

Town of St. Albans
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 17th, 2021
6:30 p.m.
Via Zoom Teleconferencing

On Wednesday, February 17th, 2021 at 6:30 p.m., the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met.

Officials and staff in attendance: Stan Dukas, and Town Manager Carrie Johnson.

Officials and staff participating via Zoom Teleconferencing: Vice Chair Jessica Frost, Erin Creley, Jonathan Giroux, Director of Operations Corey Parent, Director of Public Works Alan Mashtare, Facilities Manager John Montagne, Town Clerk Anna Bourdon, and Recording Secretary Jenn Gray. Absent was Chair Brendan Deso

Public Participation via Zoom Teleconferencing: Sarah Hadd, Franklin County Sheriff Roger Langevin, Jen Williamson, Bryan DesLauriers, and Jackie Brown.

Vice Chair J. Frost called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

General Warrant

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the general warrant dated February 17th, 2021 in the amount of \$82,614.85. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Chair Brendan Deso joined the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Payroll

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the payroll warrant for February 5th, 2021 in the amount of \$24,502.98 and February 12th, 2021 in the amount of \$20,751.11. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Industrial Park Warrant

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the Industrial Park warrant in the amount of \$936.23. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Infrastructure Development Warrant

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the Infrastructure Development warrant dated February 17th, 2021 in the amount of \$2,700.00. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Department of Public Works (DPW) Reserve Account

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the DPW Reserve Account warrant in the amount of \$167,487.00. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Minutes

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Selectboard meeting minutes from Monday, February 1st, 2021 and the Selectboard special meeting minutes on Friday, February 5th as presented. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Amendment to Agenda

MOTION J. Giroux made a motion to add the annual adoption of the Town Roads and Bridges Standard to the agenda as item 7F. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Liquor Control Board

MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to recess the Selectboard meeting and convene as the Liquor Control Board. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Town Clerk Anna Bourdon read the annual renewals list to the Board.

Walmart 2nd Class, Pizza Hut 1st Class, Jolley 2nd Class, Kinney 2nd Class, Pie in the Sky 1st Class, Hannaford 2nd Class, Maplefield's North and South 2nd Class

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve the Class 1 & 2 liquor license renewals as presented by the Town Clerk. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to adjourn the Liquor Control Board and reconvene as the Selectboard. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Appointments

Assistant Administrative Officer – Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant AJ Johnson

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to appoint AJ Johnson as the Assistant Administrative Officer for a term of 3 years to act on applications for Certificates of Occupancy, Compliance, and updates when the Zoning Administrator is absent for one week or more. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Police Advisory Committee Appointments

C. Parent went through the list of appointments for the Police Advisory Committee. He pointed out that he, J. Frost, and J. Giroux reviewed the letters of interest/resumes.

At-Large (two-year term): Danielle Houle Charbonneau

At-Large (two-year term): Jennifer Williamson

Resident with Law Enforcement Experience (two-year term): Daniel Merchand

Representative of area Non-Profit (one-year term): Preston Fuller

Representative of area Non-Profit with Addiction Experience (two-year term): Ben Kauffman

Business Owner (one-year term): Armand Messier

Fire Department Representative (one-year term): Jay Sweeny

J. Giroux stated his concerns regarding appointing Jennifer Williamson to this committee after seeing some articles in the newspaper. He went on to say that he doesn't know what the intentions are and that the Board should strongly take a look appointing Ms. Williamson, whether we appoint her or not at this time. B. Deso asked if J. Giroux had any issues with any stances on policy Ms. Williamson had. J. Giroux stated that the removal of the SRO's (School Resource Officers) in schools was one thing. He stated that he didn't think that this committee was a place where they would be looking at that, being that this committee is going to be working with the Sheriff and currently, he doesn't believe the Sheriff is supplying SRO's to the school district. B. Deso stated he didn't believe that the Sheriff was supplying SRO's to the school district. J. Frost stated that Ms. Williamson is also running for a seat on the school board. E. Creley stated that we wouldn't get involved in SRO conversations as the Selectboard or the town.

B. Deso asked J. Giroux if he thought the position that this individual took regarding SRO's is making him call into question whether or not she should be appointed to create policy at a police level, over general policing matters? J. Giroux said it is something the Board needs to talk about.

A. Bourdon pointed out that we must keep in mind that when we voted to join a unified school district, that it is its own municipality, so what they (school district) want to do is up to them and we just vote on their budget individually.

