

**Town of St. Albans  
Selectboard 'Special' Meeting Minutes  
Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
4:00 p.m.**

On Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 4:00 p.m., at Town Hall the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met for a 'special' meeting and a budget work session.

**Officials and staff present:** Brendan Deso, Al Voegelé, Stan Dukas, Jessica Frost, Town Manager Carrie Johnson, and Matt Young of Ascent Consulting. Vice Chair Bruce Cheeseman participated by phone.

**Public:** None

Chair B. Deso opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

The purpose of this 'special' meeting was to review the Town Hall relocation options in a report created by Matt Young of Ascent Consulting.

**Option 1 – Current Town Hall**

Mr. Young went over Option 1 with the Board. He explained that this option would include using all three levels and an addition to the current Town Hall building. He stated that in his opinion, older buildings can be a money pit. He said that he could not say the costs would come in under or go above what he estimated. There are a lot of risks. One item he was unable to investigate was the roof on the current Town Hall. Another thing to consider is that there is zero room for expansion. There is limited parking, office space, and septic. After about 8-10 years, we will start to incur more costs.

**Option 2 – Grice Brook Road – Existing Single Level Building**

Mr. Young explained that with Option 2 would also be a short term investment, 8-10 years. Being that this building is 15 years old, a lot of the mechanical equipment is close to end of life. This building is not as energy efficient as requirements dictate today, it shows signs of aging. He did point out that there is quite a bit of renovation that would need to occur to fit the needs of a town hall. B. Cheeseman asked Mr. Young that while he was doing his inspection of the roof if he found a large amount of HVAC equipment up there. Mr. Young stated this to be the case. B. Cheeseman then suggested that for Town Hall, we wouldn't need all that HVAC equipment because we wouldn't be using the holding cells and Mr. Young agreed. S. Dukas did point out that with the new building codes that came out in 2015, we need to be cautious about moving equipment around to ensure we follow the new codes.

**Option 3A – Smith Property New 1 Level Building**

Mr. Young explained that Option 3A is a 10,000 square foot slab on grade option with a wood frame and would be a higher efficient building. It would be built on a donated piece of land. We would have a much higher energy efficient building with a useful life of 50 – 70, years designed for future expansion. It can be technically advanced and include programming needs for the future.

**Option 3B – Smith Property New 1 Level Building with Basement**

Mr. Young stated that having a building with a basement as stated in Option 3B will add very little to the cost per square foot. You'd have to dig deeper to pour a basement and add a frost wall. However, you could include windows and an egress and use the basement level for meeting space. B. Deso stated that if we do that, we'd need to figure in the cost of an elevator. Mr. Young explained that the only time you need to have an elevator is if you have staff that are on separate floors, for ADA rules you have to provide same level of facilities in the basement as you do downstairs. C. Johnson stated that we need an elevator. If we are going to building a brand new building, we should include an elevator. That is one of the reasons why we dislike this building, it doesn't provide ADA access.

A. Voegele asked how a vault would be supported on the first floor? Mr. Young stated that he'd put the vault on the lower level. In case of fire, you could take advantage of the concrete walls. A. Voegele stated that the vault has to be assessible to all who need to look at documents. C. Johnson stated that the Town Clerk has to be able to view people going into and out of the vault to ensure no one is stealing or destroying documentation.

B. Cheeseman suggested putting Town Hall on the same property where the new Department of Public Works (DPW) is being built. Mr. Young explained that he reviewed the report by John Alden and then did a drive around the Town of St. Albans. He then said that the purpose of building a town hall was that you are closer to the population, closer to where the residents work and live. Brigham Road, geographically is the center of the Town of St. Albans, but not where the population or majority of the residents will be. C. Johnson pointed out that the Brigham Road property is commercial/industrial right now and that the Town hoped to could get another commercial/industrial tenant there. We have been approached by one or two that have not panned out, but we expect new ones to keep coming up.

Mr. Young did share his concern with the safety of putting a town hall on the same property as the DPW complex. DPW is a commercial/industrial use. The truck traffic as well as the dirt, dust, and noise. S. Dukas said you don't think Route 104 is right there? Heavy, heavy, heavy traffic. It is not easy access at all.

### **Option 3C – Smith Property New 1 Level Building**

This option includes a 1 level building without a basement at 13,000 square feet. This option is very similar to Option 3B.

### **Moving Forward**

Mr. Young went over what to do to move forward. March 2020 would be the Town vote. The traditional path to design, bid, and build, which usually takes 21 months.

