

**Meeting Minutes
Windham ARPA Advisors Committee
By Zoom Only
Wednesday, August 2, 2023**

Present Committee Members

Bill Dunkel	Michel Simonds
Cathy Edgerly Fales	Tom Widger
David Lewis (left early)	Jan Wyman (came late)
Ellen McDuffie	Mary McCoy (Mac), clerk

- 1. Call meeting to order** – Mac called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM.
- 2. Act on the minutes of the past two meetings**
Motion: To approve the minutes from the ARPA meetings held on June 20, 2023 and July 10, 2023. Michael moved, Tom seconded, and all agreed
- 3. Make changes (if any) to the agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda.
- 4. Hear public comments on items not on the agenda** – There was no one from the public.
- 5. Discuss plans for the townwide meeting for the Meeting House**
Cathy reported that she spoke with Ellen about sending emails to all of the co-hosting committees and their members to ask for their involvement. She wants to get as many people involved as possible. There will be an article in the N&N. Ellen will also send out info about the meeting to her extended email list. Cathy would like to send everyone in Windham a note asking for their input at the meeting. The date is Saturday, September 23 at 9:30 AM.
Cathy asked the ARPA committee what we think would be the best food to serve and when to serve it. Having eggs was discussed. Cathy said if we use ARPA funds for the food, we could do a more extensive brunch. She thinks frittatas, coffee, tea, and juice. Ellen liked the idea of baked eggs with bread and meat. Ellen asked if it would be a buffet with tables on the lower floor. Mac asked if the food would be eaten during the brainstorming or separately. Cathy said that could be determined later. She also said we can make the point that kitchen ventilation isn't good enough to cook anything on the stove top; we can only use the oven.
Cathy will meet with Meg to plan the event, and she will report back to the ARPA committee

- 6. Discuss possible distribution of the ARPA funds**
> UPDATES ON COST ESTIMATES – Mac shared the most recent spreadsheet, in order to add new cost estimates. Ellen had a new quote for the color copier, which was \$5,100 for outright purchase. It can also scan, copy and fax, and it is more advanced than the current machine. The quote came from a Canon rep who lives in Windham, and Ellen would like to have a local person responsible for service. The estimate includes up to 10 computers using the copier. Ellen said we need to replace the copier now, which is seven years old, because we won't be able to get parts soon. Kathy Scott would like to have color copies for her reports. The town would pay $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cent for each black and white copy, and 5 cents for each color copy. Each department would need to keep track of their copies and would be billed accordingly. Ellen said that there was discussion about using the M&I fund to pay for the

copier, and Kathy told her the M&I funds are for building improvements only. Mac said that Kord told her if we didn't have enough ARPA funds for the copier, the funds could be found elsewhere. Ellen said we could also buy the copier on time, and not pay the full amount up front. She did not know what the monthly charge would be.

Mac asked if there were other new cost estimates. Bill said he was unable to get a quote for an on-demand water heater, although he has reached out to Jeffers for one. He thinks this is an urgent need. He recommends that we set aside \$2500 for an on-demand water heater.

Tom did not get any estimates, saying everyone knows what is needed. He said he could not get cost estimates until they were put out for bid. He said he didn't know where to start, as he was not getting cooperation from the Friends of the Meeting House. He said the Town Meeting House Committee has \$12,000, and they don't know how to apply it to their long list of needs. He said they need ARPA funds. He can give ballpark costs, but they won't hold weight.

> UPDATE ON GRANT STRATEGIST & GRANT WRITER FOR MEETING HOUSE – Mac suggested up in \$8,000 for this. Half of that would be for a grant writer, as discussed in the past. The other half would be for a grant strategist, someone who would do the upfront work, get drawings and assessments, make initial contact with grant funders, determine what matching funds were needed, create a timeline for applications, and complete other strategic work that needs to be done to successfully secure grants. Mac said from her experience, these steps are essential. Cathy has already done much advance work, but there is much more to do. She said it makes sense to her that Cathy continue with this work, and she hopes the ARPA committee will support this.

Michael said Cathy would be extraordinarily good at this, as she is experienced in this field and has already done a great deal of work for Windham related to grants. He said she deserves compensation for her ongoing work.

Cathy said this work is essential to make sure all the opportunities fit together. She has done this work in the past and knows how to do it. She doesn't want to make decisions – she wants to gather the information for other decision-makers. She said we already know we will have an audit of the Meeting House, which will come with a set of recommendations. We need to determine long-term needs, short-term needs, etc. She understands the frustration of those who have been working on this and how long it takes to make the wise choices. Cathy said there are four grants coming up in the next few months.

