

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes
May 17, 2021 Regular Meeting

Present via Zoom:

Maureen Bell, Selectboard Chair
George Dutton, Selectman
Dawn Bower, various positions
Margo Ghia, Windham Regional Commission
Sally Hoover
Tom Johnson, various positions
Imme Maurath, various positions
Pat McLaine, Auditor
Eileen Widger, various positions
Gail Wyman, Assistant Treasurer

Kord Scott, Selectman
Vance Bell, various positions
Bill Dunkel, various positions
Kerrie Heslin
Louise Johnson, Town MHC
Kathy Jungermann, various positions
Mike McLaine, Town Clerk
Brent Rakowski, Otter Creek Engineering
Tom Widger, Town MHC

Call to Order:

Maureen announced the meeting and called it to order at 5:32 PM

Additions to Agenda/Announcements/Reminders

Bill Dunkel announced that the Energy Committee meeting is on Thursday at 4:30. Jessica Williams from Window Dressers will be there to talk about building energy efficient and inexpensive storm windows. Will address the efforts of the 3-town cooperative (Londonderry/Wardsboro/Windham) to get this done in the fall.

Dawn Bower announced that long-time resident Jim Scott died on Friday. She spoke with his daughter who advised there will be some kind of a service in June, at the church in Grafton.

Maureen announced that construction on Rt 11 continues with milling of bridges this week. She is also taking a webinar on how to use the Federal coronavirus funds coming to towns shortly.

The town is hosting (via Rescue Inc) a Johnson & Johnson vaccine clinic tonight at the Town Office parking lot.

Conditions are very dry; recommendation is for no burning at this time. Windham residents must speak with Rich Weitzel or Ralph Wyman to get a burn permit. Londonderry is not allowing any burning at this time.

Act on minutes from May 3 regular Selectboard Meeting:

Motion: To accept the minutes of the May 3 regular Selectboard Meeting – moved by Maureen.
All voted in favor.

Public Comment:

Kerrie Heslin indicated that she is interested in the culvert repair/replacement on Route 121. Maureen indicated that the discussion is coming up soon in Roads. Since she is driving and cannot see it, Maureen will send her a copy of the presentation.

Bill asked if any open burning in Windham requires a permit – yes it does.

Correspondence:

Maureen indicated she had seen 2 overweight permits (for Kord to deal with) but nothing else in the folder as of Saturday afternoon. Maureen received an email from Liza Eaton (Priscilla Eaton's granddaughter) who asked if she could borrow 3 folding chairs from The Meeting House for a couple of months. (She is a yoga teacher.) Kord and George said they were OK with loaning her the chairs. Maureen will follow up with her.

Roads:

Rt 121 Culvert Projects Local Concerns Meeting – Initial public discussion and Q&A with project engineer (Brent Rakowski/Otter Creek) and project manager (Margo Ghia/Windham Regional Commission). The project is to replace a deteriorated culvert with a precast box concrete structure with wing walls (on the gravel section of Route 121 not far from the intersection with Windham Hill Road). The project construction/completion is anticipated for summer 2023.

Brent Rakowski and Margo Ghia were introduced. Brent is a Civil Engineer with Otter Creek Engineering, the firm that will develop, design and prepare bid documents for the project.

The existing culvert, a 72-inch corrugated metal pipe, is deteriorating. It does not currently meet State standards for bank full width for aquatic organism and fish passage and poses a potential safety risk. Route 121 is a well-traveled gravel roadway with many driveways.

Existing conditions – there is a beaver deceiver to prevent water from being blocked off. Otter Creek is looking to maintain that and keep it working.

The project is funded by an 80% grant with Windham matching 20% in-kind or direct contribution. Federal funding requires a very structured process with identified steps, which include:

- Coordinate and install traffic detour during work, for shortest time
 - Pre-cast concrete box may be used to facilitate this
- Install erosion and sediment control measures
- Excavate and remove existing culvert
- Backfill culvert and grade roadway
- Re-install/replace guardrail
- Stabilize disturbed soils/clean up

The VTrans Municipal Assistance Bureau process flow chart was shown. The project is at the Local Concerns Meeting stage now. The contracting and initial project meeting have already taken place. After today's meeting, they will put together Purpose & Need statement. Once the design has been determined, the project will move to NEPA process, which includes State and Federal reviews. In terms of project schedule/timeline, Brent is estimating 2023 or 2024 for the completion. They may complete this sooner, but the schedule is subject to required reviews. This is the first of 3 public meetings.

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has a locator map that shows the Windham culvert and wetlands.

Concerns/impacts include traffic & detours, project duration (type of structure may speed up or slow down progress, wetlands (environmental impact – need to protect ecosystems), water quality and other things.