**Design – 5 months – March 2020 – July 2020**

**Bid – 1 month – August 2020**

**Construction – 8 months – September 2020 – April 2021**

**Completion – May 2021**

Mr. Young explained that in order for the Town to spend the minimal amount of dollars to get ready for a vote, the Town should budget about \$55,000 - \$60,000. Mr. Young's time to manage the process, put the RFP's together, send off to a design/build will be about \$10,000. He highly recommended the Town get a Geotech report done, enabling the boring process and get some sub-soil information.

B. Cheeseman stated he felt a vote on Town Hall this was too soon after spending the money we spent on the DPW project. We should wait and do this right. Maybe wait until March 2021 to get this to the voters. A. Voegele suggested a vote in November, 2020. B. Cheeseman agreed with that.

B. Deso suggested that we get a deal done on the land, find where the corner markers are, and what the site plan costs to develop are. Maybe not do borings yet, but have the deal on the land be subject to step voter approval. Go to the voters in March, 2020 on the land only. Get their opinion on the location. J. Frost stated that voters will need an option. If they vote "no" and don't like the location, what is our next option?

Mr. Young cautioned the Board and stated that if you go for the voter input a piece of land and they agree to it, and then have a vote the following fall for the Town Hall and it fails, what do you do with the commitment on the piece of land. B. Deso stated the Town would require a funding contingency clause. Mr. Young

said that the Town should do it all at one vote. B. Deso suggested going to the voters for \$60,000 of Local Option Tax (LOT) funds to develop a proposal for a new town hall at location "X". To pay for the pre-development phase of new town hall. We would then work on a contract on the piece of land.

C. Johnson stated that the only way we are going to move forward and make progress is if we make a decision and build on that decision. The decision of the Selectboard as a whole was that one of these 5 locations would work. Now, the Selectboard needs to take the 5 locations and decide which one would work and then go to voters with a recommendation.

Mr. Young explained that he read the Infrastructure Committee report and they had done a lot of the work already. This is the next phase, launching off their recommendation. They recommended a certain property for the site. A. Voegele suggested that we go forward with the pre-development phase, which can be moved anywhere if the voters do not like the location we put forth.

J. Frost asked if there was an executive summary that the public could read from the Infrastructure Steering Committee that looked at all the building sites. Mr. Young stated he read it, but it included the DPW project so it was like two reports in one. Mr. Young suggested an up-to-date executive summary about just the Town Hall. J. Frost stated that everybody has an idea of where it (Town Hall) should be and if you don't have the back story on why a certain location was recommend you may not get enough "yes" votes. Mr. Young suggested doing a follow up to the report and have a public forum before March.

The Board was in consensus to go to the voters in March to ask for \$60,000 LOT money for the pre-development phase for a new town hall. A. Voegele will work on an updated executive summary. B. Deso suggested developing a 30 minute pitch followed by a 15 to 30 minute Q & A and present to different places in town several times. C. Johnson suggested at short video clip on Facebook as well.

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to recess the Selectboard meeting at 5:10 p.m. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to reconvene the Selectboard meeting at 5:35 p.m. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Staff Present:** Town Clerk Anna Bourdon and Director of Administration Ned Connell arrived at 5:10 p.m.

**Public:** Franklin County Home Health, American Red Cross, Franklin/Grand Isle Restorative Justin, Vermont Adult Learning, and Green Mountain Transit

Chair B. Deso called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Budget Work Session**

The Board started with going over the non-profit organizations' allocation requests. A few of the organizations requesting allocations were in attendance.

### **Franklin County Home Health Agency – Kristina Senna, Chief Financial Officer**

Ms. Senna came before the Board to give a brief overview of the benefits and services of Franklin County Home Health Agency and provided them with a copy of her presentation. Ms. Senna explained that her agency provides home health and hospice care services for Franklin County. They are the only non-profit home health agency in Franklin County. Her request for allocation was \$4,000 for FY 2021.

**American Red Cross – Rachel Zellem, Regional Development Specialist**

Ms. Zellem came before the Board asking for renewed support of \$2,500 for FY 2021. She gave a brief overview of the Red Cross services.

**Vermont Adult Learning – Eric Peterson, Regional Director for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties**

Mr. Peterson came before the Board to provide an overview of the programs and services Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) provides. They are one of four adult education and literacy providers in the state and is the largest serving 7 of 14 counties in Vermont. Their main learning center is in St. Albans located next to the CVOEO building on Lemnah Drive with two satellite centers; one in Swanton and one in Richford. Mr. Peterson did state that they are a GED (General Equivalency Diploma) testing site. Mr. Peterson's request for the FY 2021 year has increased \$100 from \$500 to \$600 for VAL. He went on to explain that in his request letter he requested \$500 for the Franklin Grand Isle Bookmobile because they lost their fiscal agent and didn't have anyone they could raise money through or generate funds for their program. VAL has agreed to be the fiscal agent for the FGI Bookmobile. This allows FGI Bookmobile to use VAL's 501C3 tax exempt status. VAL is working with them to build a new Board of Directors and to obtain their own 501C3 status.

