

Subject to Selectboard Approval

Town of St. Albans Selectboard Meeting Minutes Monday, February 4th, 2019 6:00 p.m.

On Monday, February 4th, 2019 at 6:00 p.m., at Town Hall the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met.

Officials and staff present: Chair William Nihan, Vice Chair Bruce Cheeseman, Brendan Deso, Stan Dukas, Al Voegele and Town Manager, Carrie Johnson.

W. Nihan opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. The purpose of the early start to the Selectboard meeting was to conduct an executive session to discuss a contractual issue.

Executive Session

MOTION: B. Deso made a motion to go into executive session at 6:01 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, personnel and contractual issues under the provisions of Title 1, section 313(a)(1) of Vermont Statutes and to invite in Town Manager, Carrie Johnson. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: B. Cheeseman made a motion to recess the Selectboard meeting at 6:28 p.m. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Regular Meeting – 6:30 p.m.

Officials and staff present: Chair William Nihan, Vice Chair Bruce Cheeseman, Brendan Deso, Stan Dukas, Al Voegele, Town Manager Carrie Johnson, Director of Public Works Alan Mashtare, Director of Administration Ned Connell, Fire Chief and Public Safety Administrator, Bob Cross, Animal Control Officer David McWilliams, Corey Gratton, Torrey Webster, Frank Baker, Brad Gilbeau, Bob Davis, John Montagne, and Recording Secretary, Jenn Gray.

Public: St. Albans Messenger Reporter Michael Frett, Bob Fairbanks, Kevin Briggs with Franklin County Animal Rescue, Bob Johnson, Alexander McWilliams, Sharon Cross, Jessica Frost, and Jonathan Giroux.

The Pledge of Allegiance.

Change to the agenda

W. Nihan added an emergency request for a sewer hookup to the agenda. The Board agreed to the change.

Wastewater Allocation Request - Nicole and Adam Wimble – 1 Twin Court

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the Wastewater Allocation Request for Nicole and Adam Wimble for 1 Twin Court as presented. All in favor, none opposed, motion Carried.

Industrial Park Warrant

MOTION: B. Cheeseman made a motion to approve the Industrial Park warrant in the amount of \$1,350. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Payroll Warrants

MOTION: B. Cheeseman made a motion to approve the payroll warrants dated February 1st, 2019 in the amount of \$17,780.74 and January 25th, 2019 in the amount of \$28,544.50 and All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

General Warrant

MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the general warrant dated February 4th, 2019 in the amount of \$39,950.00. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Minutes

A. Voegele had a couple of changes for the regular meeting minutes of Wednesday, January 23rd.

Subject to Selectboard Approval

MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve the Selectboard meeting minutes for Wednesday, January 23rd, 2019 as amended. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve the Selectboard 'special' meeting minutes for Wednesday, January 23rd, 2019 as presented. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

A. Voegele had one change to the 'special' meeting minutes for Thursday, January 17th.
MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve the Selectboard 'special' meeting minutes for Thursday, January 17th, 2019 as amended. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Liquor Control Board

MOTION: W. Nihan made a motion to recess the Selectboard meeting and convene as the Liquor Control Board. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Town Clerk Anna Bourdon provided a list to the Selectboard of vendors renewing their liquor licenses for 2019. W. Nihan read the list which included vendors renewing First Class, Second Class and Outside Consumption licenses.

- Colonial Mart – Second Class
- Maplefield's North – Second Class
- Maplefield's South – Second Class
- American Legion – First Class & Outside Consumption
- Pie In The Sky – First Class
- Walmart – Second Class
- Hannaford – Second Class
- St. Albans Jolley – Second Class
- Pizza Hut – First Class
- Mill River Brewing LLC – First Class & Outside Consumption
- Price Chopper – Second Class

MOTION: W. Nihan made a motion to approve the First Class, Second Class and Outside Consumption liquor license as presented. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: W. Nihan made a motion to adjourn the Liquor Control Board and reconvene the Selectboard. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Certificate of Highway Mileage

A. Mashtare explained that the Town didn't take over any new roads in 2018. The State requires we update this every year regardless if the Town has taken over any roads or not.

MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage for 2018. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Public Hearing on the Unified Development Bylaws

This was the second and final hearing on the bylaws. C. Johnson read the hearing opening:

"In accordance with the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 VSA Chapter 117), this public hearing is to hereby review and update the Unified Development Bylaws and Zoning Map for the Town of St. Albans, Vermont. The Unified Development Bylaws and Zoning Map, upon adoption, and while in effect, shall amend in their entirety all prior Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations of the Town of St. Albans".

The Board approved the bylaws and signed the new map.

MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve and adopt the Unified Development Bylaws for the Town of St. Albans as presented. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Subject to Selectboard Approval

Town Manger's Report

Franklin County Area Rescue – Kevin Briggs

Kevin Briggs, the new President of the Franklin County Area Rescue (FCAR) came before the Board to provide an update. He provided a handout for the Board. Mr. Briggs explained that they are trying to reestablish themselves. He wasn't asking for any funding at this point. He is visiting all 14 towns, he will develop a 3 year strategic plan, and then return to the Board requesting funding. He went over the handout he had provided to the Board.

B. Cheeseman asked if FCAR planned on continuing in the location they are currently in. Mr. Briggs explained they were and because of the wetlands and lack of space, they are unable to expand the current building they are in. They don't want to move too fast and not be able to keep up with the changes they are making. He stressed that FCAR needs to think strategically.

A. Voegele asked if FCAR had an endowment fund. Mr. Briggs explained one is being started up but, didn't want to speak to specifics at this time.

David McWilliams explained that we used to give the Burlington Human Society \$150 for a dog and \$100 for a cat. He asked the Board if he would be authorized to bring animals to the Burlington Humane Society if they have space available. W. Nihan stated that he thought that in the past, we only paid for boarding dogs and we didn't pay for cats, rather, we made a lump sum contribution to take care of cats. Mr. McWilliams explained that if a cat bites someone, we have to hold the animal for 10 days. He went on to say that employees in Town Hall have done a great job and have gotten good responses from folks who have seen pictures of animals posted on Facebook. If he can't locate the original owner or place the animal with a new owner, he would like to place the animal at the Burlington Humane Society. C. Johnson said the Town had a payment arrangement with FCAR now.

Mr. Briggs explained that FCAR has space for 5 dogs at this time. If a space is open, the Town may bring the animal to FCAR.

Department of Public Works (DPW) Relocation Project Update

B. Cheeseman made the following statement:

"I'm entering my third term as a Selectman in this Town, next month. I have a lot of challenges in progress and we've had to deal with some things that weren't really pleasant. I've never let any of those challenges bother me as much as what's happened in the last couple of days. First of all, I want to apologize to you guys who work at DPW because by no means did I mean to ridicule you guys or question the work that you do. Because, I've always been a supporter of the Public Works Department. I've worked in the past to get you guys raises, I've worked to get bonuses for people that went above and beyond the expectations of your job, and by no means and from the bottom of my heart, did I mean to discredit you guys at all for the work that you do. Not at all. The statements that I made, I probably didn't make them clear enough but, you can bet that they were taken out of context. The most important thing is that I want to apologize to you guys if I offended you and to let you know that I am here to support you in the efforts that you do. You guys do a good job".

W. Nihan explained that he feels it's incumbent upon the Selectboard to really take a look at the situation and see how things are, how we fair with other towns in the community, and to compete and ensure we're serving the range of salaries and benefits, the whole package. We need to get this started and find out what the facts are.

B. Deso explained that both the Town Manager and the Director of Public Works identified the problem in our pay scale and they did make a recommendation for raises for certain employees who have been with us long enough and were being underpaid and we rejected that recommendation. W. Nihan stated that he thinks we should wait until we find out exactly what the facts are.