Bill said he is not opposed to this, but he wonders how the \$8,000 figure was arrived at. He also asked how this job differs from what Imme is doing. Mac said Imme is working to manage grants that have been received by gathering and reporting the support documentation. She doesn't have the experience to do what Cathy can do. Bill said he thought Imme was gathering data for grant applications. Mac said Imme isn't doing research in preparation of applications, and she is not focused on the Meeting House.

Ellen said that today Imme and Richard worked all day on FEMA damage. It is a lot of work. Ellen said that what Cathy is doing is not what Imme signed up to do. Imme told her she is not doing any upfront work for grant applications or any grant writing.

Motion: To allocate \$4,000 for a grant strategist and \$4,000 for a grant writer. Michael moved, and Cathy seconded. There were three in favor and two opposed. The motion passed.

Seeking consensus, Mac asked for more input. Bill said he was in support of this, but wondered what length of time the \$8,000 would cover. Cathy said the work would be for about nine months. Ellen said it seemed like a lot of money, and wondered if someone could

work with Imme. She also wondered if this should come out of ARPA funds. Mac said this was a way to maximize our ARPA funds to generate more funds. Tom said, “*You* said that.” He also said it was too much money when we don’t even know what needs to be done, but he said the selectboard would decide.

Cathy said our goal can be to create the strategy and then see what is needed for the grant writing. Some grant application may not take much work in terms of writing. When we need a grant writer, we could use the services of the grant writer she has contacted from Tumbridge. Cathy suggested allocating \$4,000 for the strategy, and letting the selectboard decide how to go forward. She said getting the bigger picture right takes time, like getting the village designation, which goes beyond the Meeting House, but is related to the Meeting House.

Mac asked if Tom and Ellen would support the motion if we only approved \$4,000 now for the strategist. Tom asked how Cathy would be paid, and what the parameters would be. He said it was too vague for him. Ellen said she would feel better if only the strategy part were approved. She said we have already approved \$4,000 for Imme to work with Kathy Scott. She feels the \$12,000 related to grants is too much, so she only supports the \$4,000 for the strategist, and if we find we need a grant writer, then we talk about that.

Cathy said she is sure we need a grant writer. She will put together a description of what she would do and what needs to happen. She said it won’t be hard to apply for MERP, but we’ll need a grant writer for other applications. Ellen said gathering the upfront work is part of Imme’s work, and she wondered if there is a job description for Imme. Ellen also asked about the village designation. Cathy said the planning commission and selectboard have approved pursuing this.

Mac said the majority of ARPA members has approved \$8,000, half for a grant strategist and half for a grant writer. She had hoped to achieve consensus, but since we had not, she said she would tell the selectboard that there was a feeling that we should move ahead soon on having Cathy create a strategy of the Meeting House grant funding, with \$4000 waiting to be used as needed. Ellen said that we need job descriptions for the three positions for Imme, Cathy, and a grant writer. Cathy said she will create a job description for her role. Tom asked that the selectboard know that two people dissented, and Mac said she would report that.

> ENERGY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – Bill read the recommendation from their meeting on July 19th with the main issue being whether we supported putting the array on the Town Office. They passed the following motion: The Energy Committee supports the concept of putting solar panels on the Town Office and also supports making energy-saving improvements to the Meeting House, especially an on-demand electric hot water heater.

Bill asked Tom if he had comments on the recommendations from Al Jeffers and Son, heating and plumbing folks, who looked at the Meeting House heating situation and said the most immediate need was installing an on-demand hot water heater, as this would allow one of the oil-burning heaters to be turned off. Tom said we have two oil-burning heaters, one that heats up water that isn’t needed. Bill said this adds to costs and to heating up the environment. He suggested designating \$2500 for an on-demand water heater.

Bill said the Energy Committee concluded that putting panels on the Town Office makes sense. We have specific estimates for that. They also concluded that there are many needs for the Meeting House, requiring a lot of money, and the only way to meet all of those needs is by securing grant funding.

Mac added \$2500 for the on-demand water heater is probably more than is needed, but we don’t know. Tom said we need this water heater, but we also need to address the quality of the water, due to sulfur. The filters that are there now are inadequate. Tom said he had been

working on this for four years. He has tried to find his records on oil usage, but he can't find them. Currently, we don't use much electricity, but if we get an on-demand water heater, it makes sense that we have the solar panels, but if not, \$32,000 is too much to spend on the solar array.

Ellen asked if the Energy Committee recommended one of the estimates for the solar panels. She also wondered what would happen if the roof of the Town Office had a problem. Bill said that the specific estimate from Southern Vermont Solar said the roof was good. Michaels said that that company said the Town Office roof was an ideal one for solar panels, as it is standing seam. If it were asphalt shingles, the installers would have to drill into the roof, which can be a problem with leaking. Mac noted that they had spent a half-hour up on the roof. Ellen asked what the life of the roof is, as it is now 20 years old, and she asked if they had gone into the attic. Michael said they were satisfied with the roof.

