

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
October 21, 2019 Regular Meeting

Present:

Maureen Bell, Selectwoman  
Vance Bell, Energy Commission  
Peter Chamberlain  
Russ Cumming, Lister  
Tom Johnson, Energy Commission  
Kathy Jungermann, Auditor  
Imme Maurath, Auditor  
Kathy Scott, Treasurer

Kord Scott, Selectman  
Dawn Bower, Various Commissions  
Joyce Cumming, Selectboard Clerk  
Sally Hoover, Auditor  
Louise Johnson, Windham Meetinghouse Committee  
Keith Jungermann  
Brett Roland  
Gail Wyman, Asst. Treasurer

**Call to order**

Maureen called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**Additions to Agenda/Announcements/Reminders**

There were no additions, announcements or reminders.

**Act on minutes:** October 7, 2019 Regular Selectboard Meeting and October 14, 2019 Special Selectboard Meeting

Motion: To accept the minutes of the October 7, 2019 Regular Selectboard Meeting as submitted—moved by Maureen—all in favor.

Motion: To accept the minutes of the October 14, 2019 Special Selectboard Meeting as submitted—moved by Maureen—all in favor.

**Public Comment**

See below.

**New Business:**

**Windham Regional Commission Broadband Feasibility Study letter of support request**

Maureen reported on an email received from the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) requesting a letter in support of its efforts to conduct a broadband feasibility study. Maureen drafted a letter of support citing the varying degrees of broadband capability provided by different internet suppliers and how Windham would benefit if high-speed internet service was available town-wide. Maureen and Kord signed the letter (see attached). Maureen will email it to the WRC tomorrow.

**Public Comment**

Maureen acknowledged the arrival of Brett Roland and afforded him an opportunity for public comment. Brett commented on the significant increase in property taxes and the additional hardship created by late

receipt of the bill due to change of ownership. He understands that the budget is voted on at Town Meeting in March and acknowledged the need to become more involved. He suggested that the recent paving of Windham Hill Road—if not properly budgeted—may have factored in the increase. And he asked for an explanation for the increase in the education tax. Maureen agreed that the property tax increase is an issue affecting all property owners in Windham. Kord cited the need for an explanation from the State regarding how the town's education tax bill—more than \$1 million—is determined. Windham is considered a “sending” or “gold” town and pays a disproportionate share of education taxes to the State. The million dollars sent to the State is in addition to the cost of educating students at Windham Elementary School and Leland & Gray. The Selectboard is responsible for the Town budget. The School Board determines the local education budget. Neither has any control over the State education tax bill. Kord explained that the recent paving of Windham Hill Road was part of Windham's long-term paving plan which is budgeted over multiple years and that state funds were used to offset some of the cost. Discussion followed on the education tax rate paid by residents which is currently higher than the rate paid by non-residents. Kathy Scott has discussed this with an attorney at VLCT and it seems the town-wide reappraisal conducted in 2014 may be responsible for shifting the education tax burden to residents.

#### **System for Award Management Registration Renewal Support**

Maureen received an email re: renewing registration in the System for Award Management. She discussed this with Mike McLaine and determined that the renewal request came from a third-party processing firm which is not affiliated with any local, state or federal government agency. The email and registration request should be ignored.

#### **Vermont Local Roads workshop: Sign, Stripes and Speed Limits**

Kord received an email from the Vermont Local Roads Program which is facilitating a workshop re: Signs, Stripes and Speed Limits (attached). Maureen will register to attend this workshop on October 30, 2019 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Manchester Fire Department.

#### **Old Business:**

##### **Selectboard Vacancy – discussion/appointment**

Maureen announced that Peter Chamberlain is willing to fill the vacancy on the Selectboard created by the passing of Hal Wilkins. Maureen and Kord expressed their appreciation to Peter. Peter explained that he would serve only until the next election at the Town Meeting in March.

Motion: To appoint Peter Chamberlain as a member of the Selectboard until the Town Meeting in March 2020—moved by Kord—all in favor.

