

Meeting Minutes
Windham ARPA Advisors Committee
By Zoom Only
Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Present Committee Members

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

- 1. Call meeting to order** – Mac called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.
- 2. Act on the minutes of the past meeting of May 30, 2023**
Motion: To approve the minutes from the May 30, 2023 ARPA meeting. Michael moved, Cathy seconded, and all agreed
- 3. Make changes (if any) to the agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda. However, Mac said that new information had been received that she wanted to send to the committee members before having a detailed discussion of these.
- 4. Hear public comments on items not on the agenda** – There was no one from the public.
- 5. Update on insulation for the Meeting House** – Pete Newton was not present as expected to give this update.
- 6. Update on CAPP and Meeting House plans for funding** – Cathy said there were four Windham people at the first CAPP meeting – Vance Bell (representing the Energy Committee), Pete Newton (representing the Friends of the Meeting House), Maureen Bell (representing the Town Meeting House Committee), and herself (representing the Planning Commission). Also there was facilitator Meg Staloff (Southern Vermont Economy Project). Meg started with her idea about gathering ideas. She was encouraged by Maureen, Vance, and Pete to use the list of Meeting House needs that Tom and others had put together.

Cathy said she had expected things to evolve differently than they did; she had expected they would plan a townwide meeting to gather ideas from all interested people in town. Instead, three of the four people present chose to move forward with the list they had and to create priorities from that, based on their years of work on the MH. In Meg's report, she added her own statement for townwide input.

Mac commented that she also expected a townwide meeting about the MH. She looked at meeting minutes and said it was mentioned five times at APRA meetings, five times at selectboard meetings, as well as twice in the News & Notes. She asked if she and Cathy were the only ones with this expectation. Michael said he also expected a townwide meeting, and we might need to get the selectboard involved to have broader input. George said he had thought of it only as a possibility. Tom said Windham is a small town, and the same 20 people do everything. He thinks if a townwide meeting were held, we would get the same 20 people.

Cathy said that if you are new in town, you often feel unwelcomed. Perhaps the same people may do everything because others are not treated warmly. Ellen said she was sorry to know that new people are treated warmly. Michael said he had a similar experience when he first moved to town, and now that Windham is more divided, people criticize each other, which is unfortunate. Cathy said we need to invite people to join. Our Monkey Survey went to

360 people, and we got 74 responses, which is a fantastic response to an online survey. There are people who will participate if directly asked. We need to be smarter about how we include people. Maybe food and fun will help. Cathy reminded us that we on the ARPA Committee all agreed that a way to unite people in our divided town might be around the Meeting House.

Tom said he didn't mean anything negative about only 20 people being involved, but he wants things to get moving. Progress has been made, but we're stuck now. Cathy said we have a good chance for other grants, building on the Paul Bruhn grant and the feedback we got about that grant. She noted that the town is in charge of the MH now with 100% ownership, so all grants will have to be submitted by the selectboard.

Mac stated her personal desire for a townwide meeting. She will bring it up to the selectboard on her own, or the ARPA Committee can recommend it. She feels there should at least be an opportunity for people who have expressed ideas for the MH that are not on the list – such as insulation for the building, a larger parking area, an outside pavilion, the ability to rent the MH – to know why their ideas are not being pursued.

Tom said the Town Committee came up with a list of 27 things that needed to be done, some of which have been completed, like painting the foyer, which was done with money that Imme's group raised with tag sales. We are at a point where we need to limit what can be done, so we had to prioritize. The Friends have their own agenda related to improving entry access and painting the building. They have some money, but are careful with it. But Tom said he would attend a townwide meeting if it happened.

Mac said she does not mean to negate anything the Town Committee or the Friends have done. She just wants to give everyone a chance to learn about the plan and to know why their suggestions aren't being pursued. Tom said that was fine. Let's do it when people can attend and promote it widely. Michael acknowledged Tom's work and that of the two committees. He said beyond the many immediate needs, we need to have a broader discussion about the future uses of the MH.