B. Deso asked C. Johnson if she proposed a series of raises on paper. C. Johnson stated that she did ask for a certain amount, a pay scale increase at our budget meetings. W. Nihan stated it was a total number. C. Johnson said it was but, that she backed it up with spreadsheets. W. Nihan stated that we need to find out exactly where we are in regards to other employers of the community and surrounding areas to make

Subject to Selectboard Approval

sure we are in the right place. C. Johnson stated that the Board has her to complete this in 2 weeks. W. Nihan said he'd allow an extra couple of weeks to get accurate data.

B. Cheeseman stated that we don't sit down and approve pay raises until June. C. Johnson clarified that she is supposed to set the pay raises and the Selectboard, as a whole sets policy, keep pay scale, not individual raises.

A. Mashtare stated that this has nothing to do with the raises that come in July. Those are reviews that he writes and he and C. Johnson reviews those. This is something that he and C. Johnson came up with for Senior employees. He went on to explain that his employee, Torrey Webster is leaving us for the simple case that he's been with us for quite a few years and we are underpaying him compared to other places. He said that he was trying to bring Senior employees up to a pay scale that is suitable. Instead, he is losing a senior employee to a neighboring town for \$2 an hour more than what we are giving him now plus his benefits will be paid for by the employer. A. Mashtare went on to say that he has done some of the research and had started calling some towns. We are paying our people less than other towns. This has nothing to do with their normal raise. This has to do with giving my Senior people, that are dedicated, what they deserve. W. Nihan stated that he hasn't seen the research. A. Mashtare stated that when C. Johnson did the spreadsheet, we had looked at the VLCT book. W. Nihan said that by a systemic point of view, we are out of step with other folks. That is what should be verified factually with what we know in the market place, not just out of the blue. B. Deso stated that we've done that.

B. Deso stated that there was a recommendation back in January and we didn't do it, we said no. W. Nihan stated there was no factual basis behind that. B. Deso said yes there is and went on to say that C. Johnson reviewed data that is put out annually by VLCT showing pay scales in neighboring municipalities. B. Deso then went on to say that this Board should not be interfering with the Town Manager's ability to retain and acquire qualified candidates for employment. We should not be involved in the day-to-day management of employees. He then made the following motion:

MOTION: B. Deso made a motion to allow the Town Manager to perform her duties in maintaining and acquiring existing and new employees as she sees fit in regard to our pay scale. Open for discussion. B. Deso said that she (C. Johnson) made a recommendation and we said no. The only way we can get it right would be immediate and to say we accept her recommendation. She identified an issue, she made a proposal to give salary increases. The proposal that she made may have kept someone on board but, we rejected and here we are back pedaling.

S. Dukas stated that he would like to amend the motion. He went on to say that we have a list of about 20 specific questions that we will cover in the next two weeks. We do have money in the budget, if it's due to a senior employee or a new hire, it will be given to them.

Alex McWilliams stated that the Board should accept his (B. Deso's) proposal. He thought it was fair. Let the Town Manager do her job. Quit micro-managing. B. Cheeseman stated that he thought the Board hadn't stood in the way of Alan (Mashtare or Carrie (Johnson) hiring anybody. Mr. McWilliams stated he didn't want to see anybody leave. We spend a lot of money training.

W. Nihan stated that it's incumbent on the Board to ensure that any proposal or any decisions taken are based on objective evidence. At this point, DPW employee, Corey Gratton left the meeting.

Town resident, Emberly Keith (girlfriend of DPW employee, Bob Davis) said "it seems that you're not open to listening to these suggestions, but it is people's livelihood, that's all I'm asking you to consider. It's not just paper or spreadsheets that come into play".

David McWilliams stated he has been on the Selectboard before and knows it can be hard to make a decision whether you want to give employees raises. We've got a good Selectboard but, we also have to realize we've got outstanding employees. We need to support them. This is a reason why Towns go union, because employees feel they are not being heard. We have a decent package as far as benefits. As far as the pay, when a guy comes in and he is making almost equal to a guy who's been here 4 or 5 years, it causes a lot of animosity in that group. We need to take care of our employees. We need to support them and their families.