Mac added that they were able to get three estimates for the solar array. Now it has to go through the bidding process. It will be up to the selectboard to decide who gets the contract after the bidding process takes place.

Motion: To recommend to the selectboard the installation of a full solar array on the south side of the town office roof, with 70% paid for with ARPA funds and 30% paid for by the Energy Incentive Tax Credit, and that the selectboard start the bidding process as soon as possible so that the array can be installed this year. Estimated cost \$45,500 with 70% being \$31,850 and 30% being \$13,650. Michael moved and Cathy seconded.

Discussion: Bill said he is in favor, but he also feels it is necessary to set aside funds for the on-demand water heater. The Energy Committee recommended both as a package. We need to shut off the fossil-fuel burning water heater. That is equally important to installing the solar array. Michael agreed and said the Energy Committee was unanimous in wanting both, and he said he would agree to Bill amending his motion to include the on-demand water heater as the first thing needed for the Meeting House. He noted that we know what the solar array will cost, but not the on-demand water heater.

Mac said we need a cost estimate for anything we present to the selectboard. She asked Bill if he could get one before the selectboard meets on the following Monday, in five days. Bill said he would try.

Cathy wondered how having an on-demand water heater would impact the MERP energy audit. Would they say we did the right thing by putting the water heater first? Bill asked Tom if he thought the insulation was more important than the water heater? Tom said we don't know that. Cathy said that the MERP audit will be this year with a report by December. Should we go ahead, regardless of the MERP audit? Bill said he hopes that out of our ARPA funds, we can hold some for the on-demand heater.

Tom said he and Imme can't find the info on the oil burned by the heating system. He will continue to look for it. He will try to get estimates. Anything that can be done to reduce the oil usage is good.

Ellen said that we need to know more about the needs and costs of the Meeting House. All of the town benefits from the improvements to the Meeting House. She understands that if we want it to be available for events, we need a sanitizing dishwasher, and that needs to be taken into account. She suggested we slow down, as she doesn't see the urgency of pushing through the solar panels tonight, so she will vote against it.

Tom said he agrees that we should not approve the solar panels, as they will generate more energy than we need. That will be good when we add on electrical use, but he wants to get done what needs to be done now. The biggest problem he sees are the Meeting House doors, which need to be changed to swing out to meet fire codes. You can't now do the

Harvest Supper. The safety stuff is most important. So he will vote no on the solar panels. Bill asked Tom if the safety concerns would cost as much as \$70,000. Tom said that is more important than the solar array. The Meeting House needs much work and is wasting funds on oil. The electric use from solar will increase, but we don't need it now. We don't know how much will be needed for the Meeting House.

Mac said that from her experience in helping get estimates for the solar array, companies were happy to give estimates. The bidding process is something else – the selectboard puts out requests for bids, they are sealed, and after they are opened, the selectboard decides to accept one or none of them. As the ARPA Committee, we need to make a recommendation of what we think something will cost, based on estimates from vendors, and the selectboard decides whether that is something they want to pursue. We have estimates for the generator and insulation, but we don't know what the other things wanted for the Meeting House will cost. We need estimates to work from.

Mac said there is a motion on the floor. She asked Bill if he wanted to amend Michael's motion. Bill said he didn't think it made sense to amend it now since we don't know what the on-demand water heater will cost. So Mac called for the vote.

Motion: Michael reread his motion. The vote was three in favor and two opposed. The motion passed. Mac said she will tell the selectboard that this was not a unanimous decision. Cathy suggested that we show the selectboard the status of the current spending. She noted that the Monkey Survey showed significant support for the solar array.

- 7) Schedule next meeting – Bill will try to get some estimates for the on-demand water heater before the next meeting. Tom said he will call Precision Plumbing, and he will work with Pete to get more estimates. He said the Friends are meeting tonight. Mac said the selectboard is working on a memo of understanding between the Friends and the selectboard. Tom said it is difficult with the town committee having \$12,000 and the Friends having \$100,000, since they don't respond to his emails. He has worked with them in the past, but Pete is really busy. Tom said his big concern is blowing money on oil.

Mac said we need to meet before the townwide meet on 9/23. She suggested Wednesday, August 30. Bill asked if the goal of our next meeting would be to finalize our recommendations. Mac and others said we could probably do that, considering funds for the copier and the Meeting House. All agreed that August 30 works for them. Some people had conflicts on the 29th.

- 13. Adjourn meeting and stop recording** – The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.

The next ARPA meeting will be Wednesday, August 30, 2023

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), ARPA Clerk
Approved 8-30-2022