

**Town of St. Albans
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 6th, 2021
6:00 p.m.**

On Monday, December 6th, 2021 at 6 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 Operations Corey Parent, and Town Manager Carrie Johnson.

Chair B. Deso called the Selectboard meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Selectboard started their meeting with an executive session to discuss a contractual matter.

Executive Session

MOTION: B. DesLauriers made a motion to go into executive session at 6:00 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 Director of Operations Corey Parent and Town Manager Carrie Johnson. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to come out of executive session at 6:25 p.m. and recess the Selectboard meeting until 6:30 p.m. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Regular Meeting – 6:30 p.m.

Officials and Staff: Chair Brendan Deso, Vice Chair Jessica Frost, 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 Town Hall project.

Staff participating via Zoom: Erin Creley, Town Clerk Anna Bourdon, and Executive Assistant Jenn Gray.

Public Participation via Zoom: Steve Deal, Amanda Giroux, St. Albans Messenger Reporter Josh Ellerbrock, Joseph Connelly, VT Digger reporter Shaun Robinson, Jack (no last name), and Pizzutillo (no first name).

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 St. Albans Bay Area Sewer Feasibility Study.

Motion: J. Giroux made a motion to amend the agenda to add the St. Albans Bay Area Sewer Feasibility Study. Seconded by B. DesLauriers. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

General Warrant

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the general warrant dated December 6th, 2021 in the amount of \$127,294.28. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Payroll

MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to approve the payroll warrants dated November 19th, 2021 in the amount of \$22,563.50, November 26th, 2021 in the amount of \$37,351.51, and December 3^d, 2021 in the amount of \$20,255.00. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Industrial Development Warrant

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Industrial Park warrant dated December 6th, 2021 in the amount of \$2,185.68. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Infrastructure Development Warrant

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Infrastructure Development warrant dated December 6th, 2021 in the amount of \$349,548.61. Seconded by B. DesLauriers. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Minutes

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Selectboard meeting minutes from Monday, November 15th, 2021 and the Selectboard special meeting minutes of Monday, November 22nd, 2021 as presented. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Selectboard special meeting minutes from Monday, November 8th, 2021 as presented. Seconded by B. DesLauriers. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Public Comment

Town resident Amanda Giroux addressed the Board regarding the Belongingness, Equity, and Inclusion committee. As a Town resident, she explained that she is interested in learning what the issues are in Town. She explained that she's lived here all her life and feels that this is a welcoming town. For her to hear that people are not feeling welcomed here doesn't sit right with her. She continued by saying that after some of the things she has heard or read on social media, in regards to the public meeting on the 16th, she's not sure that the Town should provide resources for such a committee. Ms. Giroux explained that there was a certain person preaching for this committee on social media, telling people that the public meeting is for a community conversation, that people of a certain race or religion do not need to be heard and that the meeting for the community conversation is just for the marginalized. Ms. Giroux went on to say that she's not sure who this person is representing or speaking on behalf of when they come to this Selectboard meeting, but in doing so and trying to exclude people is just that, excluding. If the person pushing for this committee is going to have others with the same points of view and want to segregate themselves, they should have their own group, but it should not be funded by the Town.

Northwest Communication Union District – Seeking Nominees

B. DesLauriers mentioned he met Steve Deal and stated that Mr. Deal would be a huge asset to the Northwest Communication Union District (NWCUD) board.

MOTION: B. DesLauriers made a motion to appoint Steve Deal to the Northwest Communication Union District with a term expiring at the end of April, 2023. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

C. Johnson handed out a survey from the NWCUD to the Selectboard and stated Director of Public Works (DPW) Alan Mashtare was going to fill it out.

Town Manager's Report

Budget - Hunter Gomez – Project Manager

Hunter Gomez came before the Board to provide them an update on the Town Hall construction process. He explained that we are currently putting on the roof. The sheathing is going up right now. After the roof gets on the last of the interior framing will be completed. The Town Hall Building Committee will be doing a walk through on Wednesday, December 15th to review the layout of the building. Windows and exterior doors are scheduled for installation on December 27th.