Motion: To tell the selectboard that the ARPA Committee wants there to be a townwide meeting about the Meeting House. Tom moved, Cathy seconded, and everyone voted aye.

That meeting can include a discussion of the future of the Meeting House, a review the plan Meg has prepared, and response to other ideas for the building and grounds.

7. Update on the Solar Array – Michael reviewed the recent information. VLCT reps told us that we could use ARPA funds along with the federal tax credit. The town pays for the full amount, and the tax credit is applied for after completion. The VLCT reps also gave us a list of 10 grants possible for the Meeting House. We will need someone writing grants and coordinating this effort.

We learned from Green Mountain Power that if we use more power than we generate, we cannot sell it. We can create a group to benefit from all the power we generate. They will receive reductions in their electric bill based on the energy generated by the solar array. We have to designate what percentage each group member will receive for the generated power, and we can change the percentages four times a year. Michael said that we have to do things their way. It is not very flexible, but we can work with their system. Cathy asked if we can include the school in our group. Michael said he thinks we can designate any building that has a GMP account as a group member.

Cathy said she spoke to an organization's rep who said they would help us apply for the tax credit. Tom reported that he did a spreadsheet to project how long it would take to get back in savings what was spent on the solar array, and it would be nine years. Michael said that the solar array is the only project that will pay for itself, with all funding for installation

coming from the federal government. Mac said she spoke with Kord about how we would manage the payment for this, and the town can pay for 70% with ARPA funds and 30% out of nondiscretionary funds. That 30% would later be reimbursed through the tax credit.

- 8. Update on Town Office needs** – Ellen reported that we have a town resident (Cisco) who works for Canon, and he is taking over our current Canon account. She is now partial to Canon, which our current machine is. She was leaning to Xerox, because the current Canon representative wasn't responsive to her request for an estimate on a new machine.

George commented that we need to send out specs to get at least three bids if the cost is over a \$5000 cost. A service contract makes it even more. Ellen said they currently pay \$45-\$50 per month for use. She has put out other requests, one to Toshiba, but Mike McLaine said his law office isn't happy with Toshiba. Mac asked if a color copier is needed by the treasurer, and Ellen said that it isn't necessary but is wanted.

In terms of the digital indexing, she has one estimate of \$16,000. She doesn't see the benefit of spending that, plus other connected fees. The second company she contacted for an estimate hasn't responded. She also doesn't see the need for a wide-format printer.

- 9. Update on AV Equipment** – George said the Owl system does well in a room 15 x 20 feet for a group of up to 20 people around a table. So it would work well for most hybrid meetings of the selectboard or other groups. But for larger meetings, like town meeting, we need to update our sound system for upstairs at the MH. We need two or more wireless microphones, cables for the equipment Becky donated, a camera, a laptop, etc. He moved that we as a committee recommend spending \$2500 for the necessary AV equipment, and Tom seconded. Cathy said that it might be wise to find out if there are grants available for this. George agreed to an amendment.

Motion: To recommend to the selectboard spending \$2500 for the Owl system with the remainder used to purchase equipment needed for large meetings, contingent on Cathy finding out if there are grants available for this. There was unanimous agreement.

- 10. Review spreadsheet re possible distribution of ARPA funds and make adjustments** – Considering the time of this meeting and the additional info that needs to be explored, Mac suggested that we skip looking at the spreadsheet. Everyone agreed.

- 11. Consider making recommendation(s) to the selectboard** – Michael recommended that we send the solar array proposal to the selectboard. Realizing he was not ready to offer a concrete motion with the appropriate figures, he withdrew his motion.

- 12. Schedule next meeting** – George asked that the ARPA Committee meet on a different week than the selectboard meets. It was agreed to hold **the next meeting on Wednesday, July 12.** Ellen said she won't be able to attend then. George asked her to get proposals ahead of time for the copier. Mac will send all committee members the relevant reports she has received.

- 13. Adjourn meeting and stop recording** – Michael moved to adjourn the meeting, and several people seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), ARPA Clerk
Approved 7-10-2023