Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes

December 20, 2021 Regular Meeting

Via Zoom: In-Person:

Kord Scott, Selectboard Maureen Bell, Selectboard Chair

George Dutton, Selectboard Vance Bell, various positions

Dawn Bower, various positions Leigh Merinoff

Marcia Clinton, various positions Betsy Thomason

Crystal Corriveau

Russ Cumming, Lister

Louise Johnson, Town Meeting House Committee

Tom Johnson, various positions

Kathy Jungermann, various positions

Erin Kehoe

Imme Maurath, various positions

Michael McLaine, Town Clerk and Town Moderator

Pat McLaine, Auditor

Kathy Scott, Treasurer

Eileen Widger, various positions

Tom Widger, various positions

Gail Wyman, Assistant Treasurer

**Call to Order**

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

**Additions to Agenda/Announcements/Reminders**

Maureen indicated that the article for the News & Notes is due next Monday. The Selectboard should get anything they want considered to her.

The Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) indicated the Legislature will be taking up the issue of Australian balloting in place of Town Meeting. This will be decided early in the session in January.

**Act on minutes from December 6 Selectboard Meeting**

**Motion**: To accept the minutes of the December 6 Selectboard Meeting – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

**Public Comment**

Imme Maurath noted that the Auditors got together today. Several things have been written to the Selectboard regarding excessive late fees ($35/month) and interest being chardged for our People’s Bank credit card bills after they are being paid late. Kathy Scott indicated she is contact People’s Bank to see if they will put us on a different schedule. If not, she’ll look for a card that better suits us.

**Correspondence**

We received a letter from Vermont Elevator Inspection Services outlining costs and requesting a non-binding contract for 2 or 3 years at a State-contracted rate of $150 per annual inspection, They have done a good job for us so far and we see no reason not to use this company. All were in agreement that Maureen will sign and return the papers.

We received the Annual Report from the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation. It will be left in the office in case anyone wants to inspect it.

**New Business:**

**Auditors’ Timeline for Town Report**

For those having to submit reports to the Auditors for the Town Report, please note they have a due date of January 17 and have requested that all reports be sent in Times Roman 12 font.

**Masks**

Leigh Merinoff is interested in how we discuss problems in Town and hopes we will discuss the issue of masks. She brought retired respiratory therapist Betsy Thomason from Jamaica with her. Betsy asked about the intention to create a mask mandate. Maureen asked both guests to put on their masks while in the public space of The Meeting House. Betsy refused to put one on. Maureen said that she was uncomfortable with that refusal.

George asked Betsy what her opinion was about masks. Crystal asked if we are looking to enforce a mask mandate since we only have 2 Town buildings.

Betsy said she doesn’t wear a mask because safety is related to her immune system. She said that vaccines won’t make her healthy and wearing a mask won’t keep her healthy. don’t really know how this thing (Covid) transmits. She continued to say that we don’t know what masks actually do. Normal breathing rate is 35 times/minute for a 2-year old and wearing a mask doesn’t give them a chance to breathe. She went on to say that most adults breathe more than 20 times/minute and wearing a mask doesn’t help them either. The real problem in our country is heart attacks and cancer; people are dying faster from these diseases than Covid. We are not a well society. She indicated she wanted to be part of the conversation regarding mask wearing.

Kathy Scott said that wearing a mask while one is in a public building is simply a matter of courtesy. Since people might be dealing privately with all sorts of things such as immunocompromised health or even fear, she doesn’t understand why it is such a big deal to wear a mask in certain situations like coming in to a public space.

**Lawsuit against the Board of Civil Authority**

Maureen acknowledged that a lawsuit has been filed; the Board of Civil Authority is one of the named entities. The Town Attorney is handling this.

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

**Ingalls/Old Farm Roads connector**

A request came up at the last meeting to look into using ARPA funds to improve the trail that connects Ingalls Road and Old Farm Road. We were told that this is not an acceptable use of ARPA funds. Kord understands what Michael Pelton’s original idea was and he will discuss the issue with Richard Paré, the Road Foreman.

