

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2021 Regular Meeting

Present via Zoom:

Maureen Bell, Selectboard Chair	Kord Scott, Selectman
George Dutton, Selectman	Dawn Bower, various positions
John Beagan	Andy Coyne, Jamaica Selectboard
Dave Crittenden	Ginny Crittenden, Conservation Comm.
Joyce Cumming	Russ Cumming, Lister
Sally Hoover	Louise Johnson, Town MHC
Tom Johnson, various positions	Kathy Jungermann, various positions
Cate Kelley	Ron Kelley
Imme Maurath, various positions	Mike McLaine, Town Clerk
Pat McLaine, Auditor	Diane Newton
Pete Newton	Sarah Peck
Carolyn Rubin	Kathy Scott, Treasurer
Alison Trowbridge, Conservation Commission	Eileen Widger, various positions
Tom Widger, Town MHC	Gail Wyman, Assistant Treasurer
Tim Morton, VT Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, Stewardship Forester	
Hannah Phillips, FPR, State Lands Administration Program Manager	
Brian Renfro, FPR, Forest Recreation Specialist	
Jessica Savage, FPR Recreation Program Manager	

Call to Order:

Maureen announced the meeting and called it to order at 5:31 PM

Additions to Agenda/Announcements/Reminders

George announced that he has a new 5-day old baby. Congratulations were offered.

Act on minutes from March 15 regular Selectboard Meeting

For Town Highway Emergency Fund Grant the date of the storm is to be corrected to 12.25.2020 instead of 12.25.2021.

Motion: To accept the corrected minutes of the March 15 regular Selectboard Meeting – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Correspondence

Other than some excess weight permits for Kord to look at, there was no correspondence.

Old Business:

Hamilton Falls Update with Guests from Forest, Parks and Recreation (FPR)

Hannah Phillips started off the discussion by saying she would talk about the role of planning at the Falls. She introduced the other participants from FPR, explaining that Tim Morton and Brian Renfro work in the district and are “boots on the ground” here. She and Jessica Savage work Statewide and will be assisting with this project. Hannah reminded us that they met in September with a number of local people to get observations regarding visitor behavior, including parking and traffic problems on West Windham Road which became apparent last

year. Hannah pointed out that this issue was not unique to the Falls – it was Statewide, as people came to value the outdoors. Hannah indicated that it was helpful to FPR to get the perspectives of neighbors, rescue people and the Selectboards of Windham and Jamaica. FPR is taking a bifurcated approach. Short-term(ST) strategies to respond to immediately (this summer) regarding visitation and user behaviors and long-term (LT) planning strategies for which FPR wants broad input: why people appreciate this place, how FPR might manage the land, how the community will respond.

FPR will seek input for their long-term management of the lands. This will enable them to come up with a proposal to which the public can then respond.

Jessica reiterated that what we experienced at the Falls was not unique – it was/is Statewide. Many other waterfall areas across the State have become more popular and have safety, parking and infrastructure issues. There was renewed and sustained interest in many locations throughout the State. They saw a lot of use during times they wouldn't necessarily expect it, such as mud season, which was due to the onset of "lockdown" that we faced. It proved additionally problematic because the staff themselves couldn't get out there. She went on to say that they are working around the State with other "water-based" groups like the Green Mtn National Forest and VT River Conservancy to develop ethics messaging, signage and protocol so that staff can have tools to inform users about best practices.

Brian addressed some ST strategies. FPR has obtained funding for an on-site Ranger directing people to the 4-5 parking spots and re-directing them when the spots are full. The Ranger will educate people about ethics – no parking on roadside, leave no trace, etc. The Ranger is not for the Falls exclusively, but they're hoping that with the Ranger's presence, the atmosphere will change and start heading in the right direction. They will designate an emergency parking area for first responders and are hoping to revegetate some sensitive areas that will be roped off, such as the goat path connecting the upper and lower pools. They will designate an emergency parking area. They are working on signage about place, which they hope will inspire people to understand and take care of it. They will have more signs about danger so the Ranger can have discussions with visitors. They will put in a portable toilet, as human waste was one of the issues that came up last year.

FPR is starting to engage in longer-term planning by doing survey work, collecting data to figure out how people are using the site so they can adjust their thinking/planning. They always look for feedback. Will use long-range management plans. Anticipate releasing that for public comment late in the year. If these short-term solutions seem to be working, they could stay in place or they could be changed if they find they are not working.

