

**Town of St. Albans
Selectboard Joint Meeting
With the St. Albans City Council
Monday, July 22nd, 2019
5:30 p.m.**

On Monday, July 22nd, 2019, 5:30 p.m., the Town of St. Albans Selectboard and St. Albans City Council met for a joint meeting.

Town of St. Albans Officials and staff present: Chair Brendan Deso, Vice Chair Bruce Cheeseman, Jessica Frost, Stan Dukas, Al Voegelé, and Town Manager Carrie Johnson.

St. Albans City Council and staff present: Mayor Tim Smith, Tim Hawkins, Marie Bessette, Michael McCarthy, Kate Laddison, Chad Spooner, and City Manager Dominic Cloud. Absent was James Pelkey.

Public present: Maple Run Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Kevin Dirth, St. Albans Messenger Reporter, Michael Frett, St. Albans Police Chief Gary Taylor, VT. State Police Lt. Mo Lamothe, and Northwest Access TV cameraman Roger Lindala.

The meeting opened at 6:05. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Current Collaborations

C. Johnson started off by explaining that she and D. Cloud talked earlier about the City/Town collaborations and that the City and Town work a lot together.

Department of Public Works

C. Johnson stated that currently, the City and Town work together in regards to the Department of Public Works; specifically, the City sharing one of its plow trucks with the Town this past winter.

Stormwater

C. Johnson explained that the City and Town shared a Regional Stormwater Education Program (RSEP) as well as grants. This makes it less expensive for both municipalities.

Fire Department

C. Johnson explained that both departments back each other up seamlessly and the staff we currently have seems to work really well for all of our residents.

Grants

C. Johnson explained any project that is near the City/Town line, works well by making it a collaboration which increases our chances of success for grants.

Recreation

C. Johnson explained that both she and D. Cloud feel this is working really well. Town residents participate in City recreation program.

C. Johnson went on to say that despite what some people recall, the two municipalities are working pretty well together to the benefit of our citizens.

D. Cloud left the meeting at 6:20 p.m. B. Cheeseman left the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

St. Albans City Police Chief Gary Taylor

Chief Taylor was in attendance to provide a brief update on the Street Crimes Unit (SCU). He explained that this is the most successful that he has been involved in. It is being replicated in Rutland and Barre. Both the Town and City pay for a person in that unit. Chief Taylor provided a summary on the SCU activities between February 26th, 2018 through February 24th, 2019. He stated that a lot of the crime is related to substance abuse. He continued by explaining the differences between Street Crimes Unit and traditional criminal drug investigation units. This was followed by a discussion about drug use in this and surrounding communities.

Joint Proclamations – Athletic and Academic

T. Smith explained that the Bellows Free Academy girls softball team won the state championship this year and both the City and Town escorted the team back into town after their win was well received. The Mayor went on to explain that he felt it was very important to recognize this achievement as well as others in drama, music, and other categories with individuals who have proven to be very successful.

T. Smith presented a proclamation to Brook Hodgeman a 2019 graduate of Bellows Free Academy (BFA). He read the proclamation stating that Brook played hockey and later moved onto Nordic skiing where he was named State Champion in the State of Vermont in March, 2019 in classic Nordic skiing. He was awarded several educational leadership and athletic awards while studying at BFA and will be studying physics and pre-med at St. Michael's Honors College and skiing on the Nordic ski team.

B. Deso presented a proclamation to Trey Poquette. He read the proclamation stating that Trey a 2019 graduate of Bellows Free Academy (BFA). He ran track where he was crowned Indoor State Champion for the 50 and 300 meter and Outdoor State Champion for the 100 and 200 meter and the 4x4 relay. In 2019, he received the Franklin County Athlete of The Week 2 times and was named Burlington Free Press Athlete of the Week. He also received the 2019 National Guard Student Athlete Award and the 2019 Track and Field Coach's Award. Trey will be studying Business at the University of Vermont where he will continue his running career.

T. Smith explained that other individuals will be recognized in future meetings.

Future Collaborations

B. Deso explained that the City and Town have opportunities to collaborate on the stormwater, bike/pedestrian infrastructure, and economic development.

C. Johnson explained the largest combined stormwater collaboration was one that was required when both municipalities were designated impaired in 2012 and that was the Regional Stormwater Education Program (RSEP). She went on to explain that the Town is currently working on 5 different stormwater projects. At some point, we are going to need to start some enforcement. This may not require a full time person, but a person that both the City and Town can share to do the enforcement and possibly share with other communities in the future.

T. Smith asked if the Town was considering a stormwater utility. C. Johnson explained that the Town has a Request for Proposal (RFP) out now. We are going to analyze that in the next few months. We should have a recommendation to the Selectboard by the end of the year. A. Voegele suggested that we have the consultant study a combined utility with the City. T. Smith stated he thought it made sense. T. Hawkins stated that it would be useful if there was a project that had a lot of stormwater that was very expensive to remediate and using offsets from sites available in the Town. More discussion followed on the future of a stormwater utility. Recommendations will be provided to the consultant once the Town has hired them.