J. Frost stated that you don't want a board that will all think the same way, you need a variety of opinions to bring different ideas to the table. She went on to say that she thought it was OK to have a wide range of different positions on policies and stances. The SRO piece of it is irrelevant to the Town. C. Johnson made the comment that all members of this committee should not make comments to the press and sign their name as a member of this new committee. A. Bourdon agreed with J. Frost, the SRO piece is irrelevant.

S. Dukas stated that he agreed with J. Giroux on SRO's. He's a big believer in SRO's. He would not support doing away with SRO's in schools.

B. Deso stated that he's read all the letters submitted to the Messenger, the County Courier, and Facebook regarding the school district races. He believes that having SRO's in school is becoming a race issue. He went on to say that pro SRO candidates are going to win overwhelmingly because the community supports the program. B. Deso shared a personal experience regarding an SRO when he was younger.

Jennifer Williams explained that what this really comes down to are statistics and numbers. When we look back on the data on SRO's what we are seeing is that disabled children are 3 times more likely to have negative interactions with police officers in the schools. As we have seen at BFA, Officer French harassed a child, man handled him, threw him on the ground, put him in cuffs, and called him the "R" word. That isn't the only story. Other parents have stepped up and told Ms. Williams their stories with SRO's. Children are being abused by SRO's and not being listened to. She feels strongly about this. As a Town resident, she would like to have a police force present, but would also like to make sure that somebody who is not just going to go along with whatever they say and that somebody actually questions it. If it's not her, she would like someone like that on this committee. Somebody who is

able to step up and say when things aren't right, we need to address them. We want to make sure that everyone is being heard and listened to.

J. Frost added that it is important to have a wide range of voices. Her children have had wonderful experiences with SRO's. We are only looking at one prospective and there is always going to be other stories. Maybe it ends up that we get more training for SRO's. She went on to say that she didn't think we'd be having these conversations if people in the community were not bring them to light. We need to have those types of people on this committee to discuss stories that we are not all hearing.

E. Creley explained that she thinks it's fair for us to have the conversation that is happening in the public around SRO's. She believes that the conversation is not something that is going happen in our Police Advisory Committee since that is something Maplerun is going to be reviewing and consider. We don't have any piece of that contract in that conversation, except as citizens who want to be involved in that conversation, independently of our place on the Selectboard and the work that we do here. E. Creley continued stating that she too values diverse opinions on this advisory committee. If we are hoping to see conversation and review, we are going to have folks who disagree with us at times. She hoped that we would have space to listen to all of them, and they are only advisory. Decisions are made by us, the Selectboard. J. Frost explained that for the 7 seats on this committee, only 2 are women. We put the call out to make this committee as diverse as we can get it.

B. Deso explained he received an email from Al Voegele who had provided a recommendation for a person of color to sit on this committee. He hasn't had a chance to vet the member yet, but forwarded the information to Corey Parent. B. Deso didn't know if it was worth tabling this discussion with that in mind.

C. Johnson asked if there was a hard cap on 7 members? B. Deso stated that was what we approved in the policy. C. Parent stated that it would make for a better committee to have more at large members. However, we are going with what the policy says. B. Deso explained that the committees very first recommendation is a policy amendment and restructure the committee.

J. Giroux put a motion on the floor to table this conversation until the next Selectboard meeting. B. Deso stated that if we decide to table this, we can do it on consensus and not a motion. He went on to say that we should review the information from A. Voegele. J. Frost stated she didn't want to table this, but move forward.

E. Creley asked if we table this, would the vetting process start over again and does that put us behind in the work we want the advisory committee to do? C. Parent explained that every meeting the Board delays this delays the start of the advisory committee. If the Board was to appoint 6 of the 7 members tonight, he could start the Police Advisory Committee while the Board considered another member. The key is to have it up and running by July 1 with the new police contract. E. Creley stated that with regards to whether we table this or not, it feels as if this conversation is about a vote we all might make on Town Meeting Day about whether to vote for Ms. Williams to join the Maplerun School Board or not. It feels like that's the conversation that we're having and that is not what this advisory committee would be doing. E. Creley went on to say that she would welcome folks to change her mind to help her understand why we continue to discuss and think about the relevance of a position on something that has no direct bearing on the work of the advisory committee.

