

**Windham ARPA Advisors Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 16, 2023**

**At Town Office:**

Mary McCoy (Mac)  
Ellen McDuffie  
Michael Simonds

**Via Zoom:**

Bill Dunkel  
Cathy Edgerly Fales  
Tom Widger  
Jan Wyman

**Note:** This meeting started late, and we experienced unstable connections throughout it due to the internet outages from the major snow storm that started Monday (3/13) afternoon and ended Wednesday 3/15) morning, leaving three feet of snow. This meeting was originally scheduled for Wednesday, March 15.

**1. Call to Order**

Mac called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM and started the Zoom recording.

**2. Minute Approval**

There were no changes to the minutes of February 9, 2023. Jan moved to approve the minutes, and Ellen seconded it. The minutes were approved.

**3. Changes to the Agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**4. Public Comments**

There were no public comments

**5. Check in – What is a vision (past or future) you have of the Meeting House?**

Mac said she remembers square dances there and looks forward to dancing at future Harvest Suppers. Ellen said she would like to see events there like weddings and memorials there. Repairs are needed for that to happen. Bill shared the vision of building being a central location for gatherings, including public entertainment. Jan and Tom agreed with those ideas. The town could possibly rent it out. Cathy said her vision is that we have a process that brings together as many voices as possible to figure out what we want the building to do for us. Hopefully, clarity will come out of that community planning. Mac added that to make the Meeting House a place for gatherings, we need to find more spaces for parking.

**6. Report on MERP Mini-grant application**

Mac, Cathy, Bill, Michael, and Kord met briefly and looked at the application for MERP's mini-grant for \$4,000. Then Mac submitted the application, which was a simple form. We are seeking the funds to hold a townwide community meeting to create a plan, as Cathy mentioned in her vision. Mike from the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) said we would get this money. Cathy thinks it will come in a couple of months. It will be used for the townwide meeting that Meg Staloff will facilitate. The harder process will be the application for the larger amount to enact the plan.

The pursuit of the funding will not be guided by ARPA but by a task force that oversees the funding needs for the Meeting House. Members of the Meeting House committees and others will make up the task force. Cathy has volunteered to lead it.

### **7. Confirm plan for April 1 gathering at the Meeting House**

Mac said the basic plan is to tour the Meeting House and discuss the funds available. Tom mentioned again some of the building's many needs. He and Pete will walk everyone through the building, show us its problems, and explain ways to preserve and update the historic building. They will also show us work that has been done already. Tom suggested a quick gathering when we get there, a walkthrough, and a discussion. Tom thinks we can create a larger parking lot.

Cathy said we need to think about the second, bigger MERP grant, so we have all the information ready. We also need to think about how that money dovetails with other funding sources. She will write up her notes and share it with all of us. At the tour, Cathy will have a document showing the funding possibilities and the sequential order for applications.

Bill wondered if we can visually record what we see during the walkthrough and create a running list of the outcomes we want. It would be good to have on one spreadsheet a list of possible projects, prioritized, with funding sources, and estimated costs. Cathy said that would be great. We could even pay a videographer with the mini-MERP funds. Tom suggested Vance Bell. Mac will ask Vance. Maybe Becky Eliastom. We could always use a cell phone. Mac said she would make the record of the various problems that need attention.

Cathy said that Meg Staloff, who will facilitate the townwide meeting, will be there on April 1 to see the Meeting House issues. Mac said that Kord will be there, and George and Michael may come for a while. Also, she knows that Cindy Kehoe will represent the Library trustees. Tom said most of the Meeting House committee and the Friends will be there. Tom and Louise Johnson will attend. Ellen will be there, and she will see if anyone besides herself wants to come from the WCO. We need to make sure Imme Maurath is there. Jan will see if anyone else wants to come from the Fire Company. It looks like most of the ARPA Committee will be there. Cathy said she will bring a 30-cup coffee maker and a coffee cake. Jan will bring muffins. Ellen will bring water, as the water at the Meeting House has an odor.

