

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
September 5, 2023 Regular Meeting
Held on Zoom Only**

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Mary McCoy (Mac), sb clerk
Richard Paré, road foreman
Danielle LaBerge, guest from
Grassroots Solar

Maureen & Vance Bell
Michael Simonds
Russ & Joyce Cumming
Cathy Edgerly Fales
Tom & Eileen Widger
Tom & Louise Johnson
Barbara Jean Quinn

Imme Maurath
Gail Wyman
Pete Newton
Bill Casey
Abby Pelton
Dan Reilly

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.

3. Announcements/Reminders – Mac and Michael S. encouraged others to sign up for Windham Solar, the community solar project here in town.

4. Act on minutes from the 8-21-2023 selectboard meeting

Motion: To approve the minutes from 8-21-23 regular meeting. George moved; all agreed.

5. Public Comment – There were no public comments.

6. Correspondence – There was no correspondence to the selectboard.

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. Guest Introductions, Staff Reports and Discussions

A) Updates of Town Office Solar Array – Mac welcomed Danielle LaBerge from Grassroots Solar, and George reported that the roofer he spoke with said the standing seam roof on the Town Office was in good shape and was the best roofing for a solar array. Mac reported that four solar companies were contacted to give bids. Grassroots Solar and Southern Vermont Solar submitted bids. Sunnyside Solar emailed that they would not be bidding, and Integrated Solar assessed the roof, but then did not reply to emails.

Kord opened the bids. Grassroots Solar’s bid was for \$45,300 for generating 17.494 kW, and the work could be done in 10-12 weeks. Southern Vermont Solar’s bid was \$45,396 for generating 20,760 kW, and the work would be completed in late 2023 or early 2024. The time frame for both solar companies depended on the how long it takes to get GMP and state approvals and on the weather.

There was brief discussion about selecting one of the bids right then. Mac and Michael S. recommended carefully comparing the bids first, then having a short special meeting of the selectboard to make the decision. George wanted to wait until the next meeting. No decision was made about when to make the selection.

Next Step: Michael S. and Mac will prepare a report comparing the two bids and send it to the selectboard along with the all pages of the bids received.

George noted that the selectboard also needs to make a decision about the copier in the Town Office, and he asked Mac to put that on the parking lot for the next meeting.

B) Road Foreman' Report – Richard reported that they have finished the roadside mowing, and cleared and restored 12 culverts. The culvert replacement project on Wheeler Road will start on Thursday and continue for five weeks. Wheeler Road will be closed.

On August 30, Richard, Kord, and Imme met with representatives of FEMA for a Recovery Scope Meeting. Richard was prepared with measurements and details, and he was able to answer all FEMA questions. Imme said they discussed work on four roads – Wheeler, Horsenail Hill, Howard Hill, and Poplar Dungeon. The site inspections are in process with less than 75% completed. Kord asked the FEMA folks if we could add the work needed on West Windham Road. They are coming back, and additional work can be discussed then.

A similar but separate process will be necessary with FHWA (Federal Highway Aid) regarding work on Rt. 21 and Windham Hill Road. There was significant damage in South Windham where Wheeler Road overflowed onto Windham Hill Road, due to culvert issues. The temporary culvert that will soon be replaced on Wheeler might be reused on Burbee Pond Road, or it could be sold.

VTrans has extended its deadline for Grants In Aid work from 9/30/23 to 9/30/24. We can get \$16,500 if we match it with \$20,750. We have the time to determine how to get the maximum amount.

Michael P. said the Burbee Pond beavers have plugged up the box culvert by West Windham Road, due to part of the beaver-deceiver being missing. During a storm, the culvert can't handle the water flow, even if the beaver-deceiver is working. Michael thinks we need a second culvert, placed near the logging access point. We need Everett or Skip Jensen to look at the situation and determine what is needed. Michael said the situation needs to be over-estimated, as he remembers at least three times when water has overflowed onto West Windham Road, trapping West Windham residents. It is unclear if FEMA will pay for new culverts. If they won't pay, we need to put this in our budget. Richard said even with new culverts, we need a beaver-deceiver. Perhaps we need to block the culvert with a wire fence, as boulders aren't stopping the beavers.

Next Step: Contact Everett or Skip Jensen to do an engineering analysis.

C) ARPA Recommendation for Meeting House – Mac said the ARPA Committee is making its final recommendation, which was unanimously approved by the committee. They recommend the following:

Motion: To have the remaining \$44,000 of ARPA money set aside to be used as matching funds for grants the town may secure for the purpose of making upgrades and improvements to the Meeting House. Any of the \$44,000 that has not been used as matching funds by June 1, 2024 shall be made available to the Meeting House Committee to be used to make energy savings improvements to the building before the winter of 2024-25 begins, with the ultimate approval of the selectboard.