Questions/comments from the public: **Imme** – would it be a good idea to implement fees to keep users to a minimum. *FPR is trying to publicize primary entrance from Jamaica State Park which charges fees.* **Andy** – Sheriff's Dept. funding last year. *Last year it was from CARES funding. We don't have access to that this year.* **John** – Putting a sign at Burbee's Pond to suggest parking is limited to 4 spaces. *FPR just received the language for the sign and will look at it and respond. FPR will be putting signage about where to park.* **Diane** – would be helpful if Jamaica could say there is no parking within the right of way. *Andy responded that Jamaica is working on a parking ordinance and Charlie Peck is helping on this, which should address the issue. Doesn't have details yet; Charlie is working with the Sheriff's Dept re enforcement.* **Diane** thinks that using a camera to inform visitors about parking availability before they get to the Falls would be a good idea. *FPR hasn't been able to define a number of parking spaces – can say it's "limited". Also not sure they can put up cameras to track parking. The Master*

Planning process is typically contracted to a professional organization which has proven successful. FPR will act as facilitators, but the unbiased organization will come up with the plan. **Diane** commented again about parking cameras, that they are being used everywhere. National and State parks use them – it's not a privacy issue. They can be still photos. *Tim agreed that they would think about the issue.* **John** is concerned learning about the plan to install a portable toilet. Says there were a couple of incidents last summer but that the whole tone of the natural site will change with such an addition; there were nods of agreement from the audience. He asks that FPR reconsider this idea. *Tim responded that they understood the problem to be huge last year and this was their response to address that. Brian added that other sites around the State are reacting in the same way to similar complaints. He reminded us that this is a Class A watershed and human waste is a big problem. Tim thinks it's worth trying on a short-term basis. If it's not good, it can be removed.* **Sarah** pointed out that once supervision of the site was in place, people responded. Human waste and garbage were no longer problematic. *Tim said that there will be 3 people rotating through the site; they'll see how the public responds. If that doesn't work, they will consider the portable toilet again.* **Kord** suggested adding "Ranger Supervision" to signage. Kord also reminded us that we contract with the Sheriff and we could ask him to patrol there occasionally. Tim asked if parking actually extends into Windham. It's a half mile to Windham. **Diane** asked about ways to limit traffic since it's a 20-mile roundtrip to the entrance to Jamaica State Park. *Hannah said that they are trying to emphasize primary entrance is from the Park with limited access from West Windham Road. They are use platforms like Front Porch Forum and Trail Finder to get the word out.* **George** asked if it was possible to close off vehicle access entirely or is that not possible because of ADA requirements. He said that even as of now, mid-week, early April, there are a lot of (out of state) vehicles traveling to the Falls. They are even abusing the roads. Hannah responded saying that a major change like that could only be done through the Master Planning process, during which they would hear public comment. It's unlikely they would cut off access entirely because it's public land, accessible from a public road. Again, they are really going to try to emphasize access from the Park. George asked if they could communicate that parking on West Windham Road is only for those who can't access the Falls from the Park. **Maureen** asked the question about advertising after seeing the Falls highlighted recently. *Hannah said that this often happens without their knowledge. Jessica said that 3rd party advertisers commonly do this. She regularly meets with the Tourism board and can bring this to their attention. Again, it all comes back to proactive messaging. Trying to shift attention to the way the Falls are accessed.* **John** wonders if a press release to area businesses and establishments would help. **Alison** commented that emergency vehicles have difficulty accessing the area when parking is so problematic. **George** agreed that emergencies are a problem and mentioned that during an emergency a DHART helicopter landed in his family's hayfield causing a lot of monetary damage. **Diane** brought up the issue about attaching a number to the "limited" parking. *Tim responded by saying that their short-term decisions will be based on experience and the long-term decisions will be based on investigation. Tim would like to check back in with us next month.*

Kord is curious about the size of the sign that Alison and John are working on. They both just left the call – he'll have to get the info from them another time.

Andy also confirmed that Jamaica has a contract with the Sheriff's Dept and maybe they can ask them to patrol there too. Maybe we can coordinate between the 2 towns.

Under the Mountain/Leonard's Road renaming

There is nothing more for us to do. Erica Bowman has turned it over to the mapping specialist for the enhanced 911 board. He initiated the name change and the ball is now rolling.

Dog Complaints

Sgt. Lakin reiterated to Kord that when we have a complaint, the complainant must fill out a statement and then he will take it from there. Our ordinance and method of enforcement are in place. Maureen mentioned that she had an encounter (from inside the car) with a German Shepard when hanging the meeting notice on the bulletin board at the Firehouse. She waited it out. Kord confirmed that's the type of thing that Sgt. Lakin is talking about. It should be documented so he can issue a violation.

