

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
July 5, 2023 Regular Meeting
Held on Zoom Only**

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Mary McCoy (Mac), select-
board clerk
Richard Paré, road foreman

Michael Simonds
Paul Hansel
Bill Dunkel
Maureen Bell
Tom Widger
Cathy Edgerly Fales

Abby Pelton
Barbara Jean Quinn
Pete Newton
Phil McDuffie
Crystal Corriveau

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:31 PM.

2. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda – Kord said the bids for sand had been received and would be opened during Richard’s report.

3. Announcements/Reminders – Kord said that the check for the purchase of the Horsenail Hill property had cleared. All three of the properties the town offered for sale have been sold. The town received \$30,000 for the Horsenail Hill property.

4. Act on minutes from the 6-19-23 selectboard meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes from 6-19-23 regular meeting. George moved; all agreed.

5. Public Comment – There were no public comments.

6. Correspondence – George said he was contacted by a logger who was having trouble getting his bond back. He helped the logger get that from Kathy Scott, town treasurer. We need information to give to loggers, explaining the process and providing a way to record the bond payment and its return. Bill said the Planning Commission worked on a draft for this.

Next Step: Bill will put this on the agenda for the next Planning Commission meeting and forward the revised draft to Michael. Michael and Richard will discuss and provide input.

7. Payroll/Bills

There was a problem preparing the report in NEMRC, so it was prepared in Quickbooks.

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 and Discussions

A) Update re road work and invasives – Kord opened the bids for sand for 2023-2024. Two were received and the third (Hunter Excavation) was a “no-bid.” P&L Trucking’s bid was for \$24.75 per yard, and Hill Construction’s was for \$20.00 per yard. Both will provide delivery. Richard said he expects we will need 1500 to 2000 yards, but we can only receive 1,000 at a time, due to space limitations. We have 300 yards left from last year. We have purchased sand from Hill for the past few years. Richard said the quality of Hills sand is good, with no 3/4 inch stone. Their sand works well on blacktop and unpaved roads.

Motion: To award the contract for sand to Hill Construction for 2023-2024. Kord moved, and all agreed.

Richard reported that the road crew has been working on the unpaved part of Rt. 121, which was damaged by recent rain storms. Rain on the 4th of July caused damage to an area adjacent to Jungermann's property on Windham Hill Road. The way to fix that is to remove the berm. On August 7, the rented roadside mower will arrive. The crew has also been busy preparing our roads for the winter.

Regarding invasives, Michael called the Dept. of Agriculture for advice. He learned that invasives are a problem all over the state, with no good solutions. The selectboard considered the following options for mowing invasives:

1. Buy a mower – They are expensive, costing between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Richard said this should be considered, as we need to mow multiple times to get rid of invasives.

2. Use Londonderry's mower – They initially said they weren't interested in sharing their mower, but Cathy reported that they seem to be more open to that now.

3. Continue to rent a mower – There are hidden costs to using a rental, related to repairing them to return them in good condition.

4. Buy an attachment for the loader – This would require buying a new loader, as our current loader cannot go slowly enough for mowing with an attachment. A new loader may be needed anyway, so ours is showing rust on the cab, which diminishes its safety.

George said a new loader should be move to the top of our replacement schedule. Then we can get a mowing attachment for a new loader. We can use the rental until we can make these purchases. Michael said we should consider buying a separate mower, as multiple mowings are needed. Kord said we should also consider an engine-driven unit.

Next Steps: George will look at pricing. Richard and Kord will explore these options.

B) Discussion re Meeting House Committee request to move forward with work – Maureen said the Town Meeting House Committee wants to work on needed projects, using the money they have from the fund established by the town. Pete said the Friends of the Meeting House are considering using some of their money to complete the work they had hoped would be paid for by the Bruhn grant, which was not awarded to them. Painting the exterior remains key, but there are few grants for that. Tom said the committee has \$12,000 from their fund from the town. He said they need \$45,000 to \$50,000 of the ARPA money, so they can move forward knowing what funds they have to work with.

Cathy said the ARPA money can be used as matching funds for grants. She said a 1776 Grant would pay for preservation, and the MERP funds will provide an energy audit with up to \$500,000 available per request based on the audit. There is also the Preservation Grant. The Arts Council will pay for ADA improvements, but we have to have a plan for the use of the building for arts events. Maureen was concerned about how long the grant writing and awarding process takes. Kord confirmed that it takes time, but that the town has benefitted greatly from the grants we have received for other activities.

