

**Town of St. Albans
Selectboard Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 26th, 2020
5:45 p.m.**

On Tuesday, May 26th, 2020 at 5:45 p.m., the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met via Zoom Teleconferencing.

Officials and staff present: Chair Brendan Deso, Vice Chair Jessica Frost, Erin Creley, Stan Dukas, Jonathan Giroux, Town Manager Carrie Johnson, Town Clerk Anna Bourdon, Town Hall Project Manager Matt Young, and Recording Secretary Jenn Gray.

Public: No public allowed in Town Hall for the meeting due to pandemic containment rules. Jackie Brown joined via Zoom.

Chair B. Deso called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. The purpose of the special meeting was for the Selectboard to decide on what next steps to take for the Town Hall Relocation project.

Town Hall Relocation Project – Next Steps

B. Deso asked each Selectboard members their preferences; primary location for Town Hall, whether to refurbish the current Town Hall, or building a new building. Also, whether to vote on the project in November or March.

S. Dukas explained his primary choice location would be to stay in the Bay and acquire the 5.7 acres of land from Jackie Brown. He went on to say that we need to focus on continuing to clean the Bay and we can do that by being in the Bay. Once we move out of the Bay, it'll take the normal traffic out of the Bay that needs to observe the Bay and see what we can do to improve it. Even if we are ready for November, we hold off. We could go out for bids in November or December and maybe have Mike Connor, one of our local contractors look at everything to make sure we didn't miss anything. S. Dukas would like to see a March Town Meeting Day vote.

B. Deso asked Mr. Young about the possibility of bidding the project contingent on voter approval, same as last time. Mr. Young stated that this is a little bit different because the approach that we are going to do is hire the design firm just to get to a schematic design level and then he would do the estimate. Then, the Board will need to approve the budget. That would go to the voters in November. If it's approved, during the month of December, the design will be completed through winter, bid out in the spring of 2021 with construction beginning in Summer 2021. B. Deso asked Mr. Young if it would be possible to work to have the schematics for design in place for November's vote and then do pre-development round 2. Then have a full-blown project vote in March. Mr. Young stated that we are already in the approved pre-development phase with the \$65,000, which will take you through the schematic design. If you go to the voters again, you may have some voters fatigue on the project. The reason we are doing it the way we are doing it now is because this is the way a lot of the municipalities do it. They hire a professional estimator. With the \$65,000, you're not spending a lot of money up front to get to the point voters can consider approving the project.

E. Creley stated she didn't fully understand what B. Deso was proposing as an alternative. She thinks that having this go before the voters in November with the plan as it's in the Smartsheet makes a lot of sense, especially to save some upfront costs and also to capture the attention of the voters during a big election cycle. E. Creley stated that she does recognize the voter fatigue issue and if we ask multiple steps, we might not get the engagement we want or we might get approval half way and then lose it in the second vote. We should plan for a November decision as much as possible. With folks spending a lot of time inside, we could engage voters with technology. E. Creley's first choice for location of a new Town Hall is to build a new building in the Bay. As much as she would like to see us use the current Town Hall, we would be doing a disservice to the voters spending money on trying to bring Town Hall up to code. If we were to leave the Bay it would be because it's too expensive to build in the Bay. As for the suggestion of two locations for Town Hall offices, it doesn't make sense. People like the one stop shopping. She went on to say that she believes it would be difficult to conduct work in two locations.

J. Frost stated that with information we have, her first choice would be a new site in the Bay. The only possibility for refurbishing the current Town Hall might be to purchase the blue building (The Vincent's) next door for expansion. Renovate and expand at the same time. J. Frost would like to vote on this in November.

J. Giroux stated that S. Dukas touched on a good point about cleaning up the Bay. If we build in the Bay we should have municipal water and sewer going to it somehow someday. We shouldn't add anymore load to the area down here. The Brown property is nice and would suit our needs. However, J. Giroux had concerns about what we could do with the current Town Hall. He would like to vote on this in March.