D. Cloud returned to the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Bike and Pedestrian

J. Frost explained to the group that Mark Fenton, a national walkability expert had come to the Town to do a walk through the community. He also came three years ago and did a walk through in the City. She pointed out that 2 years ago the City and the Town did collaborate on a joint grant on Route 7 North. The RiseVT group is still meeting to try to move that project forward.

J. Frost explained that one of the big messages Mark Fenton had was that bike and ped was really key to the economic growth of the community and attracting people to this area to visit and live. It would also make it easier for people who don't drive or don't have a car to get around easier within the community.

J. Frost stated that Governor Scott is coming to the area Saturday, August 10th. He's going to ride his bike from the hospital to the Bay, to Swanton, to Highgate, and back. This is an opportunity for us to talk about why bike and ped is important. The reason the Governor is coming is because it is the 10th year anniversary of the Swanton Recreation Path. We are going to focus on talking about infrastructure possibilities.

It was discussed and agreed to that the sidewalk from Congress Street should be continued to Hard'Ack and that the Town and City would work on this together. Regarding maintenance of the sidewalks, T. Smith stated that it was senseless for the Town to go out and buy the necessary equipment to plow when the City has enough equipment. There isn't much in the Town and it wouldn't take much to manage it.

A. Voegele suggested that because there are two different municipality sidewalk plans, we should get a subcommittee of this group to sit down and see if there is any agreement to matching up these plans making one comprehensive plan. He stated that when he worked for the Town of Colchester, the Town would post signs at sidewalks being built saying, "this sidewalk is funded by..."

Economic Development

T. Smith took this opportunity to discuss the Sunflower Festival taking place August, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. This is being hosted by both the Town and the City. He stated that his vision was for this event to attract 1,000 people to St. Albans City and Town it's a win-win for everyone. It's one more way to bring people here and to learn more about our community.

T. Smith also pointed out that Bay Day was another big event that attracts people to the community.

T. Smith said that he was in St. John, Quebec last week meeting with the Chamber of Tourism Department and they are going to do a number of cross-the-board initiatives such as soccer and baseball exchanges. The Quebec Chamber and the Mayor are going to each other's farmers markets to promote their respective areas.

A. Voegelé explained that he and C. Johnson attended a State program called "Vermont Works for Women"; it is an organization that is looking to expand opportunities for women's employment in the state and what is needed to attract women to the work force. If we can increase child care services that are affordable we could expand the labor market. There was more discussion about economic development, such as getting involved with the school district, the lack of a trained workforce, and what the community can do to get more people to this area.

T. Smith pointed out that 10,000 people a day go south to work. 4,500 came into the community daily. A Council member pointed out that a big draw to this area are the recreational amenities, such as Hard'Ack, which is shared by both communities. D. Cloud and C. Johnson were charged to develop a recommendation to establish an economic development task force/subcommittee of the joint legislative bodies.

Mike McCarthy left the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Other Business

Major Zac Fike, Operations Officer for the First Squadron 172nd Cavalry Regiment, in charge of the local armory came before the Board and Council and provide some background to what his group does and some of the things he does within the community. The guard members are from all over the State of Vermont and consist of 400 people. Some of which are business owners in their respective communities. Major Fike started an international, non-profit organization that returns lost or stolen military medals. They employ three Vermonters. A member of that organization also happens to be a business associate at 14th Star which has over 20 employees. Additionally, some of the original founders of 14th Star opened up a distillery on Lake Street making bourbon.

Major Fike went on to say that the opportunities in the military here are a great way to keep Vermonters local. They have a sense of pride and home protection. They are going to learn important skills and earn the resources to gain a free education to gain the skills to necessary to start business here locally.

Major Fike explained that the Guard would like to engage with the community more, assist in local events, and open up the armory for the City/Town needs. There is a simple process that involves filling out a request form. He encouraged the Council and Board to have future meetings at the armory.

One of the community engagement projects Major Fike talked about was the Vermont Army National Guard's live narration of their unit history utilizing local reenactors and current members of the formation. They will review the guard's lineage through the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World Wars I & II, Vietnam and modern day Iraq and Afghanistan. This is taking place on Sunday, August 11th at 11am in Taylor Park and will be about a 45 minutes exercise.

Major Fike went on to explain a community challenge to recreate a historical picture taken 100 years ago on June 7th, 1918 dubbed as "Honor Day". This picture is currently on display at Town Hall. They would like to take this picture on August 11th at noon. Coordination with local police has been arranged and Main Street will be closed for about 20 minutes. 200-300 soldiers will be present. Would like to include as many people from both communities as possible.

T. Smith stated that with Memorial Day events, both the City and Town need to engage better in honoring those who have served; past, present, and future. Have school bands participate and grow the parade.

J. Frost explained that the schools are looking to expand their “Walk to School” program and need more, responsible adults. It would be a great experience for the children to walk with a solider.

Schedule

It was discussed to possibly meet again in September.

Adjournment

MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to adjourn at 8:05 p.m. Seconded by C. Spooner. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by
Carrie Johnson