

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
January 2, 2024 Regular Meeting
Held on Zoom Only**

Present:

Kord Scott, selectboard chair	Maureen Bell	Barbara Jean Quinn
Michael Pelton, selectboard	Ginny & David Crittenden	Tom & Louise Johnson
George Dutton, selectboard	Imme Maurath	Phil McDuffie
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk	Russell & Joyce Cumming	Abby Pelton
Richard Paré, road foreman	Pat McLaine	Ellen McDuffie
	Michael Simonds	Crystal Corriveau
	Cathy Edgerly Fales	Carrie Tintle & Ron Cohen
	Gail Wyman	Alison Schantz

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 – There were no announcements.

4. Act on the minutes from the 12/04/23 and 12/18/23 selectboard meetings and the 2023 Town Meeting.

Mac explained that there were no minutes prepared for the school board section of the 2023 town meeting, and the auditors asked her to prepare and include them with the rest of the minutes, which she did by listening to the recording. George said those minutes should be approved by the school board, and Michael agreed.

Motion: To approve the selectboard minutes from 12/03/23. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To approve the selectboard minutes from 12/18/23. George moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Mac will ask the school board to approve their section of the 2023 town meeting minutes.

5. Public Comments – There were no public comments.

6. Correspondence – There was no correspondence

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. Staff Reports with Discussions and Possible Decisions

A) Discussion with Road Foreman – Richard said they are trying to smooth out the ruts, but adding more sand or gravel doesn't help much when the road is frozen. Nothing can be done about dust that arises. Snow, when it comes, will help level the roads and eliminate dust. The new truck broke down, and Richard is waiting to learn from the repair shop what's wrong with it. The truck is under warranty.

B) Discussion with Grant Administrator – Imme had no updates.

C) Discussion with Grant Strategist – Cathy reported that she has submitted a grant to the Bruhn Preservation Fund for \$75,000 for Meeting House improvements. Matching funds bring the total project to \$182,000 for the entrance changes, access improvements, and painting of the building. She met with Jenna from Bruhn and followed her advice for the grant request. Grants related to public safety are coming up. The grant received from AARP includes the Winter’s Table culinary events. All are invited to participate in those events.

D) Discussion with Planning Commission (clerk, public hearing, other) – Bill was not present, but he told Kord he liked having the Planning Commission included in routine reports to the selectboard.

E) Discussion with Meeting House Committee – Maureen said the committee got the old wood stove out of the Meeting House. They are eager to receive the ARPA funds and want to buy a generator for \$10,000. She said Pete Newton thinks the exhaust hood purchased with funds from the AARP grant is too large for our needs, and it requires exterior venting which will not be historically appropriate. Maureen would prefer a regular stove hood, and she asked if the large one could still be returned to Willy, who sold it to us. Michael P. said we need a hood that has fire suppression ability, like this one does. All agreed that we need more input regarding this matter.

Next Step: George will talk to Pete, the fire marshal, and Willy, and he will report to the rest of the selectboard what he learns from these three men.

The current company providing our fire alarm service is problematic. We received a proposal from an alarm company we might switch to, which the Meeting House Committee has not yet reviewed. With the current company, the alarm goes off when there is no fire, and if the company calls and there if no one is in the building, nothing further happens. Also, the current company won’t tell us the login codes for the alarm. Several present at the meeting said the situation was problematic and that any alarm company should have backup contacts to call. We need to know the expiration date on our contract with the current company.

Next Step: George will ask the fire marshal and Willy for their advice. Kord will review the proposal from the other company, and he will find out the expiration date of the current contract. Kord will also try to find out what the login codes are.

F) Update on Solar Array – Mac said that our January bill from GMP will show that net metering is in place. The solar generated energy will be credited to the bills of the Town Office, Town Garage, Meeting House, and Firehouse. This is the way net metering works – electricity directly from the solar panels flows into the Town Office whenever electricity is needed inside and there is sunlight outside. When less power is generated than is needed inside, the needed power is pulled from the grid. When more power is generated than is needed inside, the excess power will go into the grid, and it will be credited to the four buildings designated for net metering. Mac said the excess power is now designated as 25% for the Town Office, 35% for the Garage, 20% for the Meeting House, and 20% for the Firehouse. There were a few questions Mac couldn’t answer with specifics. She said the folks at Southern Vermont Solar said it usually takes a year to see how it all plays out, due to the change of the seasons. We can adjust the percentages up to four times a year. Kord said there was a decrease from \$250 to \$50 on the December Town Office GMP bill.