B. Deso asked C. Johnson to explain a private/public partnership she was approached about previously regarding Town Hall. C. Johnson explained that she had a developer who has done a few of these projects in the City approach her 6 months ago. He would like to do more than one project, but could start with Town Hall. He is used to doing historic preservation grants and taking advantage of the tax breaks. He said he saw a bunch of possibilities with Town Hall. At the time he asked about Town Hall, we didn't have a real clear calendar and that she would get back to him. C. Johnson did state that this developer did the Stephens House at the intersection of Federal and Lake Streets.

C. Johnson explained that we have contacted the neighbors near Town Hall, the Vincent's. She will call them again tomorrow. The Vincent's may request what their property is assessed for which is \$207,000.

B. Deso explained that he was talking about doing two votes; one in November for the next phase with schematic and estimate. We would still need to spend time in winter flushing out final design details so we would be ready for a hard bid. That would cost money, but it would be included in the total package for the new building the voters would approve in November. It might be worth thinking about doing a vote in November for just the cost of that next phase to get ready for hard bids. That give us two opportunities; to approve the money and still build the project out with the March vote. Politically, B. Deso doesn't know if it's feasible to get this through in November. If it fails, it'll go on the shelf for a few years, same as the Department of Public Works garage did.

C. Johnson and A. Bourdon both disagreed with B. Deso's statement. C. Johnson explained that peopled talked to her all day at Town Meeting Day and they've talked to Anna. They said they are ready to vote for Town Hall. A. Bourdon said yes they are. B. Deso said with the right project. A. Bourdon stated she knows the voters and they want it in the Bay. She went on to say that we buy land in the Bay and construct a new building, they are going to go for it, whether you ask it in two phases; buying the land first or the next phase where you're building a building, they are going to go for it.

Mr. Young stated you're not really gaining anything because if you're still voting in November, regardless if you're asking to get the rest of the funds to design the project, we're technically doing that anyway because you're saying to the voters that this is the price tag which includes bricks and mortar construction costs and all the designs that it'll take to finish the drawings up costs. Not gaining anything doing two steps. B. Deso asked if we have money in our budget for soil testing. Mr. Young said \$10,000 to do the testing.

B. Deso said he's shooting for March. A. Bourdon suggested doing it like did the pool. Mr. Young stated he believes we'll have a better turnout in November. The ones who are against the project will come out in March and vote against it.

E. Creley stated we can get creative on how we reach out to folks. Maybe get some access to Northwest Access TV and have a call-in show moderated by Richard Cowperthwait.

B. Deso asked the Board again when the vote should be held. The consensus is to stay and building in the Bay.

S. Dukas – March
J. Frost – November
E. Creley – November
J. Giroux – March

B. Deso stated to shoot for everything to be ready in November and then talk again and decide as a group when to put it on the ballot. If public outreach opportunities aren't good, we'll do March. E. Creley stated that this shows voters we are working fast to get this vote in November, but do it right and do it in March if we need to.

B. Deso did a recap stating that the consensus is to stay in Bay with a new property. The only property that is researchable at this point is the Jackie Brown property. We will need to talk again in the next week or two on how we go about doing that. We can agree in a Letter of Intent with Mrs. Brown to work out the terms we want to exercise, but not work out a price. Mr. Young would need to sit down with Carrie and recommend a set of terms for us. We could also do this

with a Purchase and Sales Agreement with contingencies and an addendum. B. Deso went on to say that he would prefer to not involve our attorneys. You do not need an attorney for a Purchase and Sales Agreement or a simple LOI. A. Bourdon stated we should involve out attorneys.

B. Deso asked Mr. Young to review the information C. Johnson has on the Jackie Brown property and to look at the property before June 1st. Mr. Young agreed. B. Deso stated at the June 1st Selectboard meeting we will need to decide on the Jackie Brown property and then delegate some tasks to the committee.

Mr. Young stated we are one week behind on our current schedule. He would like to get the RFP for the design team out by Friday of this week, May 29th.

Adjournment

MOTION: E. made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 6:18 p.m. Seconded by J. Giroux. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenn Gray, Recording Secretary