

**Town of St. Albans  
Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020  
6:30 p.m.**

On Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 at 6:30 p.m., at Town Hall the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met.

**Officials and staff present:** Chair Brendan Deso, Vice Chair Bruce Cheeseman, Stan Dukas, Jessica Frost, Al Voegele, Town Clerk Anna Bourdon, Director of Public Works Alan Mashtare, Fire Chief and Public Safety Administrator Bob Cross, Town Manager Carrie Johnson, and Recording Secretary Jenn Gray.

**Public:** Bob Fairbanks, St. Albans Messenger Michael Frett, David McWilliams, Bill Nihan, Anne Pomeroy, Paul and Sarah Lerner, Mitch Montagne, Jonathan Giroux, Jay Sweeny, Erin Creley, Jackie Brown, and Chuck Lowe.

Chair B. Deso called the Selectboard meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. B. Deso took this opportunity to state that the Selectboard must remain respectful and civil to one another.

S. Dukas explained that he was upset when he left the meeting last Wednesday (1/15) and stated that he had other options. In the future, he will use those options. B. Cheeseman shared S. Dukas' sentiment and went on to say that in the past, information had been used against him. He was upset and felt that it was best to leave the meeting last Wednesday.

**General Warrant**

**MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to approve the general warrant dated January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 in the amount of \$249,739.58. Seconded by B. Cheeseman. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

Town resident Bill Nihan asked for an explanation on the funds for the MS4 permit. S. Dukas stated it was for work that was done at the end of Industrial Park Road. It was a required upgrade for the MS4 Permit.

**Corrected Fire Department Reserve & Capital Reserve Account Warrants**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to correct the previously approved Fire Department Reserve account warrant from \$5,225.00 to the amended amount of \$15,225.00 and the previously approved Capital Reserve Account warrant from \$115,000 to the amended amount of \$105,000. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Industrial Park Warrant**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve the Industrial park warrant in the amount of \$562.40. Seconded by B. Cheeseman. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Infrastructure Development Fund Warrant**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve the Infrastructure Development Fund warrant in the amount of \$175,627.31. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Payroll**

**MOTION: J. Frost made a motion to approve the payroll warrants dated January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in the amount of \$20,654.32, and January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in the amount of \$19,677.17. Seconded by B. Cheeseman. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Minutes**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to approve the Selectboard meeting minutes from Monday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 as written. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Proposed Agreement for Shared Ownership of Hard'Ack and Community Pool – Proposed Letter of Intent**

B. Deso explained that the Letter of Intent (LOI) was the subject of a 'special' meeting that took place last Wednesday (1/15). The letter was drafted with supporting documents. B. Deso opened the meeting up to discussion and suggested a motion to approve.

S. Dukas asked did we figure out how we are paying for this? B. Deso stated Local Option Tax (LOT). B. Deso went on to say it was discussed at the budget meeting last Thursday (1/16). It was discussed moving the equipment for the Fire Department and Public Works

from the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) (and place them on the ballot). S. Dukas stated that the only one (piece of equipment) he saw on the ballot was for one truck. C. Johnson clarified by stating that there is one DPW plow truck and Fire Department Reserve article. S. Dukas stated that we are going to go in debt, by that document (Capital Improvement Plan) for \$3.5 million for a Town Hall and \$2.75 million for a pool. S. Dukas went on to say that he didn't see a bottom line number we'd have left after that and he had concerns that if we are going to spend that \$850,000 we think we have coming. C. Johnson clarified that the CIP remains solvent for either plan.

Mr. Nihan asked what the major points are in the agreement? B. Deso explained the Letter of Intent by reading some of the broader points of the agreement. It is subject to voter approval. Mr. Nihan asked if the land is 100% owned by the City what is the role of Hard'Ack in this? B. Deso stated there is a unique agreement with the City. It gives the Hard'Ack Corporation a governance capacity of the whole area. A. Voegelé stated that under that agreement, they have reserved certain rights. One of them is to building the Brown Lodge. The second is to have the ability to put the ice skating rink on the property. B. Deso explained that a new commission would be formed called the St. Albans Recreation Commission which would be comprised of equal appointees from the City and the Town. They would work with the Hard'Ack board to oversee its governance.

