

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2020 Meeting

Present:

Maureen Bell, Selectwoman
Kord Scott, Selectman
Dawn Bower, Various Commissions
Russ Cumming, Lister
Sally Hoover, Auditor
Imme Maurath, Auditor
Louise Johnson, Meetinghouse Committee
Bob Kehoe
Tom Simmons, U.S. Census Bureau Rep.

Peter Chamberlain, Selectman
Vance Bell, Energy Commission
Joyce Cumming, Selectboard Clerk
Bill Dunkel, Town Planning Commission
John Hoover, Library Trustee, Justice of Peace
Tom Johnson, Energy Commission
Kathy Jungermann, Auditor
Kathy Scott, Treasurer
Gail Wyman, Asst. Treasurer

Call to Order

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

Additions to Agenda/Announcements/Reminders

- Tom Simmons was present to discuss the 2020 census. Maureen agreed to allow him time under Public Comment.
- Maureen noted that the Windham Regional Commission will hold hearings on Feb. 3 prior to the next regular Selectboard meeting: Town Plan Hearing @ 4:30 p.m., and Energy Compliance Hearing @ 5 p.m. (Public Hearing Notices attached)
- Rachel Spengler and Rory Rosselot plan to attend the next regular Selectboard meeting to discuss ambulance service issues.

Act on minutes: January 3, 2020 Special Selectboard Meeting, January 6, 2020 Regular Selectboard Meeting, and January 13, 2020 Special Selectboard Meeting

Motion: To accept the minutes of the January 3, 2020 Special Selectboard Meeting, January 6, 2020 Regular Selectboard Meeting, and January 13, 2020 Special Selectboard Meeting as submitted—moved by Maureen—all in favor.

Public Comment

Bill Dunkel shared information regarding low-cost storm windows available through WindowDressers. He will try to get a sample for display at Town Meeting.

Tom Simmons of the U.S Census Bureau discussed the importance of the 2020 census which will determine Federal allocations for many programs over the next 10 years. He also noted some changes to the process:

- Residents on a mail delivery route will receive a letter in mid-March inviting them to take the census online; two reminders will follow at 1-week intervals if a response was not yet received; in early April, a fourth mailing—including a paper census form—will be sent to anyone who had not yet responded.

- Residents who utilize a post-office box will have the actual form delivered to their door in early April.
- The census will consist of a short-form soliciting responses to 9 questions.

He requested the Selectboard's assistance in encouraging residents to respond, noting that residents over 65 years of age respond at lower rates. Internet-based response rates are also anticipated to be lower among this demographic. In an attempt to get the word out, flyers are being sent home with school-age children, posters are being displayed, and part-time census workers are being recruited to knock on doors. He noted a half-page report available from VLCT for inclusion in the annual Town Report. He will provide this report to the auditors, the Town Clerk, webmaster, and editorial team of News and Notes. In response to a question about the accuracy of the current census data for Windham, Tom responded that small towns in Windham and Windsor Counties are generally undercounted, in some cases by as much as 30%.

New Business:

Discuss 5-person Selectboard

Maureen reported that the Selectboard received a request from Alan Partridge via Kord to discuss the missed deadline for including an article on the Town Meeting warning. This petition was originally submitted in October for an article to be included at the Special Town Meeting in December; it was subsequently withdrawn. The deadline to re-submit it for the March Town Meeting was January 16, 2020. Kord explained that the petitioners want the opportunity to be heard on whether to move to a 5-person Selectboard and anticipates blow-back if the article is not included.

Russ asked what the motivation was behind the petition, noting that it's difficult to find 3 members willing to serve on the Selectboard, let alone 5. Bob Kehoe expressed his hesitancy to run for the Selectboard due to the 3 member composition, and the difficulty he felt in casting the deciding vote on issues. Kathy Scott thinks it might attract younger people to serve on the Selectboard if there were 5 members to share the workload. Maureen shared data that shows that in Vermont towns with a population of less than 600, 32 towns have a 3-member Selectboard, while only 9 towns have a 5-member Selectboard. Kord acknowledged suspicion on the part of some residents who characterize the petition as a movement to populate the Selectboard with pro-wind members.

Maureen shared feedback from other 5-member Selectboard towns re: a reduction in member attendance if not required for a quorum, and the possibility of candidates running to promote a personal agenda. She also noted that increasing the budget line for Selectboard salaries by \$5,000 for 2 additional members was not the right thing to do under the current financial constraints. Imme commented on a conversation she had years ago with then-Selectboard member Walter Woodruff about increasing to 5 members, and Walter felt it would have hindered the Selectboard's ability to get things done. Bill thanked Kord for acknowledging the elephant in the room, i.e., concerns of some residents regarding the wind turbine issue. Bill feels that any candidate for the Selectboard should have read the Town Plan and be willing to go on record publicly to support it. Kathy Scott said the wind turbine issue is over and neither Meadowsend Timberland nor any other developer will pursue it. Kord feels confident that the petition will be resubmitted and would prefer an article be included at Town Meeting. Bob Kehoe suggested a compromise to include discussion of a 5-member Selectboard at the end of Town Meeting. Peter expressed his opinion that candidates should demonstrate interest, understand the need for transparency, and be willing to do the necessary work. He doesn't feel the workload is so great that a 5-member Board is required.