B. Deso responded to E. Creley's comments by saying that the SRO is a main tenant of community policing. Not only is it an armed, trained body in a school, but it is also somebody who can interact and form relationships. B. Deso went on to say that he doesn't view this discussion as whether or not Ms. Williamson is qualified to be on the Maplerun School Board. He does think that that policy position and the response is a clear indication of how someone really views community policing and police implementation around that. He would like to table this to have a little bit more time to think and vet these candidates a little further.

J. Frost asked B. Deso if he wanted a committee that would always say "Yes" to each other? B. Deso stated no, but he does want a committee that sees the importance in having an armed officer in schools. E. Creley stated that officers in schools, in you are concerned and care about that, than you should be involved in the conversation happening at the School Board. B. Deso stated he need a couple more weeks to meet with Ms. Williamson to see how she feels about other areas of policing. E. Creley suggested that if you're going to write out questions to ask related to community policing, to share those questions with all the candidates. B. Deso agreed and asked C. Parent to assist him on this. C. Parent agreed. J. Frost asked if we are now going to do some kind of interviewing process of all the candidates? B. Deso said it started with him wanting to speak to a certain individual, one on one before voting yes to the appointment. If we want to turn it into "one size fits all", he is going to ask everyone the same questions. E. Creley stated that she would be in favor of tabling this if we had that process because that one person in the public putting their opinions and policy stance out there.

Anyone on that committee has a right to know those opinions and policy stances. It gives everyone the opportunity to know where everyone stands.

J. Frost stated that it is very important to have those multiple opinions and she hoped that if we do the interview process, we don't end up cherry picking people based on their opinions. That's not going to pan out well either. We are putting one person under the microscope without knowing what 6 other people think. Then, to come up with the questions to ask them and then to pick through the ones that align with what you think this committee should be made up of, isn't making the committee diverse.

C. Parent stated that the purpose of the Police Advisory Committee is to be an advisory to the police. They are not a policy making committee. They are tasked with making sure the Sheriff is living up to their contract with the Town. They have a very narrow lane to operate within. S. Dukas agreed with C. Parent that they have no authority to change the SRO program.

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to appoint the 7 people recommended to the Police Advisory Committee as presented by Corey Parent. Seconded by J. Frost. Motion carries with a 3-1 vote with J. Giroux voting opposed.

B. Deso took this opportunity to voice how proud he is of Ben Kauffman and his road to recovery. E. Creley pointed out that B. Deso's comments come at a good time as the Governor declared that February 17th is Addiction Recovery Day in Vermont.

Planning Commission Appointment

MOTION: E. Creley made a motion to appoint Sarah Hadd to the Planning Commission for one year of an unexpired 3 year term. Seconded by S. Dukas. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Town Manager's Report

Parks Ordinance

C. Johnson explained to the Board that she has not found any evidence that the Parks Ordinance needs to be an ordinance. We seem to be updating this ordinance every year. The ordinance process involves a notice and a waiting period of 60 days. C. Johnson proposed making the Parks Ordinance a policy instead.

C. Johnson stated that at the last Selectboard meeting, we discussed winter maintenance for the parks. She retracted her comment from that meeting that we can plow wherever we want which is not a good idea given the information A. Mashtare provided to her. She went on to say that we have had damage near the Stone House in the parking lot. Therefore, she didn't think it was a good idea to mix the use of the VAST trail over the grass parking lot with the public without seriously looking into it. C. Johnson said that we have started plowing Cohen Park.

C. Johnson explained that there have been some changes made to the Parks Ordinance, asked for any comments, and again suggested revising a Parks Policy. B. Deso stated that he thought there should be things we are able to change in a policy by a Board action without a warning and a 60 day waiting period. This is an ongoing effort and if anybody has specific comments, email them to Carrie. We can incorporate that into draft 2 along with whatever guidance we get.

C. Johnson stated that she spoke to Roger Langevin and asked him to provide some unbiased feedback about whether or not we were having a parking issue on off hours. Sheriff Langevin explained that he did look into this and it was his understanding that we were possibly looking into expanding the use on the westerly side. He went on to say that it's a Catch 22; you open it up, there are more people and with more people there, there are more incidents, possibly. If the Town does decide to open it up and the Sheriff's Department was patrolling, just ask if they can add some additional patrols to that area. Should be pretty easy to adjust. Provide specific times and hours. B. Deso stated that we'll gather some more information and discuss it in a few weeks.