Mac invited everyone who is interested in the solar array to a kickoff for it this coming Saturday morning, January 6 at 9:30 at the Town Office. Folks from Southern Vermont Solar

will be there to give us some info specific to our array. They will answer any questions, including those about home installations folks might be considering.

9. New Business –

A) Discuss adding Article to Town Mtg Warning for changes to Constable role – George said according to the VLCT, the constable position can be eliminated. Law enforcement would be handled by the Sheriff's Office. For our constable to do any law enforcement, he would need training which would be costly. Russ said times have changed from the days when a constable was needed. Phil said there would be liability issues for having a constable who was trained to do law enforcement. Crystal said she wanted to eliminate the constable position because our constable removed her from a school board meeting, and no one apologized. Phil said this issue needs to be explained to voters prior to the meeting.

B) Discuss adding Article to Town Mtg Warning for changes to Listers – George said this issue was brought to him by a town resident after the townwide reappraisal. George learned that in some towns, NEMRC does the work of our three listers, with a lister clerk to handle the paperwork. Russell said the listers currently use a computer system to determine values. After they receive approved zoning permits, they visit the property, gather information, and put it into the computer system to determine the property's value. He said the town can't change the way the listers are because it is mandated by the state.

Michael S. said he supports hiring a professional to replace the current setup of three listers. He was a lister during the townwide reappraisal previous to this one, and a professional appraiser had to be hired then, which was also true of the more recent reappraisal. He said it would be more cost effect to have a professional doing the work year round and thus avoid a costly townwide reappraisal. It would also remove the need for neighbors to evaluate neighbors' homes.

Phil said there are four options in Vermont towns for property valuations. He said this is too complex to deal with at Town Meeting. Our three listers are fighting with the appraiser because he has raised the property values too high. If we had one professional in that job, he would be the only one to hear complaints.

Next Step: Look at the four options and discuss further.

C) Discuss changing accounting system from calendar to fiscal year – Kord explained that we now run a budget based on the calendar year of January 1 to December 31. It has been suggested that we switch to a fiscal year of July 1 to June 30. That way, the town wouldn't be operating on a budget that isn't approved until Town Meeting in March, as we do now. George said that isn't an issue because we don't spend much in the early part of the year. Michael P. said he liked the idea of changing to a fiscal year and not operating in the dark. Maureen said the change process would require an 18-month budget.

D) Discuss changing tax payments from once a year to twice a year – Kord explained that it has been suggest to split the tax due into two payments. Imme said that would require two billings each year, it would change our accounting, and it would not help the town with cash flow. Russell said a committee should study this issue, knowing that the change would impact our municipal taxes and not the education taxes. We should know if it this change would eliminate the need to borrow. George said making a spring payment would be hard in some businesses. Hearing no consensus, Kord said we should leave these two accounting-related issues alone for now.

10) Old Business

A) Update on year-end financial closing for 2023 & plans for 2024 budget work – Kord said since we just closed the year, the full annual reports are not ready yet. He has gone over the highway budget with Richard who made orders before we closed the books on 2023. He has asked for financial input from all committees and staff.

Next Step: Discuss the 2023 report and review tentative budget for 2024 at the next meeting.

B) Update on Altpfart property demolition – Payment for the work was received by the contractor, and there is demolition equipment onsite. The work is scheduled to begin this Friday with completion next week.

C) Update on FHWA culvert project in South Windham – The project is on hold due to changes required for federal highway funding. Also, the contractor pulled out because this was a two-man project with one person ill. Phil asked why it wasn't being rebid. Kord said another contractor is coming to look at it, and Richael is looking for others. Phil said he knew of an outfit too, and Kord asked Phil to share that name. Kord said to receive 100% reimbursement for the costs, the work must be completed by April 4. Everett told Kord to allow for six weeks for the project, so it needs to start by mid-February. The road will not be closed that entire time. Crystal asked if an email blast could be sent out to explain all of this.

Next Step: Send out an email blast about the road closure changes.

D) Discuss Special Meeting needs for budget preparation – Kord suggested a special meeting to review the budgetary information, to take place on Monday, January 8 at 5:30 PM. George and Michael agreed.

11. Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:55 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**A Special Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, January 8, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

**The next Regular Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Tuesday January 15, 2023 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved 1-11-2024