Cathy stated the grants we can apply for and said which ones require a match, or need supporting documentation that costs money, or require that the work be done and then reimbursed. The \$44,000 will be used for those purposes. We know we need matching 1-1

funds for the Historic Preservation grant, which requires that projects must be paid for prior to receiving the grant. It will provide up to \$20,000 with the town matching that with another \$20,000. The Better Places grant requires a 15% match. We hope we can get a capital fund from MERP to improve the heating situation at the Meeting House, which requires no match, but requires paying for drawings. Then by June of next year, if we haven't used all of the \$44,000, what remaining can be used for energy needs that haven't been met, or whatever else the selectboard decides.

Motion: To accept the ARPA Committee's recommendation for spending the final \$44,000. Kord moved, and all agreed.

D) Townwide Meeting on the Meeting House – Cathy said she will set the agenda on the next day with Meg Staloff, who will facilitate the meeting. Cathy has recruited some people who have not been previously involved with town work, and they will provide food and help on the day of the event, which is Saturday, September 23. Cathy will see about getting signs posted outside the school or town office and the Meeting House. She will put it on a list serve, and it will be posted via emails with Town Clerk Ellen's help.

9. New Business

A) Discuss Friends request to correct Meeting House doors – Mac read the letter (attached) from Pete Newton, president of the Friends of the Meeting House, asking for permission to alter the outside doors so they swing out and not in. The letter explained that this work will address ADA and Fire Code concerns and will be done in a way that is historically accurate. The Friends would pay for this with their own funds. Cathy said that these changes could be financed in part by a Historic Preservation grant, which is due October 1, with results given in December. A Bruhn grant could also be used for this or to complete the work to the platform outside the front doors. Concerns were expressed about control. If the Friends pay for the work, they can make sure the doors are historically built. Cathy said the two aforementioned grants are also focused on historical accuracy. Pete said he would like to make the doors, but can't do so for a few months, due to his current workload. Tom J. said that the Friends want to move forward on making the building ADA and Fire Safety compliant. Pete said he could help Cathy put together a grant for the Historic Preservation grant.

Motion: To apply for the Historic Preservation grant, and if it is not received to accept the Friends request to do the work with their own funds. George moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Kord will find out from our insurer if the town is appropriately covered with the doors as they are, so that events can be held there for the next few months without concern.

B) Discuss providing the Planning Commission clerk –Tom J. who is a member of the Planning Commission, said Bill Dunkel, commission chair, does too much and could use a clerk. Kord said no one wants Bill to burn out, but it is unclear how to finance this.

Next Step: Put this on the parking lot for the next meeting.

C) Discuss new library trustee appointment – Maureen said Chris Dunkel has resigned and a new trustee is needed. Al McLaine is a frequent user of the library and has expressed an interest in being a trustee.

Motion: To appoint Al McLaine as library trustee. George moved, and all agreed.

10. Old Business

A) Update on ZBA meeting re DiStephano stop work order – Kord reported that the ZBA (Zoning Board of Adjustment) voted to lift the stop work order after reviewing a plan presented by an engineer. The property has been up for sale, and it is unclear if the DiStephanos will now sell or build. Russ said that Chris Cumming is on the ZBA and is the realtor for the sale, and he should have recused himself from the vote. Michael P. said that there had been a back-and-forth of emails after the ZBA decision, some negative and some positive. He asked that when people express disagreement, they do so in a respectful manner.

B) Adopt the LHMP – Kord reported that the lengthy process to create Windham’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan has been completed. Mac read the LHMP Certificate of Adoption.

Motion: To approve the plan. Kord moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Kord will send the Certificate of Adoption to Ellen, and the selectboard members will go to the Town Office to sign it.

C) Discuss legal advice re constable liability issue – Kord has had continued difficulty setting a meeting with Bob Fisher (town attorney) and Phil Woodward (lawyer from the VLCT) to discuss this matter, due to the lawyer’s summer schedules.

Next Step: Kord will continue his efforts to schedule a meeting. When he meets with the lawyers, he will also ask about possible legal issues related to having events at the Meeting House while the doors swing in and not out.

D) Update of the Altpfart property – Michael Simonds, zoning administrator, reported on his conversations with Gary Altpfart about his house on Windham Hill Road near Abbott Road, that burned in 2018. Gary, who lives in Connecticut, is dealing with family and transportation challenges. He says he is trying to get to Windham to see the house, where he hasn’t been since the fire. Michael S. got an estimate of \$15,000 to demolish the house and clear away the debris. He has explained to Gary the importance of cleaning up the place and the legal challenges he will have if he tries to rebuild on the same site. Bob Fisher told Kord that the town can demolish the building and put a lien on the property. But it is a costly. Michael S. is trying to get Gary to take action, so the town can avoid the legal route. Michael P. and Abby both expressed concerns about children exploring the place and being sickened or injured. Giving Gary more time poses a danger for kids.

Motion: To give the Altpfarts until the next selectboard meeting in two weeks to present a solution to this problem. If they don’t, then take legal action. George moved, and all agreed.

11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**The next regular selectboard meeting is scheduled for
Tuesday, September 18, 2023 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved 9-18-2023

Attached: Letter from Friends of the Meeting House