Pete said he wants to work on the front of the building and address the access issues. They asked Bruhn for \$50,000 for that work, but it could be more. Pete explained in details the work needed. Some excavation will be required, which Richard could do if he had time.

Kord said we need to pursue grants but also look at immediate needs. We need to determine what is most urgent and the funds available for that. Pete, Tom, and Maureen agreed that working on the front of the building is the most immediate need. Pete has the drawings and documents related to the improvements needed for the front of the building.

Motion: To have Kord work with Pete to prepare the request of bids for the work on the front of the Meeting House, using information submitted with the Bruhn grant proposal. This will be done to evaluate what is needed and what it costs. Kord moved, and all agreed.

C) Discussion re ARPA/CAPP teams collecting resident feedback re Meeting House – Kord said some ideas have already been gathered and prioritized for what is needed for the Meeting House. This is an expansion of that. Mac said the idea is to build on the work that already has been done by holding a townwide meeting to share the plans with everyone. We want people to express their ideas about the future of the building. This may be a way to create more unity in town. Cathy added that when we apply for grants, it is a major plus to report that there has been townwide input about the request being made.

D) Request from ARPA Committee re AV Equipment – Mac said the ARPA advisors are recommending with unanimous agreement the following: To spend \$2500 of the ARPA funds for the Owl system with the remainder of the funds used to purchase equipment needed for large meetings, contingent on Cathy finding out if there are grants available for this. Cathy reported that she found no appropriate grants for this. George explained the additional equipment needed for large meetings, as the Owl system only works well for small meetings of up to 20 people.

Motion: To accept the ARPA Committee’s request for \$2500 for audio-visual equipment. Kord moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: George will determine what equipment is needed for large meetings and make the purchases.

9) New Business

A) FY24 Grants in Aid award – Kord reported that the town was awarded \$20,000 from VTrans for work next summer. Imme is doing great as our grant manager. She is working with Jeff Nugent from VTrans on a long-term plan for the completion of the work required per Act 64.

B) Discuss article re the impact of social media on tourism – Michael said the article talked about the challenges towns face due to tourism, similar to what we face with people coming here to go to Hamilton Falls. Social media promotes attractions, and property owners face undesirable consequences. Some towns are trying to remove info from social media. Windham may need to consider an ordinance to deal with tourism.

10) Old Business

A) Discuss upgrading CCI internet for faster service – Russell Cumming coordinated this effort, and Ellen made the arrangements. We have upgraded our internet service with CCI and with gather feedback on how much of an improvement it has made.

B) Discuss automated attendant for the Town Office – A few town officials would like to have a dedicated line for messages. Kord has set up a demonstration of one vendor’s system. George talked to folks in Townshend who use Solvnet for their automated attendant.

C) Update on LHMP status – Kord said this is in the public comment period. Cathy asked if the town has a system to alert others of dangers by cell phone, and Kord asked her to send her suggestion to the LHMP team. Michael said the state’s Emergency Management has such a system that anyone can sign onto.

D) Update on possible Highway Dept property – Kord said the only response we received about available property is going nowhere; the owners are not responding, and the land is problematic.

Next Step: If we don't get input from owners, we need to abandon this possibility. We will discuss other approaches for securing the needed land at the next meeting.

E) Update on webmaster search – Kord reported that Vance has interviewed some individuals and companies about this website work. Paul Hansen said his company works with towns around the state. He asked if the \$1000 budget included expenses. Kord said Vance was paying for things out of his own pocket, and we need to re-evaluate payment for the webmaster and the related website expenses. Paul had not heard from Vance and wants to know more about the job and provide a bid. Paul also said that his company works to meet ADA standards so that anyone can use the website. He will send his info to George and Michael.

F) Update re town attorney's comments on Phil McDuffie's emails – Michael recognized the valuable points made by Phil and reported on the feedback from Bob Fisher, town attorney. Bob said the town cannot create policies about gun control, as we do not have the power to do so. Bob said Phil's suggested "affirmation" might be a good idea, but it would not hold up in court or take away the town's liability. Bob wants to speak with PACIF (our insurance company through the VLCT) to determine our coverage for the constable. He and Crystal asked a few questions about what would happen in certain situations, but no one on the selectboard could provide answers, as it all depends on the circumstances and the information from PACIF. Phil had no further comment.

Next Step: Bob will talk with the PACIF and report to the selectboard.

11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:11 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

The next regular selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 17, 2023 at 5:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved July 17, 2023