Community concerns:

- Kerrie Heslin indicated she was concerned about the length of time, access to the road, impact on her property that is across from the culvert. Brent indicated that they could talk off-line about specifics.
- Pat McLaine asked about the length of time the road might be closed. Brent indicated they would need to close the road for 2-3 weeks, depending on weather, contractor, rain. This length of time presents concerns for fire safety and EMS. Brent said there would probably not be a need to close the road before the construction, unless there is an emergency problem with the existing culvert that required immediate action. There is an “emergency package” which the contractor will use to alert all emergency services of exact road closures and times.
- Kord said that Richard mentioned there is a dam that would be impacted. It is outside the right of way and Brent said there are no plans to remove the dam.
- Michael McLaine asked about aquatic organisms. Because of the dam, fish aren’t here. Brent talked about macro-organisms, like crayfish) which support other organisms. The culvert is sized with input from State Fish & Wildlife and the State Rivers Engineer with design criteria to help facilitate movement of aquatic organisms up- and down-stream. The culvert will enhance connectivity. Mike mentioned Tropical Storm Irene as a 100-years event and that water was 6” over the top of the culvert. Brent confirmed that rainfall intensities are much higher now than ever. Engineers can now determine flows in culverts and use overtopping data to properly size new culverts.

Brent verified they have already reconfirmed wetlands delineation and completed a topographic survey. He will be back in touch in a couple of months. Margo Ghia thanked everyone for their participation.

Brent’s contact info is rakowski@ottercrk.com and 802-779-2475.

Michael McLaine asked if the decision has been made to do the project and what the cost will be for the Town. Yes, the decision has been made. The total project is around \$500,000, so the 20% for the Town is approximately \$100,000, which has been planned for.

Windham Hill Road Paving Project and Grant Approval

Signed Contract with Bazin Brothers – the contract has been signed. The Selectboard also got word of State Structures and Paving Grants coming in. Each is worth \$175,000. The Structures grant is for the Chase Road culvert, near the Townshend line. The Town has options – we have the money for the current paving project, but if we meet the conditions, we can use this money toward that or we can put the grant toward additional work. Grant work must begin after July 1. We are expecting a schedule from Bazin Brothers this week. Kord will check on details of what is needed in order to use the grant, specifically whether or not work can begin before July 1 or if we just can’t get re-imbursed before then.

Vance Bell asked if there was deterioration to the culvert near the Town Garage. Kord indicated that there is a problem evidenced by a depression in the road. The culvert has stone headers. It was looked at last year, but it did not rise to the head of the list. Kord will look at it again and discuss it with Richard and Marc Pickering from VTrans.

Proposal for Project Oversight from engineer Everett Hammond

Maureen said we got a proposal from the engineer for upcoming oversight work. Kord indicated the Town has used Everett before for other projects. He coordinates oversight with specs in the Request for Proposal. He will monitor the project. Kord said we found it was beneficial to have him here the last time. Richard cannot do this work. The proposal is for \$3240.

For historical reference, several years ago Everett had prepared a survey of Windham's roads.

Motion: To hire Everett Hammond to do oversight work for the 2021 paving project on Windham Hill Road, per his estimate – moved by Kord. All in favor.

New Business:

Opportunity to change our website domain name from .com to .gov

Michael received an email from Lori Bjornlund in the Vermont Secretary of State's office advising that we have the opportunity to change our website from a .com to .gov. Vance explained that this initiative comes from infrastructure and security administration. They are willing to help with the conversion and will pay for that part. Vance is not sure what, if anything else, will be paid for. There is a lot of extra work and time needed to convert the website. The conversion is directly related to the election process. He doesn't believe that we use the website in that regard. We had problems with the website in December which may have been caused by an electronic glitch, but there are regular attempted attacks on the system. Michael said he does not believe we need this for election purposes. Vance will check into this a little bit more. George said having a .gov domain would add to the Town's sense of legitimacy. Vance said we have time until the end of the fiscal year. He also indicated that our website already has added security. He will further explore the pros and cons and get back to the Selectboard.

Michael commented that many towns have switched to .org, but none are .gov right now. He will check with other towns to find out if they are considering the switch to .gov and will let Vance know. He indicated that towns don't do anything with elections except link to the Myvoter page.

The Meeting House:

Fire Alarm System

Maureen reported that a meeting of the Committee was held last week. The issue of the fire alarm system was discussed. The Committee was not clear how this had been resolved – is the system tied in to a central monitoring system? Kord explained that it is tied into some system that notifies mutual aid and then the Fire Department. JP Soucy of K.O. Electric & Security did repairs and got this running again after an alarm last year.

Kord also noted that 2 smoke alarms are not tied into the automated system. He suggests we ask JP about how this works and what else is required. Kord will contact him.

Kord noted that Tom Widger emptied the shed at The Meeting House and Richard is going to relocate it. Maureen mentioned that her neighbor, Ron Phillips, is interested in volunteering for building-related projects and will put him in touch with Tom Widger.

Payroll/Bills:

Maureen thought everything looked in order. George and Kord agreed.

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

Adjournment:

Motion: To adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 6:38 PM – moved by Kord. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bell

Acting Selectboard Clerk (I don't know what I'd do without Pat McLaine's assistance)

DRAFT