Maureen and Kord signed the appointment letter appointing Peter Chamberlain. Mike McLaine administered the oath of office and Peter began serving as a Selectboard member immediately.

##### **Personnel Policy review update**

Maureen reported on a Special Meeting held on October 14, 2019 for the purpose of reviewing the personnel policy. Maureen, Kord and Richard participated in the review and discussion. Maureen noted that while some areas were clarified, more discussion and review will be needed and additional meetings will be scheduled.

Maureen contacted Jill Muhr, PACIF's Human Resources consultant, and received a model personnel policy. Additional meetings will be scheduled and posted as required.

### **Tax Review/Control - notes from Kord**

Kord distributed a list of comments and ideas related to the upcoming budget preparation process and tax rates. See attached. Kord noted a need to focus on the issues over which we have control such as self-evaluation of our local municipal budgets. He commended the Planning Commission for its willingness to reduce its budget by \$500. He also suggested that fund balances remaining in Dept. budgets at year-end be used to offset funding requests for next year. Kord will draft a notice to Dept. heads regarding this approach.

### **Budgeting Process**

#### **Auditors**

Imme Maurath presented the Auditors Budget Request for 2020 and agreed to reduce the Auditors budget by \$500 (line item for payroll would be reduced from \$3000 in 2019 to \$2500 in 2020). Imme asked why the printing expense was included in the Auditors budget; Kathy Scott explained that Imme had been instrumental in reducing the cost of printing the Town Report in the past. Discussion followed on ideas to reduce the cost of printing further. Sally suggested reducing the number of Town Reports printed by the amount leftover the previous year. Discussion followed on electronic dissemination of the Town Report by advising residents to view it on the Town website rather than hard copy distribution. Currently, the Town Report is posted on the Town website in addition to hard copy distribution of 1 per household. Imme suggested reducing the cost of postage (reflected in Town Office budget) by asking residents to pick up their copy at the Town Office rather than having it mailed. Imme agreed to research statutes regarding requirements for distribution of the Town Report. She also agreed to reduce the Auditors' budget line for printing the Town Report from \$600 in 2019 to \$450 in 2020. (2019 YTD expenditure/encumbrance is \$429.) See attached budget for Auditors.

#### **Listers**

Kathy Scott reported that Alison Cummings submitted the 2020 proposed budget for Listers prior to the meeting (see attached). Alison was not in attendance at the meeting. Of the \$1500 budgeted for Computers/Software/Licenses, \$775 has been expended or encumbered YTD. Kathy reported that no funds are requested for Computers/Software/Licenses in 2020. The computer requested by the Listers last year has not yet been ordered but this should be completed in the next week or so. The line item for Software budgeted at \$800 is requested at \$800 for 2020 (\$215 expended/encumbered YTD). Of the \$1600 budgeted for Contracted Services in 2019, no expenditures were reported YTD. Education & Seminars budgeted at \$4000 for 2019 likewise showed no expenditures or encumbrances YTD though Russ reported attending 2 NEMRC seminars. This line item is again requested at \$4000 for 2020 and some questioned whether it was necessary. The line item for legal expenses is again requested at \$350 for 2020 (\$0 expenditures /encumbrances YTD). Mileage, budgeted at \$500 for 2019, is requested at the same amount for 2020 in order to cover the cost of site inspections (\$127.60 has been expended/encumbered YTD). Per Kathy Scott, the Listers have requested an increase in the line item for payroll (includes employer Fica/Medicare share) from \$6,750 to \$9,000 next year (\$2,802 has been expended/encumbered YTD). Kathy Scott will contact Alison about the line item for payroll and the overall dept. budget which currently has a balance of \$12,096 remaining of \$16,016 budgeted for 2019.

Brief discussion followed on a prior request from the Listers to use some of the reserve funds for a re-appraisal if necessary in 2021. Russ Cumming reported that the Listers are making progress on the land schedule issue and will discuss it this week in the hope of avoiding a re-appraisal. If a consensus is reached on the revised approach, the VT Property Dept. will be notified and asked to review the logic behind the changes. Russ reported that in developing and applying a uniform approach to the land schedule, taxes will increase for some property owners while taxes for other property owners will decrease.