Mr. Gomez explained that payment #4 for DEW was approved this evening. \$1.5 million spent (\$1,566,472 spent to date). We finalized the pricing for the first prime contract change order in the amount of \$25,836.43 for design changes that were required as a functioning of the Division of Fire and Safety comments. That includes some additional firewall work in the attic and roof system and fire suppression in the vault. The owner contingency is \$162,777. Currently, we are under budget. Mr. Gomez stated that the furniture Request for Proposal (RFP) will be posted on Tuesday, December 7th.

New Town Hall – Meeting Room Names

C. Johnson asked the Board if they had any suggestions for meeting room names for the new Town Hall. B. DesLauriers suggested forest, field, lake, hillside, Maquam, Abenaki, Champlain, and green mountain.

C. Parent stated that A. Mashtare mention to him the names of some of the ships that were built when we had a shipyard in the Bay. St. Albans Bay was known as Port Washington before it became St. Albans Bay.

A. Mashtare mentioned that the McDonough was the first steam ship built here in the Bay. There was also the Chateaugay and the Champlain. The Ticonderoga pulled into the bay as well. A. Mashtare suggested naming the larger of the conference rooms Port Washington and possibly name the smaller rooms named Ticonderoga or Champlain. B. Deso asked A. Mashtare to see if the St. Albans Historical Museum had any pictures of any of the ships. A decision needs to be made by early January. C. Johnson stated that this will be added to the January 3rd, 2022 meeting agenda.

Large Meeting Room Screening Door Design

The Board agreed to go with a black and white image for the door design. A. Mashtare suggested a photo of the bay with the Adirondack Mountains in the background. He stated that there is a Town employee who is available to take a still shot. Main Street Graphics has been selected to do the design to the door.

Loan Discussion

C. Johnson explained that once we have exhausted our Local Option Tax (LOT) funds, we must apply for a loan. A. Bourdon provided 10 year and 15 year loan options. She stated that the rates are guaranteed. C. Johnson explained that the last LOT payment at the end of February will be the last payment to be used for the Town Hall project. A. Bourdon's recommendation was to go with the 10 year loan at 2.85%.

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to accept the Treasurer's recommendation to apply for a loan for \$2.5 million for 10 years at a rate of 2.85%. Seconded by B. DesLauriers. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Department of Public Works – 5-Way Intersection Alignment Revision – Church/Patten Crosby/Georgia Shore

C. Johnson explained that she and A. Mashtare met with Marcos Miller and Jim Cota with VTrans to discussion acceptable options to make this intersection safer. A. Mashtare explained that originally he installed breakaway delineators. We were thinking about keeping the Stop Bar back 10 or 15 feet. The State recommended putting in rubber delineators that are safer for bikes and pedestrians. The State also suggested signs and warning stencils on the road which have already been added. Being late in the season, the rubber delineators will be installed in the spring. A. Mashtare went on to say that this recommendation is similar to what Swanton Village has where the square is. Keeps people from driving into the park and keeps them in their lanes.

J. Giroux explained he drives the road every day. He explained that the biggest issue he had with the intersection was the lack of visibility due to all the cedar trees that are now gone. The visibility is better and you can see the speed limit sign. Doesn't know if it's necessary to put the delineators in the road.

E. Creley mentioned that with a possible sidewalk going in the Bay, she wondered if VTrans had any feedback as far as pedestrians, visibility, and safety in that area. C. Johnsons stated that we didn't talk about that. A. Mashtare mentioned that when they met with VTrans, they really didn't go into detail about sidewalks. He did say that it was mentioned putting in a sidewalk from the marina to the (new) Town hall on the lake side of the road, so it wouldn't have any cross pedestrian traffic. No other sidewalk details were discussed with VTrans. Sidewalks will be addressed at a future "Safety Audit".

The Board was in consensus to have A. Mashtare install the traffic delineators per VTrans' recommendations. J. Giroux requested that the public be made aware of when this traffic change is made. A. Mashtare agreed to do so.

Accepting Honor Wall Nominations until December 15th, 2021

C. Johnson explained the committee is meeting on Wednesday, December 8th. Currently, the committee has received two nominations and are seeking more. Jenn Gray to update the Town's website with the Honor Wall Nomination policy and form.

Equity and Inclusion Consideration and Analysis

C. Johnson explained that she, J. Frost, and B. Deso had a virtual meeting with Equity and Inclusion consultant Curtis Reed. J. Frost provided a brief summary of that meeting. J. Frost stated that the meeting was held on November 19th and that there are two parts. The first part is the people who are living here. J. Frost then reiterated data she shared at a previous Selectboard meeting. She explained that the health department issued a survey to the high school asking students if they felt they mattered to their community. 60% of hetero students said they feel they do matter to their community. Only 25% of LGBTQ students feel that they matter. J. Frost went on to share a couple of emails she had received from a few students from BFA (Bellows Free Academy).

