

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes  
January 15, 2024 Special Meeting  
Held at Town Office and on Zoom**

**Present at Town Office**

Kord Scott, selectboard chair  
Michael Pelton, selectboard  
George Dutton, selectboard

**Present on Zoon**

Mary McCoy (Mac), sb clerk	Cathy Fales
Kathy Scott, town treasurer	Jon Gordan
Maureen Bell	Gail Wyman
Pat McLaine	Ellen McDuffie
Tom & Louise Johnson	Abby Pelton
Becky Philips	David Osborne
Ginny Crittenden	Phil McDuffie
Pat Cherry	Barbara Jean Quinn
	Jenny Reilly

**1. Start Recording and Call to Order**

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:33 PM.

**2. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda** – A discussion regarding postponement of then February 19<sup>th</sup> (President’s Day) meeting was added at the end of this day’s meeting.

**3. Announcements** – There were no announcements.

**4. Act on the minutes from the 1/11/2024**

**Motion:** To approve the selectboard minutes from 1/11/24. George moved, and all agreed.

**5. Public Comments** – Maureen expressed concern about changing to a different transfer station, as going to Brattleboro or Manchester would be inconvenient for many people. Pat M. said she is concerned about holding Town Meeting in person due to RSV and other illnesses and fire safety issues, and she asked the selectboard to change the in-person meeting and instead conduct all business by Australian ballot.

**6. Correspondence** – Ellen has received two petitions for Articles on the Town Meeting agenda. Frank Seawright asked for a written explanation of the culvert project in South Windham. Emails were received asking for Town Meeting to be replaced by Australian ballot.

**7. Payroll/Bills**

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

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

Maureen said since all three on selectboard were present, they must all sign the pay orders.

**8) Update on Meeting House Meeting with Fire Marshal/Others** – George said the fire marshal will be sending a full report after he discusses it with others and does some research. Michael said the CAPP Report states the priorities for the Meeting House, and the exhaust hood fits with the priority of making the Meeting House more rentable. It also fits with an original mission of the Meeting House Committee to make the building self-sufficient. George said there are ways to make the vent more visibly acceptable. Maureen suggested having a domestic hood and putting up signs that explain the limitations for using the stove. She said

the Meeting House Committee would discuss this further and tell the selectboard their decision. Michael said we need to also talk to our insurance company, as people could ignore the signage and start a fire. It was agreed to discuss this further after receiving the fire marshal's report.

Regarding the alarm system, we still don't have the code for accessing the system, and K.O., the alarm company, is not responding to our request for the codes. They said we had not paid our bill, but they sent it to the former church. Kathy said that bill was resubmitted to the town and was paid with this night's pay orders. Kord is trying to contact the manufacturer to get the codes, and he needs to resubmit his request after it is notarized. Ginny said he found some paperwork about this that she gave to Tom Widger who gave it to Maureen. David Cherry said he had used K.O. and recommended doing as he did and switching to Royal based in Rutland. Maureen said she and Pat M. are concerned about the egress with the hood now in the entryway. George said the fire marshal said it was not blocking egress, but it can be moved if that is wanted.

**Next Steps:** Discuss the exhaust hood again after receiving the fire marshal's written report. Send the notarized request for the fire alarm system access code to the manufacturer.

- 9) **2024 Budget/Town Meeting Work Session** – Kathy said the budgets provided this night were nearing completion. Revenue is still uncertain and based on estimates. She went through the budgets line by line. These minutes do not include amounts that were discussed and accepted at the meeting on 1/11/24.

**Highway Budget:** No amount is suggested for the VT Grant, because it appears to be a one-time grant. Raising the stipend for Road Commissioner was considered.

**Motion:** To increase the Road Commissioner's stipend from \$750 to \$1000. Michael moved, Kord abstained, and George and Michael approved.

Most other budget expense amounts for 2024 were similar to actual figures for 2023, except New Small Equipment, (none was spent in 2023 with \$2500 for 2024); Roadside Mowing (down to \$10,000 in 2024 with a different approach planned); Ditching (down due to having to hire a contractor for this purpose in 2023); Tree Service (didn't get done in 2023), and Utilities (lowered to \$9000 with less electricity expense due to the solar array at the Town Office).

Equipment Replacement was discussed. Michael wondered if \$27,000 was sufficient. Kord said we needed that in 2023 for the grader, and that won't be an annual expense. Pat M. asked why there was no charge for gasoline sold to the Fire Company, and Kathy said the bill was \$128, and she will bill them. Maureen asked if the contractor hired to do roadside mowing could also do Timber Ridge.

**Next Step:** Look into sharing the cost of the roadside mowers with Timber Ridge.

The total for Highways was \$536,286.75, but Kathy explained that there was surplus revenue from 2023 of \$15,333.29 which could be applied to the budget. All agreed to do so.

**MOTION:** To accept **\$520,953.46 as the amount for Highway Expenses** to be approved by Windham voters at Town Meeting. Kord moved, and all agreed.

**General Fund Budget:** Revenue figures remain uncertain – property taxes are under review, but need to be similar to what we bill. Other amounts are estimates. Revenue without the unknowns of taxes, interest, most town clerk fees, traffic ticket payments, and sale of tax properties is expected to be \$17,650.

Expenses for the **Selectboard** were similar to 2023. The amount for VLCT Consulting was set at \$300, and the category of Miscellaneous was removed. The other costs were discussed on 1/11/24. The total for Selectboard is \$22,582.