### **9. Review spreadsheet of possible distribution of ARPA funds and make adjustments**

We began by looking at what funds have been approved already by the selectboard:

- \$14,600 for DVFiber
- \$4,000 for grant administrator, which will be Imme Maurath, to oversee funds from FEMA, VTrans, and other grantors.
- \$1,200 for digitalizing the land record index – more will be needed
- \$260 to chair of the ARPA Committee (Mac)

We discussed the other projects.

- Tom moved that we remove the \$500 for plantings. It was generally agreed that we have much higher priorities. Bill seconded it, and all agreed.
- Ellen commented that other funds available for the indexing of the town land records. The state has added this to what it funds. All agreed to remove for that from the projects on our list.
- Cathy said there is legislation now on the governor's desk that will let us apply for funds for a grant writer. We have until 2024 to decide how to spend the ARPA funds, so we can

wait and see if we can get other funds for the grant writing and use free help, like that available from the WRC. Bill said we won't know how much we need for a grant writer until we know what we are applying for and how much we need to raise. We can set this money aside and see later what we need. Cathy agreed 100%. Tom agreed as well. There was no disagreement. Later, Bill commented that Imme might do research and find the info that is needed to support grant applications. Cathy said we might also get free help in finding out the grants that are available for what we need.

- Jan spoke on behalf of the Fire Company. As their treasurer, she knows they have money, but they also have large expenses for their equipment, and they need to raise funds for a new building. In terms of the gear they have requested ARPA funds for – it takes nearly a year after the initial request to get the gear. They are an all-volunteer organization on call 24/7. They need ARPA help, and they need to make the order by August or September at the latest. Tom suggested expediting this and sending a request to the selectboard. Bill asked Jan about possible grant possibilities. Jan said Bill Casey is looking into this and working on it. He's calling other towns that have received grants for gear. Jan said Windham's Fire Company has made grant requests in the past and not received them. Cathy suggested using some ARPA funds to pay a grant writer to help the Fire Company. Tom suggested giving preliminary approval and considering it further at a future meeting. No one disagreed to giving preliminary approval, based on whether other funds come through a grant. Bill said let's set aside \$10,000 for them in case they don't get a grant. If they get it, we use the \$10,000 for other needs. Cathy said let's also use some ARPA funds to pay a grant writer to help the Fire Company. Tom said there is a grant writer in Londonderry that works for the town. Tom will get the name and number and give it to Cathy and Jan.
- Someone from Integrated Solar is coming to look at the town office roof. We know that there is 30% off on solar arrays, and Mac was unable to find any additional funds for this. Ellen asked if we have enough line capacity to handle a solar array. Integrated can tell us that. Michael pointed out that we might have to pay 100% of the cost and wait for the 30% rebate. Bill said we need to know the upfront cost. Michael said he thought it was \$39,000. Michael pointed out that this is the only project we are considering that will pay for itself, as it will be part of the net metering program which will cover the cost of the town buildings' electricity bills.
- We still don't know what we'll need for audio-visual equipment. Kord and George have said they will look into this, but they have not been able to do so yet.
- Mac does not think we will need to use \$1000 for her ARPA clerk time. She used \$260 in 2022. That number can be lowered to \$750 at the most.
- When Mac prepared the latest version of the spreadsheet, she put in estimates for everything except the Meeting House, then directed what was left for the Meeting House. That came to \$40,000. We can't know how much will be needed for the Meeting House until we know more clearly everything that is needed and what everything will cost.

Mac commented that George said the selectboard very much appreciates the work of the ARPA Committee and the way we are maximizing the funds by looking at other possibilities.

**8. Relate April 30 filing for ARPA to U.S. Dept. of Treasurer**

We have to file a report to the federal government. Mac said she would file the report. All agreed for Mac do this.

**10. Schedule next meeting**

Mac suggested April 12. Bill will not be available, as his son and his family will be in Windham from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>, and he gets to see them rarely. The 12<sup>th</sup> worked for everyone else.

**The next ARPA Meeting is Wednesday April 12, 2023 at 5:30 PM.**

**11. Adjournment** – Michael moved to adjourn the meeting, and Tom seconded it. We all agreed. The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 PM and the Zoom recording was stopped.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary McCoy (Mac),  
ARPA Committee Clerk  
*Minutes approved 4/12/2023*