**Franklin Grand Isle Restorative Justice – Nina Curtis, Executive Director and Harmony Bourgeois, Director of Court Diversion**

Ms. Curtis and Ms. Bourgeois came before the Board to request for an increase in allocated funds for FY 2021. Ms. Curtis provided the Board with a handout and gave them a brief history and overview of their services. She explained that they are a merged agency consisting of the Community Justice Center and the Court Diversion Program, under one group. Previously, the Court Diversion Program was a 501C3 non-profit. The Community Justice Center had been a municipal entity. When considering the merger, they went through two 18-month community dialog processes trying to decide whether to remain as a municipal entity with the City of St. Albans or remain as a 501C3 non-profit. The community decided that the City of St. Albans be asked to take on the Court Diversion Program. They are now part of the City of St. Albans. The Town of St. Albans had previously allotted \$2,000 for Franklin Grand Isle Restorative Justice in the budget. For the FY 2021 budget, they are requesting \$10,000 from the Town.

**Green Mountain Transit – Jen Wood, Public Affairs and Community Relations Manager**

Ms. Wood came before the Board and provided them with copies of the request letter, their annual report, and a 1-page flyer she previously sent regarding their allocation request. She also provided a brief background stating that they are technically a municipality and the only transit authority in the State of Vermont. They cover 50% of the ridership in Vermont and the other 50% is covered by 7 other transit agencies in the state.

Ms. Wood explained GMT's funding model. There are two service areas; urban and rural. On the urban side, 80% of funding comes from a federal grant. The other 20%, GMT is required to get a local match. In the urban areas, through the power of taxation, every town is a member and based on census data (Fair Share Equation), a contribution is assessed by GMT per town. Those towns will automatically give that assessed amount each year to GMT with a 3% increase that is mandated by law. Ms. Wood went on to explain that the process is different on the rural side and could include petitions, applications, or written letters, whatever the requirements are. Because of GMT's designation as a municipality and not a non-profit, GMT is requesting towns consider putting GMT in their budgets as a municipal service.

The previous allocation, in the amount of \$4,952 had been level funded for several years. The request for the FY 2021 budget is up 5% to \$5,200. Based on the Fair Share Equation, if GMT assess St. Albans Town, our full 20%

contribution would be \$26,317. A lot of towns aren't close to the 20% match. The Town of St. Albans is at 20% of the 20% of what our contribution level is now. That is why GMT is asking for the 5% increase.

S. Dukas asked Ms. Wood if any of the businesses located in the Town's industrial park contribute. Ms. Wood stated currently they do not, but that they are on her list of places to pursue.

### **St. Albans Street Crimes Unit**

Police Chief Gary Taylor came before the Board to discuss the Street Crimes Unit and some of the crimes officers had responded to in the last year. The Street Crimes Unit operates as a separate unit within the police department. Current costs to operate this unit is \$229,200 per year. This cost is split in half between the City of St. Albans and the Town of St. Albans. Chief Taylor stated that he would like to continue the Street Crimes Unit. He explained that when he went before both the City Council and the Selectboard, he stated that if it wasn't an effective unit, it would be dismantled. This unit is very effective. Chief Taylor answered questions on some of the crimes his unit has responded to as well as staffing, overtime, and operating costs. For FY 2020, the Town had budgeted \$114,600. His request for the FY 2021 budget is \$115,000.

### **Friends of Northern Lake Champlain – Kent Henderson, Chair**

Mr. Henderson came before the Board. He explained that Friends of Northern Lake Champlain (FNLC) is a long time water quality improvement group. He stated that they have a long record of successful projects. One of the projects is providing residents something they can use on their property to improve water quality. Mr. Henderson requested an allocation of \$1,500 for FY 2021, which is an increase of \$1,000 from FY 2020. He did point out that this is the same amount of allocation FNLC receives from other towns along Lake Champlain such as Georgia, Swanton, and Highgate.

One of the programs FNLC offered previously was "Lake Lessons" provided to 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Another program that was just completed was a five year contract with the Town and City with the RSEP program. With Northwest Regional Planning, they present workshops to individuals on what they can do on their own property (as mentioned above). FNLC has also lead the "April Stools Day" initiative to encourage folks to pick up pet waste.