J. Frost continued saying that Mr. Reed explained the second part of this is that you can't do this kind of work just because it's a feel good thing, or to make people feel good. It really is an economic development tool. For a town to thrive, you need a multi-culture community. We want to retain more people who move here, we want to attract people to come and visit here, and if we work on equity issues, our town will be a more desirable destination. This will grow our economy and businesses.

J. Frost explained that she would like to have a committee to facilitate vision, mission, and responsibility. But, we don't really know what we need to work on until we start working on it. She continued by saying that Mr. Reed's group offers a thorough assessment, mapping and a course of action. The plan they develop is a long term plan and could take as long as ten years. Mr. Reed did say that we should have staff and a Selectboard member at the committee meetings.

J. Frost said that there are four choices:

- Do nothing
- Allow a committee to form from the community and provide Town staff. Although Town staff is pretty overtaxed right now.
- Hire a consultant – price varies depending on what we want. If we have \$5,000 now we could start the work and look for grant money.
- Municipal Engagement for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - VLCT put out a guidance of 12 things that the Selectboard can do to get the process going. Invite people to come to meetings and allow more public comment.

J. Frost said that she would like to see us move forward in some way and for the community to have a voice in the work. C. Johnson said that what she got from the meeting was that it would be beneficial to get someone to analyze the community first, not to assume the worse, to see what we have and where we need to focus our efforts. Diagnosis is the first step.

B. DesLauriers stated that what was found with high schoolers through the survey would be more effectively, officially handled by BFA and the school system. If there are things we can do in the Town in better ways and are effective at it, that is something we can do. Regarding the cost, if we can pay for someone to give us a quick rundown, if there are trouble spots, then we can do that. It can be expensive. B. DesLauriers asked what do we mean, as a town board when we say "Equity"? He just wanted to be sure we were all talking about the same thing.

J. Frost addressed B. DesLauriers' comment about the survey in the high school. She explained the survey wasn't asking students if they mattered at their school, but in their community. It was separate from the school. J. Frost continued by saying that she believed that most kids get their belief system from home and not from school.

C. Johnson stated that Mr. Curtis suggested dropping "Belongingness" in the name. The consultant would help us define improvements. B. Deso explained that "Equity" means equal in being fair and impartial.

B. Deso, J. Frost, and E. Creley all agreed that it would be best to seek outside help on this topic.

J. Giroux stated that he doesn't want a Belongingness and Inclusion committee run by the Town. The school district is already working with Restorative Change and the City already has a Belongingness committee. He asked if VLCT had training we could put our department heads through and then have staff look through policies themselves? Due to all the responsibilities the Town has right now, as far as workload, we need to focus on what we are doing daily and keep moving along that list of stuff we already have to do.

B. Deso said we should start to do some of the work ourselves, circulate a questionnaire with the staff, and look at the VLCT guidance list as well. Maybe go through each of our

departments and look at the services we offer and find specific areas in each department that we don't know enough about and add that to an overall list.

E. Creley stated that so not to lose steam on this topic, she asked what goals can we set for ourselves that are attainable, so we can hold ourselves accountable to meeting them. There has been an ask from the community to have a Belongingness and Inclusion committee. We do have some obligation to set some goals, if a committee isn't being set up right away, for us to take some steps to keep this moving forward.

C. Johnson explained we could do a hybrid of what Mr. Curtis talked about in our meeting when he said he worked with the Town of Bennington. He worked with a subcommittee from the Selectboard that would periodically poll the public. We do want public involvement, but that doesn't really equate to they must participate in every step.

B. Deso stated we'll have more discussion at the next meeting on December 20th. The VLCT guidance will be provided to the Selectboard that J. Frost referenced earlier.

