

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
February 6, 2023 Regular Meeting
Meeting Held on Zoom Only**

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Kathy Scott
Maureen and Vance Bell
Tom and Louise Johnson
Gail Wyman
Bill Dunkle
Cathy Edgerly Fales

Barbara Jean Quinn
Imme Maurath
Kathy Jungermann
Pat McLaine
Jan Wyman
Jon Gordon
Marcia Clinton
Leigh Merinoff
Abby Pelton
Ginny Crittenden

1) Start Recording and Call Meeting to Order – Kord announced the meeting, started the recording, and called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

2) Changes to the Agenda – There were no additions, deletions and/or changes to the agenda. George said he was sorry he missed the last meeting, and he asked to be reminded when special or emergency meetings take place.

3) Announcements/Reminders – Kord announced that it was Michael’s birthday, and several people wished Michael happy birthday. Kord thanked Vance for getting the website back up and running. Michael thanked the ARPA Committee for its work. Abby asked that people write their representatives to encourage changes to the education tax formula.

Next Step: Consider holding an informational meeting to explain the tax situation.

4) Act on Minutes of Previous Meetings

Motion: To approve the minutes from the 1/23/23 meeting. Kord moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To approve the minutes from the 2/3/23 meeting. Kord moved, and Michael agreed. George had not read these minutes and abstained.

5) Public Comments – Leigh asked that the selectboard consider building a permanent gazebo or pavilion outside the Meeting House, as was suggested at the previous meeting.

Next Step: Consider this structure for future funding.

6) Correspondence – There was no correspondence.

7) Payroll/Bills – Michael asked if there was a way to see the details of items they were asked to approve, including a comparison between the actual and budgeted expenses. Kathy responded that the items have been discussed and approved when the budget was created, and she has no control over ongoing costs. Some monthly reports given to the selectboard show where we stand in terms of the budget.

Motion: To approve the pay orders from the town treasurer. Kord moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To have Kord sign for the payments presented. Kord moved, and all agreed.

8) Staff Reports

A) Vote on using \$14,600 of the ARPA funds for DVFiber Connections – Mac said that the ARPA Committee recommends that the selectboard use \$14,600 to provide financial assistance for those in Windham who need it to connect to DVFiber for high speed internet. This amount will be matched, providing \$29,200 to provide connections. George suggested sending only \$10,000. How the amount suggested was determined was unclear, but Kord and others trusted the figure, as David Cherry had proposed it.

Motion: To provide \$14,600 to DVFiber to be used to assist Windham residents who need financial help to connect to DVFiber. Kord moved, and all agreed.

B) Update on ARPA, MERP, and other funding sources – Mac reported that she, Cathy Fales, Bill Dunkel, and Michael Simonds attended a regional meeting with representatives from various state agencies who provided information about numerous funding opportunities available through the state from federal stimulus funds. Bill commented that if we apply and receive MERP funding for energy-related issues at the Meeting House, we will not need to use ARPA funds for that. An energy audit is needed, and applications for that will be available in early March. Cathy added that the various funding options need to be coordinated. We can start with a \$4000 grant from MERP to get community input and create a plan. Also, \$60,000 is possible through Better Places grants, but we first need to get the area near the Meeting House designated as a “village center.” Other grants are available for historic buildings.

C) Discuss increasing Town Budget by \$250 for Social Services error – Mac said the West River Community Project was accidentally omitted from the list.

Motion: To add \$250 for WRCP to the Social Services request for the 2023 town budget. Michael moved, and George agreed. (Kord abstained as he is on the WRCP board)

Mac explained that the selectboard approved the total Social Services request as an article on the warning. This was done because of information she learned through a VLCT webinar. The article would be long, listing all the organizations to be funded. However, on further review, she learned that the list of organizations to be funded could be a part of the general fund budget, which is how Windham has done it in the past.

Motion: To add the Social Services request back into the general fund budget and not have it as an article in the warning. Michael moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Mac will revise the Social Services report. Kathy will revise the general fund budget. The auditors will adjust the town report. Mac will also send the warning to Vance for posting.

9) New Business

A) Discussion – re changing town meeting date to May 20th – Kord apologized for not realizing when the date was set for May 6 that he would be out of town.

Motion: To move town meeting date to May 20, 2023. Michael moved, and all agreed.

Next Steps: Consider changing our accounting system from a calendar year to a fiscal year that starts in July. Also consider changing tax collection from once a year to twice a year.

B) Assign someone to write the selectboard article by 2/15 for the News & Notes – Michael volunteered to write the article.

10) Old Business

A) Discussion re Business Directory – Michael has confirmed with 29 local businesses to be listed, and he awaits responses from others. He asked that the word be passed to anyone who might have been overlooked. He suggested posting the finished directory on the town website and perhaps annually in the News & Notes.

Next Step: Vance will check to make sure this is not considered “advertising,” which is prohibited by our website provider.

B) Discussion re procedures and training for town positions – Michael advised that job descriptions be created for town officials, so people taking the jobs on a long-term or short-term basis know what their duties are. He said this will help with consistency and transparency. Maureen said the Secretary of State’s office has job descriptions already. Michael said we need to create descriptions with the nuances specific to Windham. Abby said that in an emergency when someone has to fill in for others, this would be very helpful.

