

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
July 17, 2023 Regular Meeting
Held on Zoom Only**

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

Maureen Bell
Gail Wyman
Paul Hansel
Bill Casey
Cathy Edgerly Fales

Abby Pelton
Barbara Jean Quinn
Phil McDuffie
Bill Dunkel

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:32 PM.

2. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda – There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Announcements/Reminders – Mac announced that all of the paperwork has been completed for the installation of a solar field on their property. About 15 households can become “off-takers” to receive credit for this green energy with a 5% reduction on their Green Mountain Power bills. Anyone interested in being an “off-taker” can contact Mac or Michael Simonds.

4. Act on minutes from the 7-5-23 selectboard meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes from 7-5-23 regular meeting. Kord moved; all agreed.

5. Public Comment – There were no public comments.

6. Correspondence – Two emails have been received from Crystal Corriveau and will be discussed at the next meeting.

7. Payroll/Bills

Motion: To approve the pay orders from the town treasurer. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To have Kord sign for the payments presented. George moved, and all agreed.

8. Staff Reports and Discussions

A) Update re road work and invasives – Kord reported that the road crew has been responding to the damage done by the recent torrents of rain, including damage to the culvert on Wheeler Road. Michael and others acknowledged the excellent work done by our road crew to address the damage and all of the work they did in the past that kept the rain from causing even more damage to our roads.

Michael said he contacted the state Department of Agriculture regarding eliminating invasives on our roadsides. They suggested consulting with companies that do this work and sent Michael a list of those companies. Michael said a plan needs to be created with the involvement of the Conservation Committee.

Next Step: Michael will contact Alison Trowbridge, head of the Conservation Committee, about creating a plan of action.

B) Report on ARPA committee work – Mac reported that the date of Saturday, September 23 has been set for the townwide meeting to brainstorm on future uses of the Meeting House. Other groups are co-sponsors – the Town Meeting House Committee, the Friends of the Meeting

House, the Energy Committee, the Planning Committee, and the Windham Community Organization. We're referring to it as "Brainstorming and Brunch," as food will be served.

The ARPA Committee is now focused on funding for the solar array on the Town Office and the improvements for the Meeting House. We have three estimates for the solar array. It can be funded entirely with federal funds. ARPA funds can pay for 70%, and a federal Energy Incentive Tax Credit (ITC) can pay the remaining 30%. On Wednesday, the Energy Committee will be reviewing the details of the project and making a recommendation. Cathy said she will be attending a webinar regarding the ITC.

Mac said Tom Widger, chair of the Town Meeting House Committee, has asked for \$45,000 to \$50,000 of the ARPA funds for the Meeting House improvements. Estimates for what things will cost are being sought. Mac made a rough estimate of the total costs, to be around \$250,000 to \$300,000. The ARPA Committee wants to set aside \$50,000 for the Meeting House, to be used primarily to receive grants, of which there are several available for the Meeting House needs. Some of these require matching funds.

First, we need a strategy for pursuing those grants with cost estimates, professional drawings, outreach to funders, whatever else is needed to create winning grant proposals, and a timeline for doing all of the work necessary.

9) New Business

A) Federal Disaster Declarations – President Biden signed two disaster declarations for Vermont. Assuming our county meets the damage threshold, FEMA will be overseeing the distribution of those funds for town infrastructure repairs in addition to private property – businesses, homes, etc. Imme Maurath, Windham's grant administrator, has started filing for FEMA support, and we will need a list of the damages here. Maureen asked if it would include damage in Timber Ridge since it has private roads. Kord said it would. FEMA is already doing assessments of the damage to bridges here – we have three with minor damage. **Next Step:** Continue working with FEMA to receive the support needed.

10) Old Business

A) Update re request for estimates for Meeting House entrance improvements – Kord said Pete Newton, president of the Friends of the Meeting House, has created a basic breakdown of the costs for this work, and his estimate is \$80,000. Of that, \$10,000 is for engineering designs. The next step is to send the project out for estimates.

As an experienced carpenter, Pete might do some of the work. Kord consulted with Bob Fisher, town attorney, to see if the Friends and the town can designate Pete to do part or all of the work. Bob said we can attach contingencies to our bidding process that say who to hire, but our bidding process needs to have a discretionary policy.