Selectboard Clerk Position – place an ad?

We haven't had any interest as yet. Talked about placing an in The Chester Telegraph. Imme suggested that we ask Ellen to send out an email to her list. Also a good idea.

New Business:

Auditor Resignation/New Appointee

Sally Hoover has resigned as Auditor. The Auditors have met with and suggest that Pat McLaine be appointed to fill the position. A Selectboard appointment would be in effect until the next Town Meeting.

Motion: To appoint Pat McLaine to fill vacant Auditor position – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP) Adoption

It is available for presentation. Maureen didn't get a copy (note – Maureen did receive it but inadvertently deleted it), but Kord did. Kord confirmed that it looked ok. Kathy J and Imme said there were just some personnel changes that had to be made.

Motion: To adopt LEMP and send it (Kathy J.) to Windham Regional Commission – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

The Meeting House

Spruce Tree Removal

The committee would like to have the tree removed but is looking for the SB's approval first. Additionally the committee wonders if the Road Crew could assist or even take the tree down. Then some volunteers could take the lights out so the tree can be composted. Kord will talk to Richard and make a plan. Site work will eventually have to be done; for now we can just cut it flush. The Selectboard was in agreement with this plan.

Change the committee's name to the Town Meeting House Committee to distinguish it more from The Friends of the Meeting House

There has been some confusion about which committee is from the Town and which is private (Friends) so it is proposed that we change the name to the Town Meeting House Committee.

Motion: To change the name of the committee to the Town Meeting House Committee – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

Have some requests for the use of the building in August and October

Assuming the uses (memorial service and family reunion) will fit within the Covid guidelines the Committee will let the parties know it's ok.

Planning a Labor Day Weekend Tag/Book Sale

Looking forward to re-scheduling the tag sale that was cancelled last year.

Cordoned off part of the front porch which is in need of repair

The stringers are broken. The Friends probably won't be able to fix this according to the new plan/design before the events take place, so Pete thinks the best thing to do is repair what's there now. He will take a look and provide a proposal in 2 weeks to the SB.

North Side – rotting wood, peeling paint, deck material

Deck needs to come off. Tom W. thinks it would be easy with a couple of volunteers. Pete points out that it's actually the West side exit from the addition, not the north, although that deck has to come off as well. Since there are numerous problems, Kord suggests that he meet with Tom and Pete so they can go over things and see how the Town can help.

Sightings of contractor(s) using outside outlets for charging equipment. Lock boxes?

Have heard that contractors (at least Webb) are using the outlets. Kord and George suggest simply turning off the circuit breaker. Tom W. will look into this.

Tom W. reminded us of the broken fire alarm that Kord was called in for. The contractor said he was going to make some repairs. Kord will forward the info to the Committee but isn't sure that contractor is the right guy for the job.

Imme volunteered to give a good cleaning to the building, including the back furnace room and the kitchen. Also, she wants us to think about the viability of things like the chicken bbq, which are starting to come up in conversation. Tom and Dawn offered assistance in the clean up.

Roads:

Update on Rt 121 Culvert Project

Otter Creek got the engineering bid. Margot Ghia (Windham Regional Commission) is finalizing the details for us.

Possible Summer Paving and Structures Projects

With the money we have in reserve and if we get money from the State and VTrans we would have approximately \$482,000 though the VTrans money is not guaranteed at this point. Without it we have approximately \$307,000. The paved sections on the attached map are 1, 4, 5 and 6 (up to Wheeler Road). We still have to do 2, 3 and 6B (from Wheeler Road to the Town line). Engineer Everett Hammond is estimating that the same kind of work we did last time – mill, shim, overlay – would be \$240,000. Would like to get this proposal out for bid in case we can go ahead with it this year. Would effectively mean that the entire 9½ miles of Windham Hill Road will have been resurfaced in a very effective way!

Motion: Put out an RFP (request for proposal) to do a mill, shim and overlay project on sections 2, 3 and 6B of Road Surface Management Survey and possibly some additional crack sealing – moved by Kord. All in favor.

Payroll and Bills:

None of the Selectboard Members noted any issues with the payroll or bills presented for approval by the Treasurer.

Motion: To approve payroll and bills presented and authorize Kord to sign off on same – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

Adjournment:

Motion: To adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 7:31 PM – moved by Kord. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bell, Acting Selectboard Clerk