jenn Gray.

**Public Participation via Zoom:** Amanda Giroux, Al Voegele, Janet Bailey and Lisa Evans from the St. Albans Museum, VT Digger reporter Shaun Robinson, St. Albans Messenger Reporter Josh Ellerbrock, and Marilyn Grunewald.

B. Deso called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Agenda Amendment**

B. Deso requested a motion to amend the agenda to include the new Town Hall Promissory Note.

**MOTION: B. DesLauriers made a motion to amend the agenda to add the new Town Hall Promissory Note. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**General Warrant**

**MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the general warrant dated December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in the amount of \$70,600.62. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Payroll**

**MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to approve the payroll warrants dated December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in the amount of \$63,511.76 and December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in the amount of \$27,701.06. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

Payments in lieu of health insurance were paid on the December 10<sup>th</sup> payroll.

**Stormwater Utility Warrant**

**MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Stormwater Utility warrant dated December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in the amount of \$9,102.50. Seconded by B. DesLauriers. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Infrastructure Development Warrant**

**MOTION: B. DesLauriers made a motion to approve the Infrastructure Development warrant dated December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in the amount of \$15,151.56. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Industrial Development Warrant**

**MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Industrial Park warrant dated December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in the amount of \$599.32. 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, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 as presented. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Warrants & Minutes = 3 minutes**

**Public Comment**

None.

**Northwest Regional Planning Commission Appointment**

Al Voegele explained that he met with Marietta Scholten and she expressed interest in joining the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). Ms. Scholten is a physician, a critical thinker, has experience working with people, and is very knowledgeable with regards to the

health care industry. Mr. Voegelé continued by saying that Ms. Scholten can help us better understand why the hospital is such a critical business to keep in Franklin County.

**MOTION: B. DesLauriers made a motion to appoint Marietta Scholten to the Northwest Regional Planning Commission for a term expiring at the end of April, 2022. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**NRPC = 3 minutes**

### **St. Albans Museum Presentation**

President of the Board of Trustees for the St. Albans Museum (SAM) Janet Baily came before the Board, via Zoom, to go over the town budget request. She went over the following:

- SAM was closed to the public from EOY 2019 to July 2, 2021
- In July 2020, the American Association of Museums reported that 1 out of every 3 museums in the US would likely close their doors for good as a result of the negative economic impact from the pandemic
- SAM's annual operational budget is \$175,000 - the minimum amount necessary to keep the museum operational
- The current SAM Board of Trustees has 10 members: 6 St. Albans Town residents, 2 City residents, 1 from Swanton, and 1 from Fairfax
- In an effort to reduce costs, SAM shifted from a FT ED to PT, an annual cost savings of \$20,000
- SAM qualified for Federal PPP loans: \$11,000 in 2020 and \$7000 in 2021 with the amounts based on FTE salaries. Both loan amounts have been forgiven
- SAM conducted in house assessments as well as one from Efficiency Vermont to find ways to save money. The findings will create a savings of almost \$10,000 over the next several years
- SAM applied for and received two grants to conduct building and collections storage assessments - the necessary repairs and upgrades to the circa 1861 building. The repair priority list includes: The slate roof, cupola, exterior brick work, front steps, windows, and HVAC systems – estimated total cost approximately \$200,000. We applied for and continue to apply for grants from organizations such as Preservation Trust of Vermont, to pay for these issues
- The north chimney required immediate attention after it was discovered to be leaking water onto the Bliss Room stage. The original cost estimate was \$35,000, we were able to have it completed in November 2021 for \$20,000. The funds came directly from our operational budget
- After reopening, SAM welcomed visitors from our local area as well as 22 other states
- Our 25 active volunteers (including trustees, docents, building maintenance crew, and collections, research, and accessions volunteers) worked over 3450 hours in 2021, a year when the building was closed to volunteers for several months
- In addition to grant funding, SAM received over \$40,000 from two private donors alone

Ms. Bailey explained the ongoing challenges to the Board:

- An almost fully-volunteer staff is not sufficient to carry out the number of community programs, events and day-to-day activities of the museum
- Museums play a vital role in the local tourism industry but SAM cannot participate 9 months of the year and only a part-time role during the open-season without staff
- A large part of the SAM building lacks heating, cooling, and safe air ventilation
- The thousands of artifacts in the museum collection currently reside in improper and unsafe collection storage areas with no light, temperature, or humidity control
- Whether local or federal, grant opportunities are highly competitive. Many are “match-grants” that require the receiving organization to have funds on hand in order to be awarded additional funding.