Mr. Nihan asked the Board if they had given any thought to setting up a recreation district where the City and the Town would be equal owners in this corporation? It could expand the total concept of City and Town recreational possibilities to include Barlow Street and maybe Collins Perley. A broader set of structure in place to allow you to do things and there would be a buffer for liability. A. Voegelé stated there has been some discussion about municipalities having the opportunity to set up enterprise funds. There was a brief discussion about the possibility of using the enterprise fund to incorporate the operations of the Hard'Ack area.

Town resident Mitch Montagne stated that on the Hard'Ack board, we might have a problem with that. How can you ask for public money and have just a certain group decide where it's going to be doled out, bond money, maintenance costs. B. Deso stated they wouldn't have any role in the day to day maintenance of Hard'Ack. Mr. Montagne stated no, but they would have a say if we wanted to build a skating rink, saying I want the skating rink this big, I want it that big. B. Deso explained that per Hard'Ack's agreement with the City, they have a permitted skating rink that is already defined and they reserve the right to deed that property to SASA (St. Albans Skating Association).

A. Voegelé explained he serves on the Epi Center committee with Bruce Cheeseman. When Hard'ack sold its property to the City, Hard'Ack become an advisory board to the City and Town managers and the Board of Alderman. The Epi Center committee was to investigate options of what people want to put there; one of them being the skating rink. All that the Epi Center committee was to do was make a recommendation to the Hard'Ack board, who then agreed or disagree with that recommendation. Then they advocate for or against it with the Town Manager, the City Manager, and the Board of Alderman. The final authority falls on the Board of Alderman.

B. Cheeseman explained he is a member of the Epi Center committee as well and right now the emphasis is to put the skating rink at Collins Perley. He went on to say that they've put a great deal of time and energy into the ice skating rink and that is a very big financial commitment that they realized at our last meeting, they may not be able to accomplish.

Town resident Ann Pomeroy asked if this goes further and there is a hockey rink, who is financially responsible for building that hockey rink? Are we financially responsible to build everything that the Hard'Ack Association decided they want to build? B. Deso said no. A. Voegelé stated that the hockey rink discussion is always focused on SASA. Ms. Pomeroy stated that the whole issue is about the pool and as a bonus to basically giving the City what they need, they need us and by us choosing to go in with them, we've asked for the 50% ownership. That's a bonus to us. With that as the bonus, what is the additional (cost) responsibility? B. Deso stated that right now, we've only defined 50% of liability insurance for the pool.

Town resident David McWilliams explained that it was going to cost \$2 million to fix the current pool. He would like to see the cost breakdown proposal of the repairs. Put it on the ballot. There is no proposed budget for the pool. B. Deso stated the LOT would pay for the pool. User fees would pay for the maintenance.

B. Cheeseman stated that he is not opposed to this (the pool). Anything that will benefit the Town and the City will bring the relationship a little be closer, but the bottom line is there is a financial commitment. His fear is obligating the sales tax money to too many projects.

B. Deso stated that we are proposing \$250,000 a year for 10 years for a new Town hall from LOT. That was recommended by the Planning Commission. This bond payment, as it has been estimated is anywhere between \$170,000 to \$190,000 per year for a period of 20-25 years. Call it an even \$200,000. So, that's \$450,000. We are receiving revenues of upwards of \$850,000. B. Deso continued saying he didn't think we were being irresponsible in making commitments of a little over 50%. We should be able to leverage our income streams to benefit ourselves. Mr. Nihan stated the LOT was only for infrastructure unless voter approval. We didn't commit until we had the funds in our pockets. Mr. Nihan was concerned about diverting funds from its original intention. B. Deso stated the voters will always have the final say.

