

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
January 11, 2024 Special Meeting
Held at Town Office and on Zoom**

Present at Town Office

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Mary McCoy, selectboard clerk
Kathy Scott, town treasurer
Richard Paré, road foreman
Kathy Jungermann, auditor

Present on Zoon

Maureen Bell
Russell & Joyce Cumming
Pat McLaine
Becky Philips

Gail Wyman
Phil McDuffie
Abby Pelton
Ellen McDuffie

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 – There were no changes.

3. Announcements – There were no announcements.

4. Act on the minutes from the 1/2/2024

Motion: To approve the selectboard minutes from 1/2/24. George moved, and all agreed.

5. Public Comments – There were no public comments.

6. Correspondence – There was no correspondence

7. 2024 Budget Work Session

Kathy Scott explained that the switch to the new NEMRC system caused delays and produced a different kind of report. The new system will work to our advantage in the future.

Highway Budget – Kathy went through the new Highway budget report line by line. Some of the revenue income has yet to be determined. The proposed budget expenses were based on the previous year’s actual expenses and Richard’s input. Notable items were that Contracted Services was far over budget in 2023, due to culverts needing to be repaired that weren’t covered by FEMA. For 2024, that category will be \$10,000 in anticipation of ongoing weather events requiring more culvert work. Also notable was a need to decrease the utilities expense since the garage will benefit from the reduction in expense due to the solar array on the town office.

Next Steps: Mac will calculate the anticipated cost electricity. Kathy will doublecheck the totals on this report as one was clearly not accurate. She will also provide projected revenue figures.

General Fund – Kathy went through the projected budget line by line. She said the bank interest we are receiving in revenue has increased since moving to TD Bank. Tax Revenue is uncertain and will need to be estimated based on 2023. Kathy noted that payments received from the state, including funds for traffic tickets, are all deposited in our account without any indication of what they are for, causing reporting challenges. Other income is also yet to be determined.

Staff Compensation: The budget reflects increases in the pay for town employees, including setting the rate at \$18/hour for staff who are paid hourly. There was some discussion about increasing the pay for the Selectboard, but the selectboard members did not feel comfortable about doing this, so they will ask the town voters with an article on the Town Meeting agenda. Kathy added pay for the new Grant Administrator and the Grant Researcher, who were paid in 2023 with ARPA funds. The selectboard agreed that we need to budget for grant pursuit and grant management. The Town Treasurer's pay is determined as 1% of the municipal taxes, based on state statute. The pay for Town Clerk was increased, based on her increased workload. Pay for the Listers will need to be discussed further due to the pending completion of the town wide reappraisal and possible consideration of the change in the lister department structure. Increased pay for the Auditors was based on the hourly increase and increased time needed for their work. Payment for the Planning Commissioners was based on \$700 each, with twice that amount for the ex-officio chair, Bill Dunkel, who provides a tremendous amount of time and labor, with more expected to be needed. There was discussion about whether the Zoning Administrator's compensation should be a stipend of \$1,000 (raised from \$700 due to an increase in permit applications) or an hourly payment. Pay for the Delinquent Tax Collector was raised to \$2000 from \$1700. He will be involved in the tax sales of as many as seven properties next year. Library Trustees receive no payment and have asked for none. Grants might be pursued that will provide them some compensation.

Next Steps: Consider including an article in the Town Meeting Warning to raise the selectboard compensation. Discuss the future status of the Listers and if an article about this is needed. Kord will talk to Michael Simonds for his input about Zoning Administrator compensation.

Vendor Services: Expense for the Website Management was raised to \$2500, as the previous amount of \$1200 was too little. We anticipate hiring professionals to manage this. Funds for a new computer and software for the Auditors and Grant Administrator were included for \$2,000. For computer repairs, we need to find a new vendor. Kathy added to the budget \$20,000 for NEMRC support services for the Treasurer, Listers, and Town Clerk, as support from NEMRC is often needed. There was discussion about this amount being a great increase from the \$5,000 budgeted last year. It was noted that the \$1200 ARPA paid for land record digitalization and storage appears to be a recurring expense which will no longer be paid by ARPA. Payment to the Sheriff's Department was up \$2,000 in 2023 over 2022, but payments were down to Sheriff's animal control officer. This appears to be an issue of how charges were billed. Concern was expressed that the charges have increased while Robert nor anyone else from the Sheriff's Dept has been seen much in town. Our Windham Fire Company has asked for an increase of \$10,000 from the town. The Londonderry Transfer Station has raised its charge nearly \$9,000 to \$38,549. The selectboard discussed other options, such as using the stations in Brattleboro or Manchester.

Next Steps: Kathy will ask Ed from NEMRC to explain NEMRC's increased expenses for support services. Kord will talk to Robert and Mark Anderson about how much time he does/doesn't spend in Windham. Mac will add an Article for Town Meeting to increase payment for the Fire Company to \$40,000. Michael will explore other options than using the Londonderry Transfer Station.

Other Expenses: The amount needed for County Taxes is only an estimate, as they will give us no indication of what these taxes will be. The Legal Expenses are estimated to increase to

\$25,000 due to the three law suits, property tax sales, and legal work needed for planning and zoning changes. Social Services are up due to the Social Services Committee recommending five new recipients. Discussion followed as to how these should be presented in the Town Meeting Warning.

Next Step: Place the entire list of possible Social Service recipients in one Article, as allowed by the state, and let voters discuss and make amendments if required at town meeting.

Building Expenses: Town Office expenses for electricity will be reduced by the solar array. George suggested combining the phone and internet expenses for all town buildings by using one vendor for all. He also suggested that a different propane provider might charge us less.

Meeting House: The likely expense for electricity will be reduced due to the solar array. Kathy noted that some Meeting House expenses listed on the General Budget should be a part of the Meeting House Maintenance and Improvement Fund. Maureen questioned some other amounts.

Next Steps: Mac will determine the possible annual expense for electricity. George will investigate having one phone/internet company for the three town buildings. He will also find out if we can save funds by switching to another propane vendor. Maureen will provide better estimates for Meeting House expenses.

More Meetings on Budget – Kathy J. said the Auditors need the completed budget and the warning no later than the week of January 22, as everything goes to the printer by the end of January. The selectboard scheduled three more meetings in January. They will begin discussing the Designated Funds on January, 15, continue discussion as necessary and begin working on the Articles to include on the Warning on January 17, and plan to finalize all work on January 22.

8) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:59 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**Next Regular Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, January 15, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved 1-15-2024