Kord asked Pete if he would be interested in this job, if his price was acceptable. Pete is considering this, but he would do it as a contractor, perhaps only building the new doors himself. We need to hire someone to do the specs for the job. Michael said that he would like to see towns people doing the work on the Meeting House, as has been the case historically.

Mac noted that there is possible grant funding for this work, but little for painting the building. Cathy said the 1776 Fund will grant \$5,000 to \$10,000 for exterior painting, and will provide that amount for more than one year. The application to that funder would need to come from the Friends, and at this time, the Friends are waiting for their 501(c)(3) to be reapproved. Pete also said that he does not think the Friends are limited to work on the building's exterior and can be involved with the interior, as well.

Cathy said we need to focus on all the grant possibilities for the next six to nine months. We have a good chance for the Rural Development grant, due in November.

Next Step: Prepare a memo of understanding about the town's relationship with the Friends.

B) Update re Village Center Designation – Cathy said the pursuit of this designation has been approved by the selectboard and the Planning Commission. We need to get maps made, then hold a town meeting to approve a change to our town plan. We could fold that meeting into other changes being considered by the Planning Commission. Any grant from the state gives priority to projects with a village center designation, and it is required for a Better Places grant. She will meet soon with Richard Amore from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. We should also consider getting a village designation for South Windham and for area of the town office, school, and cemetery.

Next Step: Cathy will report to the selectboard about her meeting with Richard Amore.

C) Discuss legal advice re constable liability issues – Kord said Bob Fisher has not yet been able to with PACIF, our insurance provider. Bob knows the situation here and what information and advice are needed for the selectboard to address the concerns.

Next Step: Kord will report to the selectboard on what he learns from Bob.

D) Update on LHMP status – Kord said our plan is with the Windham Regional Commission for its final approval. We need this to receive the maximum reimbursement in the event of a federal disaster declaration. The WRC can show that the update was in process when the recent rain damage occurred.

E) Update on possible Highway Dept property – Kord said he still has received no reply from the owners who suggested their land for our salt shed, and we should end our pursuit of that possibility. Mac wondered if the Amsdens would want to rent or sell some of their land. Kord said they might be a possibility. Another possibility is land owned by Meadowsend, as we have asphalt stored there already, but Richard Paré, road foreman, does not see that as a good site because its location is hard to access.

Cathy suggested that we apply to MERP for an audit for the town garage. If we have a full audit done and if they suggest that new construction is required, we can ask for funding for that from a MERP grant. The full audit requires past utility bills and other documentation.

Kord noted that we cannot expand at the current location. We need a place for the salt shed and, preferably, a new garage, as our current garage is in bad shape. Cathy said that it would be cost effective and a good sell for a grant proposal if the Fire Company and the Highway Dept. were sharing the same land for their facilities. Kord noted that the Fire Company needs a new building, but they are reluctant to share space, as they enjoy their independent status.

Next Step: Cathy will apply for a full audit for the Town Garage.

F) Update on webmaster search –Paul Hansen said his company is still interested in providing this service, but he has not been contacted by Vance Bell, departing webmaster. Kord said that Vance is waiting to hear from a local couple that provides web services.

Next Step: Kord will contact Vance about his outreach.

G) Update on stream evaluation and damage on West Windham Road – Kord said the work done to repair this from previous flooding had been undone, and the stream again went out of its normal bed. The situation can now be addressed by FEMA, along with other damage. Michael noted that for a while, the residents in West Windham were unable to leave their end of town, due to the damage.

Mac asked if FEMA does any proactive work and might provide funding to connect Ingall's Road to Old Farm Road, so the West Windham folks wouldn't be trapped. Michael agreed that this would be a good idea. Kord said FEMA only pays for repairs, like the replacement of culverts. His past work with FEMA said they only fix problems and don't consider costs by acting proactively.

Michael asked if there was a way to alter the Burbee Pond bridge to provide more access for overflow, perhaps by adding a second culvert or another way to avoid what is happening now. He also noted that the beaver-deceiver is not functioning. Half of it has gone downstream, and the other half is out of place. He asked who might be consulted about fixing or getting rid of it. Kord said Richard is aware of the problem.

Next Steps: We need to find out for FEMA what support we can receive for improving the situation for West Windham residents, including improving the culvert to provide better release of excess water from the pond and creating another route out of West Windham. Richard will continue dealing with the failed beaver-deceiver.

11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:36 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

The next regular selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 7, 2023 at 5:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved August 21, 2023