Next Step: Michael will put together guidelines for the job descriptions. Abby will help him.

C) Discussion re a Short-term Rental Registry – Michael said according to the consensus, there are 184 houses in Windham, and 56% of them are unoccupied full-time. He said the those 56% are unregulated. He is concerned that these will be used as short-term rentals. Full-time home owners are paying a lower tax rate, and this could be equalized by charging a tax or fee for those renting their houses. There are 14 towns in Vermont which are regulating short-term rentals. Michael wants to gather data on these houses by creating a registry of them and charging the owners of these houses a fee to be in the registry.

Motion: To create an ordinance to register short-term and long-term rentals. Any fees associated with registering a rental to be used to fund the expenses related to the registry. This ordinance should have considerations for promoting business, ensuring fairness in the fee structure, ensuring public safety, and have a monitoring the system in place to review the data generated.

A 42-minute discussion followed. Kord said he didn’t know enough to vote. George said it was a good idea but needed to be a subject for another meeting. Michael said they had talked about it before, and other towns are taking action to avoid future problems. Pat expressed concern about the cost and management of the registry. Abby said the registry would pay for itself and be a good way to build community. Bill questioned if this was addressing a real problem in town, and he expressed concern that it could divide residents. Michael said it was short-sighted to do nothing. Once we have the data from the registry, we will know what to do next. Abby expressed concern that the short-term rentals were not safe and welcoming. Michael said the registry would tell us who owns the properties and if corporations were buying them and taking away local usage. Bill said the listers have this info already. He questioned who would make sure properties are safe and how the requirements would be enforced. Pat agreed that the listers already have much of this info. George and Kord said they are not opposed to the idea but questions remain. No vote was taken on the motion, as it was clear that George and Kord wanted more information.

Next Step: Learn about what other towns have done, what information is available from Windham’s listers, and how many rental properties there are in Windham.

D) Update/discussion re Altpfart property (burned building near Abbott) – Michael said we need to move forward to decide how to address this dangerous building. Kord said he had information from Bob Fisher, town attorney, and he will circulate Bob’s advice, including our town ordinance related to this. Michael said the ordinance says we need our building inspector

(Bob Kehoe) to determine if it is safe or not. There were questions about whether or not the ordinance had been passed, as it is labeled “draft.” Maureen said it was signed 2/17/2016. Bill said that Zoning Law 707F page 46 says if a structure is abandoned for more than 12 months, the town can have it removed. Michael said we can’t consider it abandoned, so better to address it as a dangerous building.

Next Step: Kord will review the ordinance and Bob’s advice and report back at our next meeting.

E) Discussion re Highway Ordinance update – Michael said we have listened to residents’ complaints about speeders and have conducted the required speed studies.

Motion: To adopt 35 mph on all unpaved roads. Michael moved, and all agreed.

Kord said we need to address Windham Hill Road. Michael recommended changing the limit to 35 mph on Windham Hill Road between the town garage and Carlton’s Corner (the sharp turn that’s around 7400 WHRd). Ginny suggested putting up electronic signs, as other towns have, that tell drivers what their speed is. George said we need to apply the 30 mpg limit that is now in South Windham to other areas where there is a cluster of homes or a bottleneck due to narrow roads.

Motion: To set speed limits on Windham Hill Road as follows: 30 mph (as it is) in South Windham, then 35 mph from South Windham to the school, then 25 mph (as it is) by the school, then 35 mph from past the school to near the town garage, then 30 mph from near the town garage to past Carlton’s Corner, then 35 mph from past Carlton’s Corner to Four Corners (Rt. 121). The 35 mpg will also apply to Horsenail Hill Road. George moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Kord will determine the additional procedures required to make these changes.

F) Discussion re Highway Dept property search – Michael said we need to look actively for land for the garage and other town buildings and begin with a list of requests that says what we need and what to look for. Michael said we need a real estate agent to look at costs. We can send a letter to Grand List stating what the town needs and a reasonable offer.

Next Step: Kord will get with Richard to create the list.

G) Update on Town Office drinking water – Kord reported that the water is fine with no contaminates. Treatments can be done to get rid of the minerals, or we could get a water softener or a water filter. There have been problems with the water bubbler that was in use.

Next Step: George will talk to Jeffers about a filter. The selectboard will decide how much to spend to get the water more drinkable.

H) Update on FEMA Project – Kord reported that David & Pat Cherry have not signed the easement papers, but intend to do so. The contract has been signed with the contractor.

Next Step: Richard is moving forward with the necessary orders to start work this spring.

I) Update on LHMP Planning Team – The team’s two required meetings have been held, and we know what needs to be done.

Next Step: When the draft plan is ready, it will be passed on to the selectboard.

J) Discussion about AV System – We need to decide if this is a priority or not since we can return to Zoom only meetings. When we conduct hybrid meetings again, we will need an improved system. Michael said he is impressed with the Owl System, and their complete

system is only \$3,000. George said we need a decent system for town meeting. Stationary cameras will be needed, even with the Owl system.

Next Step: George will talk with Becky Eliastam for her advice.

7) Adjourn meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:54 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 20, 2023 at 5:30 PM.

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

Attachment:
Letter to DV Fiber approving \$14,600