Ms. Bailey stated that SAM is requesting the Town increase their annual contribution from \$15,000 to \$25,000. The \$25,000 would be spent on the following items:

- Routine Operation
- Educational Programming including Lake Lessons
- Bliss Room Community Utilization (more use by nonprofit and community organizations)

- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion efforts
- Collections Management and Exhibition
- Staff Expansion
- Necessary building repairs (grant match funds)

Ms. Bailey finished her presentation by adding that SAM's ultimate goal is to grow their membership base and increase their revenue through unrestricted, year-round admission, programming, and events. As stewards of our local history and heritage, SAM strives to expand its presence in the community as well as creating a welcoming space for the community within the museum. They seek to be fully accessible, inclusionary, and wholly representative of St. Albans past, present, and future. They aspire to inspire curiosity for all ages. They desire the capacity to be environmentally conscious. Through these core initiatives, they aim to demonstrate our value to St. Albans and to grow our financial self-sufficiency through sustainable practices.

B. DesLauriers asked if SAM had requested any support from the Maple Run Unified School District. Ms. Bailey explained that they had approached both the school and library and was not successful in obtaining support in either case.

Mr. Voegelé followed up by saying the most important thing is saving the building. It hasn't been kept up and the annual donation of \$25,000 will help take the stress of the operating expenses. One of the things the building desperately needs is temperature control to protect and save the artifacts that are currently in the museum.

B. Deso explained he spoke to the City of St. Albans and they agreed to increase their support if the Town would match them dollar for dollar.

B. DesLauriers asked if the \$25,000 is going to be a sustainable help or will it just keep the museum afloat. A. Voegelé explained that SAM has been draining their capital funds and the museum is not operational independent. Inflation is part of the problem, but SAM is not attracting enough income. It is a public service and funding should default to the municipalities who benefit from it to help keep the museum operational. B. Deso stated the \$25,000 will not solve the issue overnight and SAM will need to continue applying for after grants.

J. Frost asked how smaller towns manage their museums? Ms. Bailey explained most small towns don't have a museum the caliber of what we have. Most towns just have a Historical Society.

Marilyn Grunewald explained that years ago, she wrote grants for the museum. She visited museums all over the State of Vermont, particularly to find out how other museums were funded, what was happening in those towns, and how it was supported. Ms. Grunewald continued by saying that the Bennington Museum writes grants and has a lot of large donors, but they don't have the artifacts that SAM has. SAM plays a huge part in, not only the community, but in our schools too. Maybe someday, down the road, the schools will be able to include SAM in their budgets.

A. Voegelé explained Colchester owns two buildings; one is the Colchester Historical Society headquarters and it owns that building and pays for all the expense for that building. It also built, owns, and pays for all the expenses for the schoolhouse on Airport Park. Services are provided by the volunteers of the Colchester Historical Society. C. Johnsons stated it is similar in the Town of Georgia.

E. Creley asked if the \$10,000 would be in addition to our budget or would we need to fine tune the budget to find the \$10,000? B. Deso stated that is a conversation for us to have at our next budget work session.

C. Johnson explained this will be added to the budget work session agenda for January 10<sup>th</sup>.

**SAM = 34 minutes**

### **New Town Hall Promissory Note**

A. Bourdon explained she shopped around with several banks regarding municipal loans. All were offering pretty much the same rates. People's Trust is local and has treated us right over the years. B. Deso pointed out that we are not raising property taxes to fund this note. A. Bourdon stated that there isn't a pre-payment penalties for paying it off early either.

B. Deso explained that we need a motion to approve the Promissory Note with loan number 74534, a Disbursement Request and Authorization with loan number 74534 in the principal amount of \$2.5 million with a loan date of December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a Business Loan Agreement

with loan number 74534, and a Municipal Corporate Banking Resolution to authorize the Town Clerk and Treasurer and Assistant Town Clerk to do the banking related to this loan. A. Bourdon stated that the \$2.5 million the Town voters voted on is coming out of the Local Option Tax (LOT) fund and not the tax rate. B. DesLauriers summarized by confirming with A. Bourdon that this is for \$2.5 million, a 10 year loan, we make annual payments, the rate is fixed at 2.85%, it doesn't move unless we don't make a payment on time, and there is no pre-payment penalty. A. Bourdon confirmed this to be the case.

**MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the approve the Promissory Note with loan number 74534, a Disbursement Request and Authorization with loan number 74534 in the principal amount of \$2.5 million with a loan date of December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a Business Loan Agreement with loan number 74534, and a Municipal Corporate Banking Resolution to authorize the Town Clerk and Treasurer and Assistant Town Clerk to do the banking related to this loan. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Promissory Note = 6 minutes**

### **Town Manager's Report Mill River bay Hockey Tournament Proposed**

C. Johnson explained that this is the first project going through the Project Review, Event Budget Approval, and Event Approval process. She requested feedback from the Board on the forms being used. The tournament is scheduled for February 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. B. DesLauriers said that it looks like we are expecting 12 teams. If there are more or less teams, will we be OK. John Montagne explained that with 12 teams we will break even on this event. B. DesLauriers asked if we get closer to the date and we don't have the teams, would it be possible to move the tournament back a week? The weekend of the 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> is the first round of the state tournament for hockey. J. Montagne explained that the tournament hasn't been marketed yet and dates will be discussed again at the weekly Wednesday meeting.