Town resident Paul Lerner stated the funds are for infrastructure only and not for the general fund. He continued by saying that we should wait for 5 years and save the money.

Mr. Nihan asked how this agreement would be dissolved if it needed to be? B. Deso said we plan to define that.

Fire Chief Bob Cross stated that he knows that the Town of St. Albans and the Selectboard have always been cautious in the past on what they do with their money and how they spend that money. The City is pushing way too fast to build a new pool at Hard'Ack. A. Voegelé stated that this has been in the plans for years.

Town resident Bob Fairbanks stated he didn't want to get back under something we got rid of a long time ago. The Town got sued because a girl got hurt up there (Hard'Ack) and we got rid of it to avoid any more liability. A. Voegelé stated we need to have some faith in the future. If we keep looking to the past we won't get anywhere. If the LOT dropped to \$400,000 we would still be OK. Need to look to what the young people want. We need to heal the divisions between the two municipalities. A. Voegelé continued by stating that he will support the pool.

Town resident Jay Sweeny stated he is against signing the Letter of Intent. Town Meeting Day is not that far away. What's the rush to sign this before we know what the voters do? Mr. Sweeny went on to say that he was against using the LOT, stating that is not what that money was for, I wouldn't have voted for it to use it for things like this. We seem to be in a hurry to throw money at this project. Let's see what the voters have to say. B. Deso stated that if we can't reach an agreement that is satisfactory to the Town, even if the voters pass the bond, we may not do it. We do have a short time window. We did not dictate the schedule. We are moving forward to allow a Town vote.

J. Frost explained that so many people in the community have told her that they're thrilled this is happening, they love the collaboration, and that it's such a great amenity for our Town. She went on to say that the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston did a study and looked at why all these small towns in New England were struggling. The one common theme that they found between all the thriving small towns is that they were dependent on how well the leaders were willing to collaborate across private business, public, non-profit sectors on a common, long term vision for the community. It's time to move forward a little bit. Put it out to the voters and see what they want to do.

A. Voegelé asked to call the question to end the debate and discussion.

**MOTION: A. Voegelé made a motion to call the question to a vote. Seconded by J. Frost. Motion carried with a 3-1 vote with S. Dukas voted opposed.**

A. Voegelé made a motion to authorize Carrie Johnson, the Town Manager to sign the Letter of Intent. Seconded by J. Frost. B. Deso opened the floor for more discussion.

Mr. Nihan asked how absolute is the \$5.5 million? B. Deso according to the document, it's absolute. Mr. Nihan asked what happens if that is reached? B. Deso said that was a good question and would need to be addressed in the contract.

**MOTION: A. Voegelé made a motion to authorize Carrie Johnson, the Town Manager to sign the Letter of Intent. Seconded by J. Frost. Motion carried with a 3-2 vote with B. Deso voting to break the tie.**

### **Jackie Brown Property**

Mrs. Brown came before the Board to speak about some land she has available for sale for a potential location for a new Town Hall. She explained she has 7.6 acres, on the lake, adjacent to the old DPW location, within the village area and would like it considered for Town Hall. Details will be discussed in executive session at the end of the meeting.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Liquor Control Board**

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

**Liquor License Renewals**

American Legion – First Class, Third Class, and Outside Consumption  
Price Chopper – Second Class  
RL Vallee North and RL Valle South – Second Class  
Pie in the Sky – First Class

**MOTION: A. Voegelé made a motion to approve all Liquor License renewal applications as presented. Seconded by B. Cheeseman. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**MOITON: J. Frost made a motion to adjourn the Liquor Control Board and reconvene the Selectboard meeting. Seconded by A. Voegelé. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**2020 Certificate of Highway Mileage**

The Town had no changes.