### **Stormwater – Ned Connell**

The Board had been provided a packet of information on stormwater costs and future spending. C. Johnson explained that we took each "**Project Summary**" and put it onto separate "**Annual Fiscal Budget Expenditure**" sheets by using detailed transaction summaries from every year to provide stormwater expenses by fiscal year, since we started funding stormwater. We also created a FY'21 summary of budget request and rollover funds called "**Stormwater Summary**". C. Johnson went over the information provided to the Selectboard stating that the Town has stormwater requirements every year totaling close to \$50,000. Some of those requirements now include catch basins, video in culverts, rain gages, and RSEP (Regional Stormwater Education Program) which is a leg of the MS4 requirement.

C. Johnson continued by explaining that the Town received an ERP grant a couple of years ago to do work on Tanglewood Drive. We did design, permitting, and then went out to bid for construction. When we went out to bid for construction, the estimated budget was \$50,000. However, bids came in at \$118,000. We are not going to do that construction this fall. Director of Administration Ned Connell had spoken to people at the State explaining the situation asking for another chance at doing this project. C. Johnson stated that we will return the construction portion (\$50,000) of this grant and ask for a larger grant. Both the HOA and Town will be responsible for 25% of the costs and the grant will cover the other 50%. S. Dukas asked if we had spoken to the Tanglewood HOA regarding their 25%? N. Connell explained that we are going

to need to speak to them to let them know we are moving forward with this project.

C. Johnson stated that the first draft of the budget had \$150,000 in the stormwater line. She reduced it to \$75,000, but the final number is up to the Selectboard.

B. Deso asked if we could get a stormwater utility up and running for fiscal year 2021 if we vote on it in March, 2020? C. Johnson and N. Connell both said yes. B. Deso stated that the costs could be \$150,000 (stormwater line item) because we wouldn't have a full time staff. A. Bourdon stated that there is NEMRC module for utility billing, which is the same as what the City uses. B. Deso questioned when we would need staff. N. Connell explained that we could start with someone part-time and grow them into a full-time position over time.

### **Current Stormwater Projects**

There was discussion on the 5 current stormwater projects; Hawk's Nest, Franklin County Rehab, Industrial Park, Tanglewood, and the main pond at Northwestern Medical Center (NMC). A. Voegelé asked why the hospital (NMC) backed out of their project? C. Johnson explained that where we conceptually proposed the pond, was their only buildable land and they didn't want to obligate that much of it to stormwater pond at this time. C. Johnson explained that she met with Jonathan and Tyson at the hospital and asked if our engineer could engineer a smaller pond to use less space would they consider it and their response was tepid, at best. C. Johnson went on to say that eventually they are going to have to address stormwater if they expand again and with the grant we had, it could have saved them some money. S. Dukas stated we spent money on that (NMC) project. C. Johnson said a few thousand dollars. B. Deso asked C. Johnson to figure out how much the Town is out money wise on this project. We will apply for reimbursement, from the grant on the money we spent on engineering for the NMC pond.

To sum up, S. Dukas stated that the hospital dropped out, leaving us with 4 project. Two of those are completed and another will be completed by the end of December. Tanglewood had a high price, so, that'll go onto the next fiscal year.

### **Future Stormwater Projects**

S. Dukas asked what the Town's focus was going to be in the next 5 years. C. Johnson explained that she and N. Connell will add one or two stormwater projects to the budget each year. The next 12 months, we will start Tanglewood Phase 2. We will also apply for a grant for Gricebrook which would be included in the 2022 fiscal year budget. We will work on the details prior to applying for a grant. The Board agreed to keep \$75,000 in the FY 2021 budget for now, noting that support may change.

### **Non-Profits**

J. Frost stated that it's hard to make decisions when you don't know how it's going to effect the tax rate. C. Johnson explained that a penny on the tax rate is \$100,000. So look at changes from a broader standpoint. A. Bourdon explained that once we agree on the expense side of the budget, you subtract the revenue side off that, that's the amount we use to raise taxes. A. Bourdon continued saying that that we usually kind of ball park off of last year's grand list because this year's grand list isn't ready May.

The Board went through the non-profits. A. Voegelé did point out the Veteran's Valet is not asking for funds for FY 2021 and C. Johnson stated that it was only a one time request for FY 2020. The Board agreed to not have non-profits organizations return to budget meetings unless there is a significant increase in their request.

The Board went through the more of the budget.

**Executive Session**

**MOTION: V. Voegele made a motion to go into executive session at 8:01 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. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**MOTION: J. Frost made a motion to come out of executive session. Seconded by A. Voegele. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

After executive session, the Board went through the remainder of the budget.

**Adjournment**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to adjourn the 'special' Selectboard meeting at 8:36 p.m. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer Gray