E. Creley asked where the Zamboni will be stored. J. Montagne explained that currently it is at the Town garage. A. Mashtare explained we can keep the Zamboni in the Stone House, but because there is no water in the Stone House in the winter, we'll have to fill the Zamboni with portable tanks. A. Mashtare continued by saying that if the Zamboni needs maintenance, we can put it on a trailer and take it up to the DPW (Department of Public Works) garage where it is heated. Maintenance will be performed on the Zamboni a couple of times a week.

E. Creley asked what was being done about a contingency planning for COVID. J. Montagne stated we are doing contact tracing and the event will be held outside. Something may be done with masks and we will be following what the schools and other hockey leagues are doing.

C. Johnson stated that once the hockey rink is up and operational, it will be shared on the Town's social media platforms.

**Hockey = 11 minutes**

### **Equity and Inclusion Discussion Continued**

C. Johnson stated the Board had requested this discussion be added to this meeting. She explained she was thinking about how to get on to the next step without spending 30 to 40 minutes at each meeting trying to figure out how to move forward. There needs to be a more productive and creative atmosphere to have this discussion. Selectboard meetings are intended to have a 10-15 minute, very brief executive summary discussion. C. Johnson suggested a subcommittee at a different time from a Selectboard meeting. Possibly one or two Selectboard members could start a committee and meet separately. Committees move forward by hiring a consultant or volunteers moving it forward.

E. Creley suggested a publicly warned meeting that may make it easier for community members to commit their time and allow them to voice their opinions. Having a subcommittee with the goal of reviewing the Local Solutions and Community Action or the Municipal Engagement for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion documents would be more beneficial if a member of staff was there to provide us with some insight into things that may have happened that we are not necessarily aware of. Then, the committee could make recommendations for the next year, provide a time line, and things we could work on. E. Creley went on to say she may be able to commit to sometime in January or February if there are others interested in doing a subcommittee for this conversation. C. Johnson explained that before anyone commits their time, the Selectboard has at least 3 meetings in January, possibly 4. J. Frost expressed her interest in being on a subcommittee. If the meetings could be held via Zoom, that would be very convenient.



B. Deso suggested a special Selectboard meeting in February to discuss this and invite the Planning Commission and staff. Solicit feedback. He suggested tentatively a meeting for February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. B. DesLauriers suggested having an agenda created ahead of time. E. Creley suggested someone to facilitate the meeting so as not to get “into the weeds”. J. Frost suggested a spreadsheet with all 12 items from the Municipal Engagement for Diversity, Equity, and inclusion document and highlight them in different colors to prioritizing the items.

**Equity = 17 minutes**

**Act 250 Notice of Initial Application Filing – Cadillac Properties, LLC**

Informational only, no action required.

**Act 250 Land use Permit Amendment – City of St. Albans**

Informational only, no action required.

**Act 250 = 1 minute**

**Schedule**

The next regular Selectboard meetings are Monday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 and Wednesday, January 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. A budget work session is scheduled for January, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. Holiday Office Closures: Thursday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> closing at noon. Closed on Friday, December 24<sup>th</sup>. Thursday, December 30<sup>th</sup> closing at noon. Closed on Friday December 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Schedule = 1 minute**

**Chair’s Report**

None.

**Other Business**

**Vermont Council on Rural Development**

J. Frost explained that a few years ago, the Selectboard signed a letter asking the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) for a community visit. They reached out to J. Frost asking if the Town was ready for them to do their visit. What the visit entails is that they will come to the Town of St. Albans and facilitate community conversation. They come back and present what they heard. There is voting by the community on what the top three most important issues are to them. Then committees are formed. Once the committees are formed, VCRD will bring in resources, State and Federal experts to help move projects forward. They will also help with grant writing. J. Frost continued stating that we put in a letter with the City of St. Albans to do it jointly. VCRD would like to do an overview for the Town and the City at the same time. This is being scheduled for January 26<sup>th</sup> over Zoom. C. Johnson reminded the Board that they may have to have a meeting that week to discuss the budget and/or questions for Town Meeting. That is going to be our priority. If you’re willing to schedule another meeting, that may be your fourth or fifth of the month.

B. Deso suggested pushing this out to April because of Omicron fears. J. Frost explained that VCRD has been doing these meetings virtually for communities. She stated that she doesn’t want to delay this for too long because we are at the top of the list right now. If don’t do this now, we may have to wait another couple of years. C. Johnson stated that we have waited almost 3 years. J. Frost stated that if no one else would like to attend, she can attend on her own and report back to the Board. C. Johnson stated that this sounds like strategic planning, so the Selectboard should be clear about whether they support this and whether you would attend this meeting on behalf of the Selectboard or as a citizen. The Board agreed to the January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**VCRD = 8 minutes**

**Adjournment**

**MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 8:02 p.m. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jenn Gray Executive Assistant