**MOTION: S. Dukas made a motion to accept the Highway Mileage according to Vermont Statutes annotated, Title 19, Section 305, added 1985 for 80.584 miles and of that 27.074 miles is State highway leaving us with 53.51 miles. Seconded by A. Voegelé. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Town Manager’s Report**

**Water Allocation Request – Jeffrey & Tammy Boissoneault – Off Cody Drive**

**MOTION: B. Cheeseman made a motion to approve the water allocation request for Jeffrey and Tammy Boissoneault off Cody Drive. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Proposed FY 2021 Municipal Budget**

The Selectboard was provided draft #6 of the budget. B. Cheeseman stated that the budget is high and was wondering if we could cut it, but after thinking about it there really isn't anywhere else to cut. He was ready to approve it. B. Deso stated that he projects that it'll be around \$.03 increase on the tax rate. He explained that we used to have \$300,000 of general fund balance to reduce taxes. This year it's \$100,000. We've made major cuts. The budget isn't lavish. A. Bourdon did remind the audience that the tax rate may not increase at all if our grand list goes up, but we won't know that until May.

**MOTION: B. Cheeseman made a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Municipal Budget in the amount of \$4,663,258. Seconded by A. Voegelé. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**Proposed March 2020 Town Meeting Day Warning**

B. Deso went through the articles.

**Article 5 – Shall the Legal Voters of the Town of St. Albans authorize the Selectboard to spend up to \$65,000 of previously collected Infrastructure Development funds (Local Option Tax Revenues) to fund the pre-development phase for a new Town Hall?**

S. Dukas stated that he thought \$65,000 was a lot of money. C. Johnson explained that Matt Young sent an email on January 15<sup>th</sup> confirmed that \$65,000 would get us through the schematic design process.

**Article 6 – Shall the Legal Voters of the Town of St. Albans support moving Town Hall?**

B. Deso suggested switching Article 5 and Article 6 around on the warning, asking voters about Town Hall first and then asking the voters about the \$65,000 to spend on pre-development. Discussion followed.

A. Voegelé reminded the Board and let the community know that stated that we have had multiple studies on this building; where to put a Town Hall. The most recent study, the advisory committee looked at it and there were two previous studies by engineers back about 5 or 10 years ago. In each case, this building could be rehabilitated, but its lasting life would, by engineering methods, have a life expectancy of 10 years. The advisory committee made

a recommendation. What's the purpose of the Board creating an advisory committee if they are going to constantly disregard what's been given?

B. Deso explained that we created the Town Hall Relocation committee and then 6 months down the line we're talking about this building still. It's time for the voters to give the Selectboard a concrete direction to move. That way, we can draw up a proposal for the voters to vote yes or no on, about either renovating or relocating and building a new Town Hall.

J. Frost agreed with A. Voegelé and would like to follow the committee's recommendations, but she also had concerns about abandoning this building. We will still own this building. Who's going to buy a building that is out of code and needs lots of renovations?

C. Johnson explained that we asked a construction manager to evaluate what we needed at this stage of the process. He (Matt Young) basically said to C. Johnson it doesn't matter what location we are talking about, to get to the schematic design stage, you need to do this work and spend this money. It doesn't matter if we're doing it here, if we're doing it over at DPW, if we're doing it on the Smith Property. It doesn't matter where we put this, we still have to get through these stages. The process is, getting a schematic design, working with our Project Manager is \$15,000 which would result in evaluating space needs, \$30,000 and a \$10,000 contingency. This will allow us to move forward no matter where we go. We are running out of vault space. B. Cheeseman stated that doing the design work will also help give us an idea on what we need for a location.

Mr. Larner stated we should ask what will it cost to make this building last 75 years. B. Cheeseman stated we also need to know whether or not to move out of the Bay.

Town resident and Planning Commissioner Erin Creley asked if the \$65,000, a schematic design, was going to give us what we need to know to give to the voters? Before we make the decision to go or to stay, we need to know all the options. B. Cheeseman stated it will not give you all the answers the voters will need to know. It's not going to give you the total cost of construction and that's what the people are going to want to know.