Motion: To include an article for vote at Town Meeting on the question of whether to change from a 3-member Selectboard to a 5-member Selectboard—moved by Kord—motion failed.
Yes: Kord No: Maureen and Peter

The Meeting House:

Review Budget Figures

Revised 2020 budget figures for the Meeting House were reviewed. The new budget which includes an estimate for insurance totals approximately \$11,500. Russ mentioned that the Meeting House Committee is developing a wish list of items to include if money is available; some of the items include emergency lighting (required by fire marshal), NEST programmable thermostat, and automated lighting sensors. A quote for blown-in insulation is anticipated from Farnum Insulation. The building is balloon-framed; blown-in fire-retardant insulation would not only reduce heating costs but might also reduce insurance premiums. A formal request for funds will be prepared and submitted for consideration. Some of the expenses may also be shared with Friends of the Meeting House. Heath Boyer has submitted a request to have his name removed as the contact for Friends of the Meeting House—the information was forwarded to Pete Newton. Dawn reported that the next meeting of the Friends is on Wednesday afternoon, and that the Church Board is working on the resolution to relinquish its share to the Town.

General Update

Budgeting Process:

Kathy Scott distributed the Roads budget for 2020/YTD expenses for 2019 (see attached). There is a balance in the Roads budget of \$39,521.89 for 2019. A suggestion was made to apply this against the appropriation request for New Road Machinery Funds thereby reducing the request from \$60,000 (voted in 2019) to \$30,000 for next year. The overage along with the appropriation request would total \$69,521.89. Maureen will revise the wording of Article 8 in the Town Warning to reflect this.

Motion: To transfer the overage of \$39,521.89 from Roads to the New Road Machinery Fund—moved by Kord—all in favor.

Kathy distributed the General Fund Report for 2019/Proposed General Fund budget for 2020 (see attached). She noted an increase in County Taxes for 2020 to \$8,542 (\$7,500 budgeted in 2019). Also, the line item for SWNH-Mutual Aid Assoc. & Dues (part of Public Safety) is increasing by approximately \$500. The total 2020 budget for General Accounts totals \$188,488. By applying 90% of the 2019 unspent budget funds along with 90% of non-tax revenue, the amount is reduced to \$151,754. When the Fire Dept. funding (\$30,000 request by article) is included for comparison against last year's budget, the total General Fund budget for 2020 of \$181,754 represents an increase of \$898 over the 2019 total of \$180,856.

Discussion followed on the need to revise the Selectboard Report for the Town Meeting due to the increase in the General Fund budget. Peter pointed out that when compared to last year's total Town budget including article appropriations which came to \$842,940, the total 2020 Town budget represents a reduction of approximately 5% at \$799,274 including article appropriations. Maureen will revise the Selectboard Report to reflect that the total Town expenditures (including General Fund, Roads & Highways, Paving, Bridges, New Road Machinery, and Fire Dept.) are down from last year's spending.

Discussion followed on where and how to list the 2019 General Fund budget surplus, 90% of which is applied to reduce the 2020 General Fund budget. The remaining 10% is applied to Town Office Maintenance & Improvements. Peter suggested listing it on the same page as the General Fund budget total, but replacing the term "over/under" with "surplus".

Roads:

Report on problem with water at the Garage

Kord reported on a problem with the well at the Town Garage. Cushings was called in to remedy the situation and determined that the pump failed because of an excessive amount of silt. This is not unusual when rock fractures over time. A draw-down test was conducted. The capacity is fine and the flow rate is approx. 5 gallons per minute. The cost of the repair, approx. \$2,285, will be paid out of Garage M&I. Cushings recommended using a filter to prevent recurring problems with silt clogging the nozzle of the pressure washer. The quote for installation was \$750; cartridges cost approx. \$350.

Storm Update

Brief discussion was held regarding the recent snow storm. The storm left earlier and the snow accumulation was less than expected. No problems were reported with roads.

Warning for Town Meeting

This was discussed under budgeting process earlier. The only change was an amendment to Article 8 to include an explanation about the highway roads budget surplus of \$39,521 being applied to offset the appropriation request.

Selectboard Report for Town Report

This was discussed under budgeting process earlier.

Correspondence/Payroll/Bills

Correspondence included a letter from the law office of Tarrant, Gillies, Richardson & Shems regarding a rate increase in attorney fees. A letter was received from the State of VT Dept. of Taxes with the corrected 2019 Equalization Study Results (see attached). This information will be forwarded to the Listers for review. Payroll and bills were reviewed and approved as required.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the regular Selectboard meeting at 7:28 p.m.—moved by Maureen—all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Cumming
Selectboard Clerk

Attachments:

- Notice of Public Hearing by Windham Regional Commission on Windham Town Plan, Feb. 3, 2010, 4:30 p.m.
- Notice of Public Hearing by Windham Regional Commission on Determination of Energy Compliance, Feb. 3, 2020, 5:00 p.m.
- Roads Budget 2019 YTD and Proposed 2020 Roads Budget
- General Fund Budget 2019 YTD and Proposed 2020 General Fund Budget
- Correspondence from Tarrant, Gillies, Richardson & Shem re: rate increase
- Corrected 2019 Equalization Study Results from VT. Dept. of Taxes dated Jan. 7, 2020
- 2019 Equalization Study Results from VT. Dept. of Taxes dated Dec. 20, 2019