St. Albans Bay Sewer Feasibility Study

C. Parent explained the Request for Qualifications responses came in just before Thanksgiving. Three staff members have ranked the four firms that submitted bids. We have to follow the federal process in selecting a firm. C. Parent requested approval to move forward in negotiating terms. A final contract will come before the Board before we move forward in hiring a firm to do the feasibility study on the public sewer system in the Bay area. B. Deso explained that this was discussed during the executive session at 6pm and the Board agreed to go with the staff's recommendation. C. Parent explained that the process to get the funding for the study requires to hire a firm first, then the firm will work with the Selectboard to put together a contract to apply for the funding.

Act 250 Notice of Initial Application Filing – City of St. Albans

Informational only, no action required.

Act 250 Land use Permit Amendment – Dankar Properties III, LLC

Informational only, no action required.

Schedule

The next regular Selectboard meetings are Monday, December 20th and Monday, January 3rd, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. Another budget work session will be scheduled for early January, 2022.

Chair's Report

B. Deso brought the question to the Board as to whether the Board would support an article on the ballot legalizing cannabis sales within the municipality. If we were to support it, B. Deso stated that he would only want to back an article question on the ballot if we have a plan for zoning businesses selling cannabis away from schools and not having signage for advertising. B. Deso continued saying that it was his understanding that at a legislative level, the majority party may move legislation to make it a statewide program regardless of any vote.

C. Parent explained that if a town does not act, there is no sale of recreational marijuana. There is a State movement to do the opposite: a town will have to opt out vs. opt in. There will be a recommendation by the legislature of up to a 2% Local Option Tax. It'll be a lot like liquor licenses. It's not going to be opened up to everybody or anybody. If a town doesn't have a vote, they will be opted in in 2024.

B. Deso asked C. Parent if he thought the legislature would honor an opt out vote that happened in 2021 or do you think it would be a clean slate? C. Parent stated that his thought was that the Town will have to issue licenses like we do with liquor, it's going to happen at the State level. The State directs municipalities on things and could override a municipality pretty quickly.

B. Deso asked C. Parent if he thought there was a benefit in the community saying yes now, that we could impose more local zoning ahead of time? C. Parent explained we are looking at the bylaws right and we are already looking at planning that in the bylaws no matter what the Selectboard chooses. If or when that times comes, we aren't opening up the bylaws. C. Parent continued saying the biggest consideration is where does the Town want to be on the revenue stream.

E. Creley said that knowing no matter what we decide, there may be an impact from the State down the road, what a vote could do is, more than putting it on an agenda for us to talk about, it will engage the public. We will hear voices for, against, and those who are indifferent to this as

well as feedback as to what it would look like to have this in the community. To spur the conversation, E. Creley thought it would be a helpful exercise.

J. Giroux stated that he would like to see a question on the ballot. It means we could generate some more revenue, get ahead of the game.

J. Frost stated that she is not a fan of having it in the Town, but feels it should be a community decision. If we do put it on the ballot, she would like to see a community forum where we could have the Department of Health there and a variety of people to speak to the pros and the cons on moving this forward so people could at least be informed when they go to vote.

B. DesLauriers stated that he doesn't love that it's legal. If he was in the legislature he would not have voted for it. But, it's legal for people to buy it, smoke it, grow it on their front or back porches. If it was on the ballot he was unsure how he would vote for it. If the rules change from opt in to opt out, if the Town voters decide to opt in now, it sounds like we may have some say on where it's going to be and what it's going to look like. If we wait, we may have less of a say. C. Parent stated that the Town will always be able to zone for it. He stated that he has always opposed the legalization of marijuana, but once it got legalized, he has always supported taxing and regulating. If it's legal, you may as well make money off of it.

B. Deso stated that he doesn't like the fact that it's legal or that you can have an ounce with you in public and not be ticketed. He doesn't like that there isn't a road standard test where you can be pulled out and not be breathalyzed for it. Let's go through the exercise and put it on the ballot. The Town maintains a point of neutrality and provides information of the pros and cons in a public forum.

C. Parent stated he can look through information from the Cannabis Regulation Board and put out a memo to the Selectboard.

B. Deso explained that earlier today, he, C. Parent, and C. Johnson met with representatives from the Town and Village of Swanton that went extremely well. We intend to work with Swanton Town and Swanton Village on a decentralized sewer system at the Exit 20 Growth Center that both municipalities could draw allocation from. Swanton Village, since they have the expertise on staff to be able to manage water and sewer infrastructure, that they would help us either on the ongoing management of it or we stand up an operation that the two towns could oversee.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 8:29 p.m. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenn Gray Executive Assistant