

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
February 3, 2023 Special Meeting
Meeting Held on Zoom Only**

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Not present: George Dutton, selectboard

Barbara Jean Quinn
Imme Maurath
Kathy Jungermann
Pete Newton
David Cherry
Cathy Edgerly Fales
Pat McLaine
Becky Eliastam
Marcia Clinton
Beth McDonald
Leigh Merinoff
Phil McDuffie

Russell Cumming
Gail Wyman
Bill Dunkle
Ellen McDuffie
Maureen and Vance Bell
Tom and Louise Johnson
John and Sally Hoover

- 1) **Start Recording and Call Meeting to Order** – Kord announced the meeting, started the recording, and called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM.
- 2) **Changes to the Agenda** – There were no additions, deletions and/or changes to the agenda.
- 3) **Announcements/Reminders** – There were no announcements or reminders.
- 4) **Act on Minutes** – These were postponed until the 2/6 regular selectboard meeting.
- 5) **Public Comments** – Thanks were given to the road crew from their work on the roads during all the snow and ice.
- 6) **New Business** – Discuss meeting/voting options per Act 1 (H.42) regarding temporary laws that were reenacted related to Annual Town Meeting and the Open Meeting Law that will be in effect until July 1, 2024. Make decisions as necessary.

Kord explained that Act 1 was enacted to address the continuation of Covid, the flu, and other winter illnesses. It gives towns the option of (1) moving town meeting to a later date, or (2) holding the votes by Australian ballot. Using the Australian ballot would require candidates to get petitions signed by four voters in favor of their nomination and would also require an informational meeting to be held no more than 10 days prior to the vote. Using the Australian ballot would require that voting be later than the traditional town meeting date. Town meeting could also be held on the tradition town meeting day, this year March 7. Whatever we decide to do this year will *not* determine what we do next year.

Discussion among all present:

- Maureen: Significantly more people voted in '21 and '22 by Australian ballot than the number who attended and voted at recent town meetings.
- Kord: The printed ballots must be mailed before the informational meeting, and many people vote before attending the meeting, which can cause confused voting.

- Leigh: We need to meet in person to discuss issues and feel a sense of community. Town meeting is a worthy tradition.
- David: Does the informational meeting give people a chance to be together and discuss the issues? Kord: Yes.
- Bill Dunkel: Town meeting is the purest form of democracy. Folks enjoy coming together, sharing lunch, and being an active part of the decision-making. But times have changed, making it harder for people to attend than it was in the past when folks lived off the land and Tuesday in early March was not a busy time. So let's combine the two options provided by the state and add an informational meeting that is set up like town meeting with folks coming together and also being there on Zoom, but we would not conduct any voting at that time. That would be done later by Australian ballot. The info gathering with lunch could be held before the ballots go out, and another stripped down informational meeting could be held at the required time 10 days before the voting deadline.
- Ellen: The warning has to be posted 30-40 days before voting, and it cannot be changed. She asked her state advisors if Bill's option would be acceptable and was told that it would not be. We can't combine a town meeting with an Australian ballot. We can move town meeting date to anytime in 2023.
- Kord: What Bill is suggesting isn't a town meeting.
- Pete: Having town meeting with a floor vote is the best option. We can wear masks to protect ourselves, or we can have it outside. Postponing it would be OK. His choice would be to have town meeting as planned or at a later time on a Saturday when more people could come.
- Maureen: We can have as many information meetings as we want, as long as one is 10 days prior to the vote. She liked Pete's idea of having it outside. Covid is still a concern. We can postpone, and all officials will continue in their jobs until then.
- Bill: There are lots of opinions and options. We could postpone and take the time to survey more of the town's voters.
- Maureen: Londonderry had their town meeting outside last year in the spring, and it was successful.
- Bill: If we postpone, do we also have no new budget? Kord: Correct.
- Michael: The Australian ballot provides for more voters but has some timeline complications. He likes the traditional town meeting, perhaps pushed back until the weather is better, and maybe on a weekend day to get more participation. Town meeting allows us to hear each other.
- John: He prefers the Australian ballot. There's a new strain of Covid and the flu, and older people have health issues. Better save than sorry.
- Beth: She is waiting for information from the superintendent about what the school board will do. More people can weigh in with the Australian ballot, but whatever is decided, she would prefer to postpone the vote until spring.
- Marcia: Let's have town meeting in May on a Saturday so more can attend.
- Pat: What would an outside meeting look like?
- Ellen: For the WCO barbeque we have a tent.
- Imme: It cost about \$750 to rent.
- Kathy: In May, we could be inside with the windows open and circulate the air.
- Cathy: We might use ARPA or MERP funding to rent a tent. Or what about having town meeting at the school or firehouse?

- Becky: Seems like there is desire to meet in-person, but postponing town meeting only addresses health issues and not accessibility. If we have an info meeting with a Zoom option and a ballot, we would get more participation. She like's Bill's idea.
- Phil: Bill's idea would let people meet and the ballot would bring higher voter turnout.
- Maureen: She likes Cathy's idea of getting a tent with ARPA funds.
- Leigh: We could build a permanent structure outside for ongoing use.
- Maureen: A pavilion was an early suggestion for building with ARPA funds.

Decision – Kord said he heard comfort with postponing until nicer weather and holding town meeting inside or outside at the Meeting House. Michael said he had issues with the Australian ballot going to people who were not informed. Voting at town meeting assures you know what you are voting for.

Cathy offered that a Survey Monkey could be conducted to get more input. Vance said that the 74 respondents to the ARPA survey was not a significant response. Beth said a survey might be good, but we need to move forward.

Kord said if we do not postpone, the warning must be posted by this Sunday. Pete suggested postponing, having town meeting outside the Meeting House, and if the weather is bad, having it upstairs in the Meeting House. Some others expressed agreement with this idea.

Motion: To hold the vote on Saturday, May 6th. Kord moved, and Michael agreed.

Motion: To conduct the vote in-person at town meeting, held outside or inside the Meeting House. Michael moved, and Kord agreed.

Next Steps: Pat will have info in the next News & Notes. The auditors' town report will include the warnings for the town and the school. Ellen will put together a new timeline, with the warning coming out 40 days prior to May 6.

Michael encouraged the auditors to get the town report out sooner than later so people have time to digest it.

7) Adjourn meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:35PM. Kord moved, and Michael agreed.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 6, 2023 at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved 2/6/23