J. Giroux asked why the south gate to the Bay Park is open, but not the north gate. A. Mashtare stated that the smaller parking area has worked fine at the south end of the park. When we open the larger parking area, that is when we have experienced vandalism in the park. So far this winter the south gate area has offered plenty of parking.

C. Johnson stated she will look into what other Towns are doing, whether a policy or ordinance is used and have some more information at the next meeting.

Winter Road Maintenance Policy

C. Johnson explained that we have had problems with people plowing snow across Town roads. This is illegal and dangerous, however, it isn't stated clearly in our current policy. She went on to say that

another reason for revisiting this policy is that we have taken out a few mailboxes and we would to combine both issues into one policy.

A. Mashtare explained that he did research VTrans policies and it is a criminal offense to plow snow across the road. He asked Roger Langevin if there are any fines associated with this? Mr. Langevin stated there is a fine attached to that offense, but he'll need to research it and get back to A. Mashtare. This would be something we would need to add to this policy. There should be a monetary consequence. C. Johnson explained that if someone pushes snow across a road and there is an accident, they would be liable.

J. Giroux asked that if we've had this policy in place for years, why are we bothering to enforce it now? C. Johnson stated that we are choosing to enforce now because it's becoming a more routine event and dangerous. There is a state statute we want to reference to add some teeth to the policy and add a fine as well to encourage compliance.

B. Deso summarized to say that we are looking at this policy, it has some changes, we are sighting a state statute, we are adding some clarifying language, and we are more clearly expressing how the Town deals with mailbox replacement and how mailboxes should be installed and where within the Right of Way. S. Dukas agrees with the policy.

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to adopt the new Winter Road Maintenance Policy. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Issues will be brought to A. Mashtare. He will address the issue with the offender.

Honor Wall Committee Update

C. Johnson explained that she has two names for this committee and that we need to appoint someone from the Selectboard, Department of Public Works and the Park and Recreation Committee. She went on to say that she would like to have a list for the next meeting and make the appointments then. B. Deso stated he would work with C. Johnson on this. C. Johnson stated that she would like names by next Thursday, February 25th.

COVID-19 Update

C. Johnson explained Town Hall continues to be open by appointment only. Many Franklin County officials were contacted by Dr. Lavine regarding the increase in COVID-19 numbers in Franklin County. He expressed that he hoped the Town would nip it in the bud and stop the spread. He implored us to ask our citizens to be careful. E. Creley reminded people that healthvermont.gov has a lot of good information and it is updated daily.

Town Hall Update

C. Johnson explained that the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) has been issued by Tom Peterson. At least 5 good size firms have indicated interest. Today, the design team met to discuss finishes. C. Johnson also stated that we completed all the ballots and they were mailed out to every voter in the Town.

Town Road and Bridge Standards

C. Johnson explained there are no changes. We received this late last week and we are trying to get grant funding in the next couple of months, so wanted to get this approved quickly.

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to adopt the Town Road and Bridge Standards for the Town of St. Albans, Vermont dated February 17, 2021. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Schedule

The next regular Selectboard meetings are Monday, March 1st and Monday, March 15th at 6:30 p.m. The informational meeting for the 2021 Town Meeting Day budget and articles will be held on March 1st as well. B. Deso asked C. Johnson to ask the Design Team if any motions are needed to be done prior to Town Meeting Day to get that scheduled. C. Johnson stated we are pushing forward with the construction manager delivery method already. We have a meeting scheduled for March 3rd, if we receive approval to move forward.

Chair's Report

B. Deso thanked C. Johnson for her hard work over the last several weeks. He also took this time to thank S. Dukas for all the work he's put into getting the Town Hall article on the ballot.

B. Deso explained that after Town Meeting Day, he would like to appoint S. Dukas as Town Agent and at a future meeting appoint S. Dukas to the Town Hall Committee. The last appointment he would like to make for S. Dukas would be to be the community representative for the Stone House.

Other Business

Anna Bourdon said that she's received lots of calls about the skating rink and how people are loving it and the lights. E. Creley stated the same thing. Lots of positive comments.

Executive Session

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to go into executive session at 8:08 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 the Town Manager and the Director of Operations. Seconded by E. Creley. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to come out of executive session at 8:58 p.m. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Adjournment

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 9:00 p.m. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenn Gray, Recording Secretary