

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
August 21, 2023 Regular Meeting
Held on Zoom Only**

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Mary McCoy (Mac), select-
board clerk
Kathy Scott, town treasurer
Tom Widger, Meeting House
Committee chair

Maureen Bell
Michael Simonds
Kathy Jungermann
Ginny Crittenden
Russ & Joyce Cumming
Cathy Edgerly Fales
Barbara Jean Quinn

Gail Wyman
Eileen Widger
Tom & Louise Johnson
Bill Casey
Abby Pelton
Ellen McDuffie
Marcia Clinton

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:35 PM.

2. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda – Added to the agenda under Staff Reports from the treasurer was approval of the tax rates.

3. Announcements/Reminders – There were none.

4. Act on minutes from the 7-17-23 selectboard meeting

Motion: To approve the minutes from 7-17-23 regular meeting. George moved; all agreed.

5. Public Comment – Joyce requested that there be greater specificity on the topics listed on the agenda.

6. Correspondence

A) Alison's Trowbridge's email – She asked to be kept in the loop regarding damages to West Windham Road when FEMA is involved.

B) New Lawsuit – Another suit has been filed against the town related to school choice.

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. Kord moved, and all agreed.

8. Staff Reports and Discussions

A) Update re townwide meeting on Meeting House – Cathy said there will be an article in the News & Notes and an email blast regarding the meeting which will be held on September 23. Volunteers are being recruited. She and Meg Staloff, the facilitator, will be setting the agenda and presenting it to the ARPA committee at their next meeting.

B) ARPA recommendations – Mac said the Committee is making two recommendations for funding, noting that these were not unanimous committee decisions. The first relates specifically to the Meeting House, which has many costly needs. Cathy has researched and found many grant opportunities, but moving forward requires a strategy to get as much funding as possible. The ARPA committee is recommending that we hire Cathy as our grant strategist to do this work and to pay her \$4000, and that an additional \$4000 be set aside to

hire a grant writer to complete the grant proposals. All of that second \$4000 may not be needed, as Cathy is finding ways to get free help with the applications.

Motion: To allocate \$4000 for a grant strategist, Cathy Fales, and \$4000 for a grant writer, specifically for raising funds for the Meeting House. Michael moved.

Board discussion: Michael asked Cathy to state her qualifications. Cathy said in her career she specialized in buildings' construction and improvements, working with government and private business. She has written many proposals and thinks she can create a plan to get the grants we need. She has already attended many meetings related to funding opportunities. She completed the MERP application and mentioned other grants we can pursue. She thinks we could get \$250,000 or at least \$100,000.

Public input: Maureen expressed concern about using the funds as matches for grants. Tom W. said Cathy should do this work as a volunteer, and he complained that the ARPA Committee requires cost estimates. Joyce said action should not be taken tonight, because that wasn't stated on the agenda. Kord said the selectboard can take action without it being stated on the agenda, and George agreed that there was no problem taking action tonight.

Michael temporarily lost his connection, so George asked to talk about the Owl AV system. He thinks we could spend more money than allocated; another \$1000 will upgrade the system to provide a front-of-the-room camera and other equipment.

Next Step: Mac will put the Owl system on the parking lot for the next agenda.

Motion Approved: The motion, as stated above and moved by Michael, was approved by all.

Mac said the second recommendation from the ARPA Committee relates to the solar array on the Town Office roof. They asked the Energy Committee for their input, and that committee passed a motion saying: 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. Mac said the ARPA committee is making a recommendation tonight only about the solar array because they have cost estimates on that and not on the water heater.

Mac said the solar array can produce enough energy to pay for the electricity used in the three town buildings. Initially, it will produce more energy than needed, but this will change as soon as the Meeting House converts from fossil fuel to renewable solar energy. The committee recommends using \$31,850 of ARPA funds, to install the array, with the balance of the cost paid with the federal Energy Incentive Tax Credit. The total cost, based on three estimates they have received is \$45,500, with the tax credit paying 30% and ARPA funds paying 70%. The committee recommends that the selectboard put this out for bids as soon as possible so that the array might be installed this year.

Board discussion: George said it offers a payback and asked what we spend on the electric use. Mac said figures from the past were around \$3000 per year, but that has increased due to the new air exchange system in the Town Office. That building's GMP bill was over \$1000 for the first six months of this year. Michael P. asked how long it would take to pay back. Tom W. said 10 years. Mac said the life expectancy is 20 years.

Public Input: Tom W. said what is needed is to get rid of the oil-burner at the Meeting House and that should be done before we buy a solar array. Russ said someone in the roofing industry needs to check the roof to assure it can hold the panels for 20 years. Michael S. said it is an ideal roof, as it is standing seam, so that no drilling needs to be done.

The discussion diverged from the solar array to the Meeting House. Kathy S. expressed concern that the town has managed the Meeting House for four years, and there are funds there already, but nothing major has been done. Tom W. said the Meeting House Committee has \$12,000 but can't do much with that, and the Friends lost their 501(c3), so they can't

apply for grants. Abby said that if there are issues with the 501(c3) she can help. Kathy S. asked the selectboard to clarify the arrangement between the town and the Friends. Tom W. said the Friends are going to finance the door springing out, and Tom J. confirmed that. Pete is supposed to get a proposal to the selectboard by the first week in September.