Subject to Selectboard Approval

Bob Cross stated the Board is here to work for us, the taxpayer. When he listens to some of the meetings and read the paper with some of the comments made by the Selectboard, there's no "I" on the Selectboard. If you're speaking for me, I want you to say "We". These guys work very hard for the money they get and he understands the whole situation and he thinks it's wrong the way things are being done now. Speak for me, not for yourselves because that's not what you, the Board ran on when campaigning to run for the Selectboard. That's what you ran for, to be our voice.

A. Voegele stated we obviously have a real problem. At this point in time, we do have a crisis among our DPW employees. He hears the need to get the facts out. On the other hand, we should support the Town Manager going forward with adjusting the pay rates for these people. To get beyond this problem, we ought to allow the Town Manager to adjust their salaries, she already has those facts. We can move on later on with the Town Manager's help to look at the facts that she derives from what she and Alan (Mashtare) have done. He stated that he supports B. Deso's motion to move forward now to solve the emotional crisis that has developed. B. Cheeseman stated that he agreed with everything A. Voegele said but, didn't think the Board needed to make a special motion to recognize this situation that we've got here. All we need to do is correct it and authorize Carrie (Johnson) to go ahead and bring these people up to where they should be. B. Deso stated that B. Cheeseman had just argued against that 20 minutes ago. B. Cheeseman asked B. Deso to be quiet and offered up his own motion that was similar to B. Deso's earlier motion.

Moving on, W. Nihan stated again that the Board's obligation is to act in the best interest of the Town. The easy answer here is to give anybody what they want. However, he thinks it is completely incorrect to make those kinds of recommendations without a strong, factual base. For that reason, he can't support either of the motions.

MOTION: B. Deso made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to adjust the Department of Public Works pay scale, per employee, at her discretion, with the end goal of retaining and attracting qualified candidates. B. Cheeseman second the motion. Motion carried 4-1 with W. Nihan voting opposed.

A. Mashtare explained that he's been working with C. Johnson on a step system with this whole program. Each job description has a range of pay. W. Nihan stated that they may be working on it but, the Board was unaware of it.

Kevin Briggs spoke as an observer and not in his official capacity as the FCAR President and said, "I hear that comment, and I have to wonder the role of the Board. Is it really the Board's role to be in the weeds when it comes to Alan and Carrie creating a chart... That comment is inappropriate, that there was a lack of communication. I don't know if that necessarily needs to be communicated."

B. Cheeseman stated that he thinks some of the comments he brought this all to a head and something good came out of it.

C. Johnson thanked John Montagne and Brad Gilbeau for joining us and welcomed them to the crew. Then, she introduced all DPW members to the Board.

B. Cheeseman asked DPW employee Torrey Webster if there was a chance of him staying with the Town. T. Webster explained he wouldn't because the job is closer to home and their benefits package was much better.

A. Voegele thanked not only T. Webster for his past work but, to all the new employees for the current and future work.

DPW Presentation

C. Johnson went over the presentation for the DPW project with the Board and explained that she and A. Mashtare are going to give this presentation at the Rotary meeting on Tuesday, February 5th. B. Cheeseman asked if we can explain how much it'll cost to maintain the new building. C. Johnson stated that the engineers are currently working on that. She also pointed out that with this project, the Town is trying to employ as many local vendors as possible; Connor Contracting, Cross Consulting Engineering and Harrison Concrete. There will be an Open House at the current DPW complex on Thursday, February 21st, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Refreshments will be provided.

Subject to Selectboard Approval

Act 250 Land Use Permit Administrative Amendment – Franklin Park West, LLC.

This was just informational. No action required. Extension of car dealership parking lot.

Schedule

Next regular meetings will be Wednesday, February 20th, and Monday, March 4th, 2019.

Public Comment

A. Voegele explained he's a member of the Veteran's Valet service at the hospital. The hospital has requested the members of the valet service wear red of to raise awareness for breast cancer.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment

MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 7:52 p.m. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenn Gray, Recording Secretary