**Town Treasurer** expense remain as previous presented. Kathy said the pay for assistant treasurer is less than it was in 2023 because she will not be hiring a new assistant for a while after Gail leaves the job in the spring, as Kathy wants to master the new NEMRC system before trying to train someone else. These figures do not include additional costs for NEMRC services, which will be presented in an Article, as Kathy is still negotiating with NEMRC about the cost. It will probably be around \$8,000. The contract needs to be reviewed in terms of the dates it covers, as we paid them more in 2023 than planned, which could make it less for 2024. The total for Town Treasurer is \$38,707.

**Town Clerk** expenses were adjusted, as requested by Ellen, town clerk. She would like more hours for her assistants so the vault can be reorganized. George suggested and others agreed to \$12,000 for assistants and \$26,000 for the clerk. That required an increase for FICA/Medicare to \$2,907. The total for Town Clerk is \$41,207.

**Listers** pay was not previously accurate, as some of their work for appraisal support was not included. Their pay should be \$8,300, raising the FICA/Medicare to \$635. New software is \$2500, bringing the Listers total to \$11,835.

Kathy asked Kathy J. if the budget presented for the **Auditors** seemed accurate, or if more hours for pay were needed. Kathy J. said the pay seemed right as it was. Total for the Auditors is \$6,439.

The category of **Computers** required some adjustments. Software was added to the line item of New Computers, and the amount was increased to \$2,500. The line item for NEMRC will now be for NEMRC - Support Services, and a new line item was added for NEMRC - Land Records, with a recurring fee of \$1,200 for land record maintenance and storage. The total for Computers is \$11,351.

Some **Planning Commission** and **Zoning** figures have slightly changed. With a more certain amount for a clerk, the total for the Planning Commission is \$9,940. Kord spoke to Michael Simonds, zoning administrator, regarding his compensation, and Michael would prefer a stipend. Kord suggested raising that to \$1000. Michael will keep track of his time for a year to get a more accurate idea of the time involved. It was noted that in other towns, the ZA is paid based on permits received and site visits made. The total for Zoning is \$1,077.

The **Public Safety** category had two adjustments. Emergency Management was reduced from \$200 to \$50, and the Fire Department was increased from \$30,000 to \$40,000. It had been thought that the Fire Company increase would be an Article for Town Meeting, but George asked that this be moved into the budget, and Kord and Michael agreed. This increase was necessary due to rising costs and the new equipment needed for dealing with battery fires. Also, there has been no increase for the Fire Company since 2016. Jon Gordan, fire chief, explained the challenges, and there were other comments about fire safety. Cathy again offered to help the Fire Company pursue grants, as there are many available for public safety, and Kord encouraged Jon to work with her. The total for Public Safety is \$66,920.

Expenses were unchanged from 1/11/24 for three categories: The Total for **DLQT Tax Collector** as \$2,153, the total for **App/DuesFees/Taxes** as \$56,591, and the Total for **Insurance** was \$10,256. It was decided to continue using the Londonderry Transfer Station.

Expenses for **Town Office** were reviewed with several changes. The line item for Web Master was reduced to 0, and that cost was moved to Contract Services. Postage was increased to \$2,500 to cover ballot mailing. Contracted Services were set at \$6,000 (\$3,500 for various services and \$2,500 for website management). The Electric cost was reduced to \$500 due to the solar array. Propane was increased to \$1000. Michael asked if our fees for

copying covered our expenses, and Ellen said, “Barely.” He also mentioned saving by having one telephone service for all three town buildings. The Total for the Town Office to \$21,300. **Next Step:** Consider raising copying fees and getting a combined phone service.

**Meeting House** expenses were reduced due to a few categories with no expenses being removed from the budget. The Electric was reduced from \$1000 to \$350 due to the solar array. Kathy noted that additional funds are recorded in the Meeting House M&I Fund. The grant funds received from MERP are in the Designated Funds. The Total in the General Fund for the Meeting House was \$13,750.

Funds for **Legal All Departments** was set at \$25,000. It is hoped that this is too much, but Kathy noted that filing law suits against the town or anyone is increasingly common. Kathy recently received notice on the latest suit against Windham.

That brought a total for the General Budget to \$339,107. However, there was \$57,855 in Interest, Fees, and half of the Refund & Sale, which was applied to reduce the Total, bringing the **Total for General Funds to \$281,252.**

**Motion:** To set \$281,252 as the amount to request from Windham taxpayers for General Fund Expenses in 2024. George moved and all agree.

There was discussion about how the **Social Services** requested funds should appear in the Auditors’ Report. The selectboard decided at the last meeting to list all of them in one Article. Pat M, Pat C, and Barbara Jean Quinn asked to have in incorporated in the budget. They said the Social Services Committee had researched the organizations and considered each request carefully, and they did not want their work to be overridden at Town Meeting. It was pointed out that a challenge could take place for a designated organization in the budget or an Article. Placing them all in one article eliminates the need to have separate Articles for each new request and focuses more attention on the good work these organizations provide.

Phil McDuffie questioned moving surplus funds to decrease the General Fund budget, as these should be kept in a “rainy day” fund. He said using the surplus funds to reduce the budget should be explained in the Auditor’s Report, and Kord said this is always stated in the Article. Kathy said the surplus funds are from 2023 only and should be returned to taxpayers.

**10) Consider changing the date for the February 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting** – Mac explained that she cannot attend on the 19<sup>th</sup>, due to traveling. Several other options were discussed.

**Next Step:** In early February, determine another date for the 2/19 meeting.

**11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording.**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 8:39 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**Next Regular Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for  
Monday, January 22, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk  
*Approved January 22, 2024*