

**Meeting Minutes
Windham ARPA Advisors Committee
at the Meeting House
Saturday, April 1, 2023**

ARPA Committee

Bill Dunkel
Cathy Edgerly Fales
Ellen McDuffie
Michael Simonds
Tom Widger
Jan Wyman
Mary McCoy (Mac), clerk
(Absent:
George Dutton
David Lewis
Kermit Blackwood)

Guests

Dawn Bower
Kord Scott
Eileen Widger
Imme Maurath
Pete Newton
Cindy Kehoe
Michael Pelton
Kathy Jungermann
Ginny Crittenden
Mike McConnell, Windham Regional Comm.
Meg Staloff, S. Vt. Economy Project

1. Call meeting to order – Mac called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM

2. Welcome guests – Mac welcomed everyone and stated the purpose of the meeting – to tour the building inside and outside in order to better understand the needs to be met. The ARPA Committee wants to support the Meeting House and recognizes that there is not enough ARPA funding to finance all the work required. The committee wants to use the ARPA money wisely and is looking for additional sources of funding to support the Meeting House. Everyone there introduced themselves and stated their connection to the Meeting House.

3. Move to dismiss usual agenda times – Mac made a motion to dismiss with the approval of the minutes and other routine items that are usually at the beginning of the meeting. Cathy seconded it, and all agreed.

4. Tour outside of building – Pete Newton, chair of the Friends of the Meeting House, conducted this part of the tour.

Pete began by explaining the issues related to accessibility and the front of the MH. The platform needs to be replaced, the doors need to be installed so they swing out, and a ramp needs to be rebuilt to have a less steep incline. Of key importance is assuring that all the exterior work retains the historic look of the building. Doors can be built like the original ones, and wrought iron handles installed. Pete presented a clear explanation of how the work could be done. He and the Friends have recently applied for a Paul Bruhn Preservation grant to do the work.

The outside of the building needs painting. An estimate has been received for \$82,000. The work would involve scraping off the old lead-based paint by hand. Much labor is involved and a crane is required. Pete is getting a second estimate. Meg will research grants for exterior painting.

Pete recommends replacing the bulletin board with one that blends into the historic façade and moving its location from near the east door to near the west door.

The outside stand-alone sign needs updating to remove the Congregational Church info. Cathy will talk to Ed Brown about doing the work.

The idea of a pavilion has been mentioned at selectboard meetings, located where the tent is for the WCO BBQ. Pete feels it would distract from the historic nature of the MH. Michael P. suggested an outside meeting place that looked like a carriage house and was open on two sides, like one in Londonderry.

5. Tour inside of building – Tom Widger, chair of the Town Meeting House Committee, conducted this part of the tour.

Tom showed the need for paint in the MH entryway. That work could be done by volunteers. The storage space under the stairs to the sanctuary may or may not need fire-resistant sheetrock. The committee has been given contradictory info on that from two different assessments.

In the meeting room, Bill Dunkel provided information about insulating the main floor. (Insulating the sanctuary would be prohibitively expensive.) VT Foam Insulation gave two estimates. One was to insulate the meeting room by taking up some of the floorboards in the sanctuary and blowing in insulation. This would protect and preserve the historic pressed tin ceiling in the meeting room. That estimate of \$15,500 did not include dealing with the sanctuary floorboards. The second estimate was for \$11,675 to put foam insulation underneath the meeting room floor. However, Pete said that spraying foam insulation there could trap moisture and cause damage, and it would be nearly impossible to remove later. Pete recommended instead using a form of reflexive insulation that can be removed. Something must be done, as the lack of good insulation is a major issue, resulting in high heating expenses.

Tom said an estimate for \$14,500 has been received for a generator. Since power is lost more often now in Windham, the MH water pipes might freeze, causing extensive damage. A generator would ensure that doesn't happen.

In the sanctuary, Tom pointed out the new storm windows that were prepared by the Window Dressers. Also, he noted the elevator that helps make the sanctuary accessible. Some painting has been done on the walls, but the ceiling paint is chipped and needs to be repaired and painted. We looked at the floorboards that would need to be removed and then returned for the insulation.

The kitchen needs updating – a new dishwasher is needed, as well as replacements for the two refrigerators that were donated years ago. Also, the stoves need a commercial-grade exhaust system for cooking on the stove tops. The current vent does not meet fire code.

In the boiler room, Tom explained the problems with the heating system and the current waste of energy. There are two oil-burning heaters, one for water and one for the three rooms on the main floor. The sanctuary is not heated. In the winter, the oil boiler must be kept running, even during the days that it is not in use, to ensure that water doesn't freeze. What would be better are a propane heater or a cold climate heat pump that is more energy efficient and on-demand water heaters for the three places in the building with water faucets (the kitchen and two bathrooms). Tom also mentioned that the water tastes bad and needs some sort of filter or treatment.

Tom mentioned that work has been done by his committee and volunteers to put in stairs outside in the back and to replace rotting clapboards. The selectboard has been very cooperative in supporting the committee and in removing the trash created by their work.

6. Currently known funding opportunities – Cathy Edgerly Fales lead this part of the agenda.

Cathy said that we need to pursue grants for the MH through state's Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) and other grantors, but we first need a plan. Meg Staloff has agreed to facilitate a townwide meeting to determine the work wanted by town folks and to create a plan for getting that work completed. The hope is to restore the MH as the great asset it is for Windham, now and for generations to come.

The Friends have submitted a proposal for a Paul Bruhn Preservation Grant to complete the work for accessibility on the front of the MH, which Pete explained on his tour. A challenge for this and any work on the MH is to balance the need for improvements with the need for historic preservation. (submitted 3/28/23)

Through ARPA, a proposal has been submitted for a \$4,000 mini-grant from MERP. This grant, which we expect to receive, will make possible the townwide meeting, facilitated by Meg, to consider the needs of the MH and the desires of town folks for the MH. (submitted 3/6/23)

The Facility Assessment Priority Plan (FAPP) will be the end product of the townwide meeting, and the blueprint for our desired future actions. (due 6-8/23)

The MERP Audit (Level II) will provide an energy assessment of the MH with anticipated cost estimates. For this, we need to provide the past energy assessments and cost estimates, as well as our energy bills for the past five years. (due fall 23)

The MERP Capital Grant, if received, will be based on the MERP Audit, and it will provide up to \$500,000 in funding. These are expected to be very competitive grants. (due winter 23/24)

A Cultural Facilities Project Plan of \$4,000 is possible, if we can show the past and current cultural uses of the MH, as well as possible future events. (due 5/15/23)

A Cultural Facilities Capital Projects grant is also available, based on a long-range plan for cultural activities. (due 5/24) Pete noted that fire codes say we cannot use the sanctuary more than 20 times a year and no more than 150 people at a time. If it is more, a sprinkler system is required, and that would be very expensive to install in the historic sanctuary.

A Historic Preservation grant from the state is other possibility. (due fall 23)

Although we can receive some free advice and assistance from the state's support for rural towns, the Windham Regional Commission, Meg's Southern Vermont Economy Project, and others, we still need the help of a grant researcher to identify other grant possibilities and to help us apply for them. This should be a paid professional, as the work requires expertise. The ARPA Committee wants to use some of the ARPA funds for this purpose.

7. Comments – Imme said an automated external defibrillator (AED) is needed at the MH, and she asked if the ARPA Committee would buy one. Someone else suggested discussing the MH’s needs at town meeting.

8. Adjournment – Michael moved to adjourn the meeting, Ellen seconded it, and all agreed. The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 PM.

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