

Meeting Minutes
Windham ARPA Advisors Committee
By Zoom Only
Tuesday, May 30, 2023

ARPA Committee	Michael Simonds
Kermit Blackwood	Tom Widger
Cathy Edgerly Fales	Jan Wyman
Ellen McDuffie	Mary McCoy (Mac), clerk

- 1. Call meeting to order** – Mac called the meeting to at 5:32 PM.
- 2. Quick check-in – Comments on Town Meeting and use of the Meeting House**
Everyone agreed that it was good to have the annual meeting upstairs at the Meeting House.
- 3. Act on the minutes of the past meeting of May 9, 2023**
Motion: To approve the minutes from the May 9, 2023 ARPA meeting. Michael moved, Cathy seconded, and all agreed
- 4. Make changes (if any) to the agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda.
- 5. Hear public comments on items not on the agenda** – There was no one from the public.
- 6. Update on insulation for the Meeting House** – Pete Newton was not present as expected to give this update.
- 7. Update on Meeting House plans for funding** – Cathy reported that there were only a few comments posted at Town Meeting with suggestions for the Meeting House. Meg Staloff will be calling a meeting with reps from relevant committees to set up the three town meetings to make plans for the Meeting House. There are two grants coming up – one from Rural Initiatives for a “transformational project” that could be used to fund the needed changes to the entrance area for ADA and safety, and one from the state’s BGS for historic preservation that could fund the same needed changes. The info on MERP still hasn’t come out.
- 8. Update on estimates for Town Office solar array and funding sources** – Mac reported that three estimates have been received, and she posted information on screen share with resulting information (see attached). That included info from a meeting with two reps from the VLCT regarding funding for the array. She contacted them for advice about the 30% off.
They told her the IRS has not yet announced how to qualify for the 30%. Also up in the air is whether MERP will fund any of the expense, but it seems unlikely. Mac said she learned that if we generate more electricity than we use, we cannot sell the excess, but we can give it away. Our array would generate more than we would use. We need to know if there will be increased electrical use at the Meeting House and/or the Town Garage. If so, we should wait and see what will be needed and only put up now what we know we can use. Michael said we might put the array up, but only connect the panels that will be used by the town now. A final question is how the town will pay for the array upfront if we go for the 30% and do not get it for a year or more.
Kermit asked if there is a way to store the excess electricity. Michael said batteries can be used, but are expensive, and the town owns none. Michael thinks we need to install the array and either give away the excess energy or sell it. Cathy asked what the payback might be

without the 30%, instead selling the excess. When would we be at zero? Tom said he would put the figures on a spreadsheet to see.

9. Review spreadsheet re possible distribution of ARPA funds and make adjustments –

Meeting House – Tom said we need to reserve some seed money for the Meeting House. There is now about \$15,000 in the town’s fund for the Meeting House. There is also money from tag sales, and the Friends have a considerable amount of money. He said that we need to move forward, as getting contractors to do the work could take a long time. Mac reported on recommendations from George. He wants us to use funds from MERP for the insulation and use ARPA funds for a generator and the exterior access work.

Mac asked if we want to make recommendations before we go through the process with CAPP to determine what the town wants? Cathy said there is a sense of urgency, but it will be OK if we have the town meetings completed by August. We should also have the in-depth audit from MERP. Having that information will prioritize needs, including ADA and safety. We ought to do the ground work. Cathy will speak to Mike McConnell to find out when the in-depth work will take place to determine the needs.

Audio-visual – Referring to the info Maureen sent about the Owl system, Mac said that this would work well when we can no longer hold meetings by Zoom only. George is in favor of the Owl. Cathy added that she is looking for grant possibilities for the Owl. Tom said he saw an Owl recording of a meeting with 30+ people, and it worked well. People on Zoom were also connected. Other towns are using it and are happy with it. Cathy said those who want to increase community involvement should want to fund this. We might use some ARPA funds as a match. Mac said George wants us to add funds for a projector, speakers, and microphone, which he estimated at \$2500.

Clerk – Mac said she had made a mistake in her pay as clerk. She had thought her pay was around \$250 last year, but it was \$878. She suggested having \$2000 in the budget for this.

Town Office – Ellen spoke about the color copier. She has two estimates from vendors and has sought a third. The estimated cost from both of those was \$5,500. Kathy Scott (town treasurer) has said she wants a color copier for her reports and records, but it isn’t needed for Ellen’s work as town clerk. Our current copier is old, and Ellen has been told that parts for it will soon be unavailable, so we need a new copier. Ellen will speak to Kathy. If Kathy doesn’t need color, Ellen will get new estimates for a black ink only copier. Cathy wondered if zoning permits and designs need to be in color. Michael said color isn’t necessary. Ellen said we are charged per copy by the copier service, and color copies are twice as expensive.

Ellen said that a wide-format copier would be expensive, and she does not think our infrequent use of it would justify the expense.

As for the digital index of the land records, Ellen got a ballpark estimate of \$16,000. She thinks there might be grants for this, as there were during Covid. The \$1200 already spent was for the scanning Mike McLaine did as town clerk. Ellen had thought that came from the Restoration Funds. Those funds can be used for indexing. She needs to find out from Kathy how much is in the Restoration Fund.

The researcher station doesn’t seem to be needed now that Covid is over. Ellen said the town would benefit more from work on the Meeting House.

10. Consider making recommendation(s) to the selectboard – Mac asked if anyone wanted to make a recommendation at this time, and no one did. It was felt that we need more information. Cathy said we might need to reprioritize our projects. Mac said we don't even have half of the funding to finance what we want to do. Cathy said the applications will be available in September for the BGS grant. The Rural Initiative grant will be available sooner. For that, we will be competing only with other small towns.

11. Schedule next meeting – We need two or three weeks to gather information. The choice was to meet next on June 20th.

12. Adjourn meeting

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:34. Michael moved, Jan seconded, and all agreed.

The next ARPA Committee meeting is Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 5:30 PM.

Respectively submitted,
Mary McCoy, ARPA Clerk
Approved June 20, 2023

Attachment:
3 Vendors and Questions