Next Step: Kord will contact Pete Newton about the Friends funding the changes needed for the exterior doors. Add this to the agenda for the next meeting.

Michael said we are off topic, and asked to get back to the solar array on the Town Office using ARPA funds, as Cathy can figure out what the Meeting House needs. He asked, if we support the solar array, what is left for the Meeting House? Mac said there would be \$8,000 for pursuing grants with another \$44,458 remaining. If we get the bids out soon for the solar array, we can get it up this year, and it can start making money for the town. Joyce asked what the urgency is. Mac said the ARPA Committee has talked about this since the first meeting a year and a half ago. It was on the Survey Monkey, and was widely supported by the town residents. We have estimates and supporting information and need to move forward on it.

Motion: To have Kord work with the ARPA Committee and Energy Committee to secure three bids for a solar array on the Town Office roof by the next meeting. In addition, George will contact a roofer to examine the roof before the next meeting to ensure that it can support the solar array. Kord moved and all agreed.

There was further discussion on the Meeting House. Kord suggested that some of the ARPA funds could be used soon to deal with the hot water issues. Tom W. said the Meeting House Committee is frustrated. They want what remains of the ARPA funds, and they do not need more oversight. Kord said that there is a purchasing policy, and if Tom feels they need to get a hot water heater, they need to ask the selectboard to get bids. Cathy said the ARPA Committee wants to maximize the funds for the Meeting House based on what can be received from grants. Tom said that is not what his committee wants. Kord said he is sorry that the Meeting House Committee is frustrated, but like anything else, prices are needed to make decisions on spending. If help is needed, he will provide that.

C) Budget Updates and Tax Rate – Kathy S. said we are in good shape financially. She asked for the selectboard's approval of the tax rate, which is just a formality. The tax rate is based on expenses of \$2,825,308. The municipal rate is .80/\$100. The non-homestead education rate is 1.9616/\$100, and the homestead education rate if 2.0069/\$100.

Moved: To approve the tax rates as presented by the treasurer. Kord moved, and all agreed.

Russ encouraged permanent residents to submit the necessary forms as homesteaders (HS-122 and HI-144); those with incomes less than \$138,000 can receive a rebate, which comes from the taxes paid by non-homesteaders.

9) New Business

A) Discuss changing the 9/4 meeting date to 9/5 (Labor Day)

Moved: To schedule the next regular selectboard meeting for Tuesday, September 5. Kord moved, and all agreed.

B) Discuss constable position (appointed or voted) – Michael P. said Jim Lawler had been appointed to this position due to the resignation of the previous constable. It is an elected position and was mistakenly not voted on at Town Meeting. Michael has researched this, and there are three options: (1) leave this as an appointed position until the next Town Meeting; (2) conduct a special vote on this; or (3) have a vote to eliminate the position. Bob Fisher, town attorney, recommended that we clarify the constable's role before a decision is made.

Next Step: Discuss and define the constable's role with input from the VLCT.

C) Crystal Corriveau's emails – Michael said he has reviewed these, and they contained no information or comments that have not been previously discussed.

10) Old Business

A) Update on Altpfart property (burned building near Abbott) – Kord reported on a meeting with Bob Fisher, Bill Dunkel, Michael Simonds, and himself. Bob recommended that they contact the owners again, and if there is no resolution, begin action to demolish the house. Zoning Administrator Michael S. spoke with the owner with this information, and Michael got an estimate on the cost of the demolition. Richard Paré is getting additional quotes. Michael will speak to the owners again this week.

B) Update on Wheeler Road culvert replacement project – Kord reported that Michael Longo has taken down trees near the site, and Richard will clean up the debris. Installation of the culvert is set to begin on September 5. Wheeler Road will be closed. Ellen will send out a blast email regarding the road's closure.

C) Update on FEMA/FHWA support for storm damage – We will receive the maximum available reimbursement for recent repairs related to storm damage – as our LEMP&LHMP are in place.

Next Step: Discuss the situation with beavers and the nonfunctional beaver-deceiver by the east end of West Windham Road.

D) Update on legal advice re constable liability issue – Kord said this matter has been delayed due to our legal advisers being unavailable. There is a meeting regarding this scheduled for next week with Kord, Bob F., and Phil Woodward from the VLCT.

E) Update of Village Center Designation – Bob Fisher was made aware of Cathy Edgerly's work on this issue and has her contact info.

F) Update on webmaster search – Vance has been away, so there was nothing to report.

G) Update on meeting re Conte Wildlife Preserve – Conservation Committee Chair Alison Trowbridge intends to inform us when she has been updated on when a meeting with the preserve's representatives and folks from Londonderry has been scheduled. More info will follow when known.

11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:21 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**The next regular selectboard meeting is scheduled for
Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved September 5, 2023