

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes
March 25, 2019 Special Meeting: Meeting House Transition Committee

Present:

Maureen Bell, Selectboard Chair
Dawn Bower, Transition Committee Member
Russ Cumming, Transition Committee Member
Joyce Cumming, Selectboard Clerk
John Hoover, Transition Committee Member
Louise Johnson, Transition Committee Member
Tom Johnson, Transition Committee Member
Pete Newton, Transition Committee Member
Kathy Scott, Transition Committee Member
Kord Scott, Selectman, Transition Committee Member

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. Maureen welcomed everyone and offered introductory comments. This initial meeting was warned as a Selectboard Special Meeting due to a quorum of the Selectboard in attendance; however, Maureen is not a member of the Transition Committee (hereinafter the "Committee") and all future meetings should be warned as Transition Committee Meetings with agendas posted and minutes taken. The Committee members will be officially appointed for a one-year term at the next Selectboard meeting.

Maureen updated the group with information from Dave Crittenden received subsequent to the March 18 Selectboard Meeting, namely that the church is able and willing to cover the church's share of expenses for 2019. The objective now is to develop a recommendation re: the future of the Meeting House to be voted upon by town residents at or before next year's Town Meeting.

Maureen asked the Committee to consider whether it makes sense for the Town to become sole proprietor of the Meeting House. The building is currently used for Town Meeting, library, exercise class, WCO meetings, as well as the summer chicken BBQ, the Harvest Supper, and other special events. The Committee's purpose is to suggest viable options to provide financial support for the building's interior, assuming the Town votes in favor of full ownership and the Friends of the Meeting House (hereinafter the "Friends") can support the exterior/structural issues. The Committee also needs to develop recommendations on best uses for the building. Brief discussion followed on the need for an online calendar for scheduling events, etc.

Russ suggested establishing a fee schedule for private functions such as weddings, birthday parties, etc. Dawn has such a fee schedule that the church used previously which she will share with the Committee at the next meeting. A list of past expenses, including regular operating expenses as well as projects funded by the Friends, would also be helpful for planning purposes. Kathy and Dawn will contact Dave Crittenden for an itemization of operating expenses. Information re: project expenses funded by the Friends can likely be obtained from files which were given to Louise by Heath Boyer and from Dawn who served as Treasurer for the Friends. Per information from Heath, the 501c3 for the Friends has expired and will need to be reactivated prior to August. Membership in the Friends has dwindled to just a few participants, and no fundraising has been held in recent years. Discussion followed on resurrecting the Friends or establishing a separate fund-raising entity, which may possibly operate under the Town's 501c3 similar to the Veterans Memorial Group. Kord will follow up with Bob Fisher on this matter. Dawn will locate and review the 501c3 for the Friends.

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With regard to the physical maintenance of the building, Dawn noted the need for housekeeping which has not been performed recently, and suggested contacting Maureen Fitch if funds are available. Russ suggested using volunteers to address small projects such as carpentry repairs, and utilizing contractors for major projects such as steeple work. Kathy commented on the importance of avoiding renovations which might compromise the building's historical status. Pete noted that the Vermont Preservation Trust provides guidance and information on historical preservation, and the Division of Historic Preservation may have grant money available for qualifying projects, i.e., roofing, siding, or structural repairs, if performed according to guidelines. Pete also commented on the foundation repair work undertaken by the Friends years ago to restore a dry stone wall foundation at the Meeting House.

Discussion followed on issuing an annual fundraising appeal letter to all homeowners on the Grand List. Louise distributed a lengthy list of ideas to consider in brainstorming, and Russ offered additional suggestions. Some of the topics included repair/replacement of the entry, parking concerns, use as an emergency center, the need for a generator, contract and fees for rental, historic building status, etc. Possible uses included hosting concerts, lectures, dinners, classes, cooking demonstrations, etc. Marketing will be needed to promote many of the events suggested. Licensing and permit requirements were mentioned in regard to establishing a commercial kitchen. Likewise, permits, host liability insurance and licensing requirements were noted in regard to alcohol served or consumed on the premises.

With regard to the physical contents of the building, church property such as hymnals, lecterns, piano, and organs will need to be sorted out by the church. The possibility of replacing the wooden deck with stone steps was quelled due to the need for handicapped access.

Maureen reminded the Committee of its charge—to explore ways and make recommendations to sustain the Meeting House in the event the Town votes to approve full ownership—as well as the need to post agendas and keep minutes of meetings held. Discussion followed on a meeting format for future Committee meetings; 2nd and 4th Mondays were agreed upon. Due to the Conservation Commission event on Community Values Mapping scheduled for 6 p.m. on April 8, it was decided that the Committee's next meeting will be a brief meeting at 5 p.m. on April 8 at Town Office just prior to the Community Values Mapping process.

In the meantime, Kord will contact Bob Fisher for guidance on whether to resurrect the Friends or establish a separate fund-raising entity, perhaps under the Town's 501c3. If possible, Kord will report back on the attorney's recommendation at the next Selectboard meeting on April 1.

MOTION: To adjourn the Selectboard Special Meeting/Transition Committee Meeting at 7:20 p.m.
Moved by Maureen—unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Cumming, Selectboard Clerk