

**Windham ARPA Committee  
Meeting Minutes ~ July 11, 2022**

**Via Zoom**

Maureen Bell, visitor	Mary (Mac) McCoy
Bill Dunkle	Michael Simonds
Cathy Fales	Jan Wyman

**Call to Order**

Mac called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

**Minute Approval**

There were no changes to the minutes, except those made on the revision that committee members received earlier that included Ellen McDuffie's ideas for improving the Town Office.

**Agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**Go-Around**

Each of us commented on what we loved about Windham and what we thought needed improvement. There was agreement that we all loved Windham's natural beauty and all the good people here, and we thought our town needed to have a greater sense of community. We will keep this in mind as we consider our task of how to best spend our \$118,000 from ARPA.

**Ideas for Consideration from Before or After our First Meeting**

1. Previous Selectboard Designations
  - a. Index for Town Records -- \$1,200 has been designated in an ARPA report, but this may not be enough funds for the work.
  - b. Audio/Visual Equipment (for Town meetings and events) -- \$4,000 to \$10,000 was estimated. It may be possible to find some equipment at the State Surplus Store.
  - c. Town Office Air Exchange System – Some funds for this are in the current town budget. We need to find out what has been budgeted and determine a more exact cost amount for what is needed.
2. Previous or Additional Ideas
  - a. Create a community center – we are addressing this with our consideration of funding improvements to the Meeting House
  - b. Create bike/riding/walking paths\* – there is other money from the state for paths that the town can apply for next year
  - c. Renovate or replace Town Garage\* – other state funds are available for this
  - d. Make grants/loans to property owners for energy efficiency projects\* – Energy Efficiency Vermont provides many generous rebates for energy efficient products
  - e. Turn Town-owned residential properties into parks or affordable homes\* – the selectboard is meeting with the Windham & Windsor Housing Authority about turning one property the town owns into an affordable home
  - f. Create a pavilion at Meeting House – we have no additional info

- g. Buy generator for Meeting House – we have no additional info
- h. Make capital improvements to Windham Elementary School building – funding for this is problematic, since the town does not own the school building; there is also concern that using ARPA funds for this would be a divisive issue
- i. Support a Summer Camp for Windham kids – there would be liability issues related to this; it could also be a divisive issue, since it would only impact residents who need child care.

### **Reports on Ideas from the Previous Meeting**

Broadband – Mac relayed a report about broadband from Ellen McDuffie after her discussion with David Cherry. Progress is being made to bring broadband to Windham, but we are not scheduled to get it until 2024. David suggested two areas of financial need: (1) To help residents pay their monthly bills, which will be between \$70 and \$80 per month; there is federal funding to pay \$30 per month. (2) To help residents connect to the power line; lines to homes will be extended for free for up to 400 feet from the nearest utility pole, and anything more than that will cost \$1 per foot at the home owners' expense. Ellen added that some folks will need help buying a computer.

Grant Writing Training – We still have no information about what Townshend did in this regard. Mac stated that she is a trained teacher and also has 30 years of experience as a grant writer. She would be willing to provide a training. Another option would be to set aside funds to hire a grant writer to prepare several grants. Funds for town projects can be greatly increased if we use some of the ARPA money as matching funds to apply for other available grants.

Fire Company – The Fire Company is a 501c3 and, and as a legal non-profit organization, they are eligible to receive ARPA funds. Jan reported that four members of the company need new gear. One set of gear costs \$5,000. The gear is considered out-of-date if it is 10 years old or older, and insurance will not cover a firefighter who is injured wearing out-of-date gear.

Meeting House – John Birch from Vermont Foam Insulation met with Bill and others to examine the Meeting House. It is a hard building to weatherize, and the upstairs (sanctuary) should be considered “outdoors” as it would be extremely difficult to insulate. The main floor could be weatherized, but an exact cost cannot be provided until a further exam of the building. John described the current heating system as one of the most inefficient he had ever seen. A cold climate heat pump would do a better job and lower heating costs. Additional cost estimates from other vendor(s) are needed.

Town Office – John Birch also looked at the Town Office, and he estimated insulating it would cost \$13,818 to take out the fiber glass insulation and replace it with sprayed foam. This would tighten up the building significantly. We need a cost estimate from other vendors. We also need estimates for an air exchange system. Bill has the names of two more other companies that he'll give to Selectboard Chair Kord Scott.

Solar Arrays on the Town Office – Since its problematic to run additional power lines up Old Cheney Road to support three sets of solar arrays there which would benefit many but not all Windham homes, Michael suggested putting a solar array on the Town Office roof. Town Treasurer Kathy Scott provided figures that show the Town Office, Meeting House, and Town Garage collectively use around 9759 kWh per year at a cost of around \$2,900. Michael reported

the solar production on the arrays at his home generate around 6000 Kwh per year and are about half the size of what could be installed on the Town Office roof. As yet, his effort to get two solar companies out to give cost estimates have not been successful, but he thinks it would run \$20,000 to \$30,000. This array's production would not only cover the costs of the Town's electric bills for the next 20 years, it is also likely that the Town's electric bills will increase as we turn to renewable energy to address climate change, such as converting to electric cold climate heat pumps and electric vehicles. There is the possibility of renting additional space on the elementary school's roof for a solar array there. The state of Vermont is using part of its ARPA funds to promote solar arrays through Act 172, and the Town can apply for this in a few months. The Town would have to provide some matching funds. Accurate cost estimates are very problematic right now, as there is a difficult supply issue happening with solar panels.

Other Towns Use of ARPA Funds – Cathy reported on her research and said that smaller towns are more concerned than larger towns about choosing projects that are not divisive. Some small towns are joining together to fund regional projects. For example, three towns are creating a regional park. Bigger towns were more likely to survey residents on their desires, but smaller towns are doing this too. ARPA requires that towns commit specific plans by December 31, 2024 as to how their funds will be spent, and people are taking their time to get everyone in their community on board.

General Comments – Bill and others commented that \$118,000 won't go as far as we'd all like. That amount could easily be used on the Meeting House only. What about the other worthy projects? We need to decide if we want to fund one thing and do it thoroughly, or fund several smaller projects, or limit our spending to two or three projects.

We also need to consider what will have lasting impact without ongoing expenses after the ARPA funds run out. Helping people with their monthly broadband bills would only last for a short while. Upgrades to the Meeting House might not provide for its ongoing usage.

We also want to choose projects that benefit the entire town. We want to come to a consensus as a committee, but also get input for the town as a whole, either before or after we send our recommendation to the selectboard.

Before the next meeting, Mac will update the evaluation form that Maureen got from Wardsboro, using the input Cathy will get by talking to Wardsboro about how well the form worked for them. Mac will send the revised form to each committee member to complete. She will tabulate the input to determine the projects we agree are best.

### **Next Meeting**

The ARPA Committee will next meet on **Monday, August 8 at 5:30 PM by Zoom.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary (Mac) McCoy, selectboard clerk  
approved August 17, 2022