**Roads:**

**Fuel Tank/Station Update**

In the ongoing repair of the tank situation, the new containment system is in place; the existing pump has been moved to the new tank and electric was hooked up today. A snowload-rated enclosure, mandated by the State Fire Marshal, is on order.

**Replacement Truck update**

Kord continues to look for pricing and is waiting on that from a local Mack dealer. He hopes to have this available for the next meeting.

**Hydroseed purchase!**

With the announcement about a month ago that we received a grant for this, Richard was able to locate one within the grant parameters. It should be here soon. Kord then offered a brief description of the what the hydroseeder is – a machine that dispenses seed on the roadside. It treats seed to promote growth and makes it stick to the area.

**2023 Better Roads Grant update**

Windham applied for 2 grants - Categories A and B. The Windham Regional Commission will put together a long-term plan for Category A. We are completing all the road erosion inventory work. So far, we’ve been working on high priority segments as we can afford to do them. Category B is for $20,000 net grant for high priority segments on Wheeler Road.

**FEMA project update**

Kord, Kathy and Richard had their second meeting with FEMA last Monday. They reviewed and separated the different projects and funding. One project is the temporary repairs on Wheeler Road. Another project is for all culverts and ditches. The last is for the permanent culvert upgrade on Wheeler Road. No timetable has been established yet. There are some funds for project management – this is considered a separate project. Kord will meet with the Project Manager to review costs and expenses. Wheeler Road guardrails are still being installed.

**Salt Shed repairs/Pete Newton project update**

Pete Newton put in the gussets that are designed to keep the upper wooden half of the structure from moving . Richard and engineer Everett Hammond are monitoring the foundation walls to see if they are moving at all.

**Budget 2022 – in general**

**Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad (LVRS)**

They have requested $3500 this year as our annual donation. Maureen pointed out that LVRS is the only ambulance squad in the State that doesn’t charge clients. Crystal suggested that we might want to consider Rescue Inc for quicker service. She’s had to wait 1 ½ hours for LVRS. Leigh Merinoff suggested looking at the response times for the 2 services. Maureen said that a committee did look into this a couple of years ago and found that Rescue Inc was cost prohibitive.

There was agreement that this is a reasonable amount to ask for this service.

Kord said LVRS should be considered a Public Safety entity, like the Fire Department, and not a Social Services item. We will have to take another look at Rescue Inc.

**Motion**: To approve $3500 donation to Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

Mike McLaine asked a question about Town Meeting. If the Legislature gives the go-ahead (like last year) to have Australian balloting instead of voting from the floor, he has to order ballot envelopes this week. Maureen suggested he go ahead and order the envelopes in anticipation of this decision. The State is not paying for Town Meeting expenses like the do for the General Election, but perhaps this my qualify for ARPA funds.

Kathy Scott recommended that we level fund the General Budget – same as last year: $229,812. She also recommended that we take some of the current surplus funds (approximately $20,000) and set up a Meeting House Maintenance & Improvement (M&I) fund. M&I is not for everyday costs, like phone service or electric bills, but is generally used for long-term costs. Kathy also recommended that we add to some of the other Town funds, like Rainy Day or Office M&I. For instance, she knows that we’re going to need work done on the heating system in the Office.

In addition to the surplus, we have $18,000 I from non-tax revenue (civil fines, zoning, Town Clerk and copy fees), that can be distributed to any of the funds. She doesn’t recommend returning these funds to the taxpayers, as they are small and will not make any difference in the tax bills.

Maureen asked George about the air exchange system in the Town Office and he responded that he has yet to get any responses to his inquiries. This is ARPA funded.

**Motion:** To level fund the General Budget for 2022 – moved by George. All voted in favor.

**Motion:** To level fund the Roads Budget for 2022 – moved by Kord. All voted in favor.

**Payroll/Bills**

Everything looked in order to the Board.

**Motion**: To approve the bills and authorize Kord to sign off on them for the Selectboard – moved by Maureen. All voted in favor.

**Adjournment:**

**Motion**: To adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 6:25 PM – moved by Kord. All voted in favor.

Next regular Selectboard meeting is scheduled for January 3, 2022 at 5:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Bell

Acting Selectboard Clerk

(with assistance from Pat McLaine)