Brief discussion followed on the timetable for review of the Town department budgets. See attached. Social Services will be the last budget to review and funding will be considered after taking into consideration all other department budgets.

#### **Zoning Update – per Alison, level fund from 2019**

Kathy Scott reported that Alison is requesting level funding of the Zoning/911 Dept. budget from 2019 to 2020 at \$1,230 (see attached). Kathy reported that Zoning Permits have brought in approximately \$1200 YTD and suggested that these funds might be used to fund the Dept. budget for 2020, essentially making it self-funding. Kathy Scott will discuss this with Alison.

#### **Roads**

##### **Winter Roads Policy – update or still valid**

Maureen reported that the Winter Roads Policy was last adopted on October 17, 2016 for the 2016-17 year (see attached). Kord suggested reviewing it with Richard and re-adopting if no changes are needed for the upcoming 2019-2020 winter season.

##### **Harrington Road Stone Culvert update**

It seems that the stone culvert on Harrington Road, which was assessed during recent heavy rain, will require an 8' concrete box culvert rather than a 4' culvert as hoped previously. Richard Paré has suggested "throwing up" the road. Brief discussion followed on the implications and meaning of "throwing up" the road. Kord explained that in "throwing up" the road, the Town gives responsibility to the land owners for maintenance. Kord suggested conferring with Marc Pickering of V-Trans regarding the cost/benefit analysis of this approach. Brief discussion followed regarding classification of Windham roads.

#### **Correspondence/Payroll/Bills**

Correspondence/Payroll/Bills included:

- Letter dated October 16, 2019 from the Windham County Sheriff's Office regarding rates for policing services for FY 2021;
- A petition for a Special Meeting to vote on moving to a 5-member Selectboard (forwarded to the Town Clerk while Statutes re: requirements and scheduling are reviewed)—tentative date for Special Meeting: December 3, 2019 at 7 p.m.);
- Notice of the Annual Meeting & Luncheon of the Northeast Resource Recovery Association on November 6, 2019 (brief discussion followed on the recycling market decline and the appropriation of \$17K last year for the Transfer Station);
- Notice regarding training for Delinquent Tax Collector received from PACIF (forwarded to DTC);

- An invoice from the Flag Shop for a flag (forwarded to the Windham Center Cemetery Commission);
- Notice from the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) and Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) re: its Annual Meeting on November 7, 2019. Brief discussion followed on two other initiatives through the Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Vermont Rural Development Corporation to identify what residents value about Windham and the vision for the Town in the future;
- Kord reported briefly on an invoice for repair of the red truck for issues that should be covered by the vehicle warranty—Kathy Scott will call the vendor to follow-up on the status;
- A thank you letter received from Grace Cottage for the Town's 2019 appropriation of \$300;
- A request received from Grace Cottage for an appropriation of \$300 to be considered at Town Meeting in March 2020;
- A thank you letter received from Neighborhood Connections for the Town's 2019 appropriation (erroneously listed as Andover) of \$500;
- A thank you letter from the Windham County Humane Society for the Town's 2019 appropriation of \$350;
- A note re: the excessive tax rate increase;
- Payroll and bills were reviewed/approved as necessary.

### **Adjournment**

Motion: To adjourn the regular Selectboard meeting at 7:40 p.m.—moved by Maureen—all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Cumming  
Selectboard Clerk

### **Attachments:**

- Letter to Windham Regional Commission dated 10/21/19 in support of broadband feasibility study
- VT Local Road Workshop: Signs, Stripes, Speed Limits on 10/30/19
- Tax Planning Notes 2019 from Kord
- Auditors Budget Request for 2020
- Listers/Reappraisal Budget Request for 2020
- Memo from Kathy Scott dated 9/14/19 re: 2020 budget review schedule
- Zoning/911 Budget update for 2020
- Winter Roads Policy for 2016-17 adopted 10/17/16