B. Deso explained that we would go to the voters and ask the clarifying question; where do you want the Town Hall to be; in the Bay or outside the Bay? From there, we would take the \$65,000 budget, generate some type of proposal that can be taken back to the voters by November. At the end of the day, this Town Hall is a place where we come to have meetings 2 – 3 times a month, sometimes 4. It's a place we come to check land records and pay our taxes. There is a group of people here who work very hard for us that have to be here every day, for 8 or more hours. The working conditions here aren't as bad as they are at the DPW on Georgia Shore, but they are approaching that. We have to do something. Mr. Larner asked if it's a problem, why don't we fix it? J. Frost suggested taking Article 6 off the ballot and have a map of the Town up and as people are exiting voting, they can mark on the map where they'd like to see Town Hall. C. Johnson suggested an informal poll. A. Bourdon stated that the map could not be in the voting area.

Town resident and local business owner Chuck Lowe wants to see more support from the Town. He thinks it's ridiculous to move the Town Hall out of the Bay. This is the downtown. It'll be extremely expensive to renovating this building and you'll be stuck within these four walls. It would probably cost the Town a lot less money to building a new building. The problem is we are not moving forward. Every other town is building bike paths and improving recreation, which brings good people to your town. People right now move here for a cheap house, they can't afford to live in Chittenden County, so they move to St. Albans.

After much discussion, the following language was decided: Do the Legal Voters of the Town of St. Albans support having the Town Hall remain in the Bay area? Article 6 and Article 5 will be switched in order on the ballot.

J. Frost suggested providing a glossary for first time voters explaining what the Local Option Tax is, what a First Constable does, so when people show up to vote, they know. C. Johnson stated we can do that, that's why she does a Budget Justification spreadsheet, but you can't put that in the voting area. We can post it on our website and Facebook.

Mr. Larner asked if the Board had considered eliminating some of the offices that are no longer needed, such as First Constable. B. Deso explained that he would like to get through this Town Meeting Day and then propose a Charter committee to review some of the issues and questions that have come up, such as should the Town Clerk be elected or appointed.

**MOTION: A. Voegelé made a motion to approve the 2020 Town Meeting Day warning as amended. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

### **Department of Public Works Update**

C. Johnson gave a brief summary. The DPW garage is substantially complete. Moving will begin this week. We are on schedule and within budget. Matt Young will give a more detailed update next month.

### **Schedule**

The next Selectboard meetings are Monday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> and Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>. A public meeting with the City on the pool to be scheduled.

### **Chair's Report**

B. Deso explained that there have been some flyers distributed in the City on public property and in the Bay with an anti-Semitic tone. He would like the Town Manager to discuss this with the Police Chief. A. Voegele suggested asking the museum and library to make the community more aware of the holocaust.

### **Other Business**

B. Cheeseman shared with the Board that in the weekly legislature report, it's clear that they are taking notice of the vacancies in volunteer fire departments throughout the state. In the summary of new Bills, H737 will allow municipalities to divide a local property tax exemption for emergency medical personnel, first responders, and active volunteer firefighters. Currently, that Bill is in the House of Ways and Means. They will also direct the Agency of Education to provide post-secondary career technical education courses at regional technical centers for the Fireman 1 Course and Emergency Medical Response Certification through the Dual Education Program.

### **Town Report**

S. Dukas asked if there had been any consideration yet as to what will be on this year's Town Report cover? C. Johnson said that she was proposing a new picture of our DPW garage from a drone. Armand Messier said he would take an aerial photo.

### **Executive Session**

**MOTION: J. Frost made a motion to go into executive session at 8:25 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 Jackie Brown and Town Manager, Carrie Johnson. Seconded by A. Voegele. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to come out of executive session at 9:00. Seconded by J. Frost. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION: A. Voegele made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 9:00 p.m. Seconded by B. Cheeseman. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jenn Gray, Recording Secretary