

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
December 18, 2023 Regular Meeting
Held on Zoom Only**

Present:

Kord Scott, selectboard chair	Maureen Bell	Ellen McDuffie
Michael Pelton, selectboard	Gail Wyman	Tom Widger
George Dutton, selectboard	Imme Maurath	Bill Dunkel
Mary McCoy, selectboard clerk	Crystal Corriveau	Abby Pelton
Jon Gordon, Fire Company	Cathy Edgerly Fales	Phil McDuffie
Jan Wyman, Fire Company		

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:31 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 selectboard meetings

George and Michael had not read the minutes, so action was delayed until the next meeting.

5. Public Comments – Imme said the box for posting on the Meeting House exterior wall was damaged by the wind, and Tom W. is repairing it. Imme urged everyone who posts to be sure to securely fasten the latch on the box door. Phil Mc. expressed his concern that he had presented the facts to the selectboard that a conflict of interest had occurred and the selectboard had accepted the word of the person concerned that no conflict of interest had occurred.

6. Correspondence – Ellen has received several thank you letters and requests for donations from nonprofits, which she will forward to the Social Services Committee.

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 Fire Company re updated budget request – Jon Gordan said the Windham Volunteer Fire Company has received \$30,000 from the town for the past 10 years. Prices have increased substantially for fire equipment, so he asked that the amount received by the Fire Co. be increased to \$40,000. Cathy said there are many grants available for fire safety. Jan Wyman, Fire Company treasurer, said Bill Casey is in charge of grants for the Fire Co., and she will speak with him about this and get back to Cathy. Jon said there are 26 active members of the Fire Company, and seven are certified for interior firefighting. Their gear must be replaced often, and the fire company is now using carbon-fire tanks, which are better but have a shorter life, adding to the expense. Maureen thanked him and all in the Fire Co.
Next Step: Consider adding this increase to the budget.

B) Discussion with Road Foreman – Richard was unable to attend, but he told Kord that the road crew’s work had helped control the current water flow. Michael said the repair work done on Cobb Brook Road had not held and is now worse than it was. A long slope needs to be contained, requiring a lot of fill and stone.

Bext Step: Kord will follow up on this FEMA Damage Inventory item.

C) Discussion with Grant Administrator – Imme said the paperwork for the Wheeler Road project has been submitted to FEMA. She is now working on projects for other roads. She thanked Richard and Kurt for their help. She has a new manager at FEMA, who is not available until next year. All deadlines remain the same and are reachable.

D) Discussion with Grant Strategist – Cathy spoke to Chris Campany, director of the Windham Regional Commission, regarding our needs for technical assistance. He said our best bet is to ask for assistance related to VOREC (Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative). Preparation for when things move forward with the West River Wilderness District. He put that on his list.

Cathy said we were not awarded the \$20,000 from the State Preservation Fund, but we are in the alternate category and might receive some funds if others who were awarded don’t use all of their funds granted. She is working with Pete Newton, chair of the Friends of the Meeting House, to apply to the Bruhn Preservation Fund due 12/21/23. We can ask for up to \$100,000, and we’ll focus on the front doors, access, and painting the building and steeple. Matching funds can come from the Friends, ARPA and town monies. Other funds from ARPA, Friends and town would remain to help fund improvements recommended by the MERP audit. The Bruhn grant will be awarded February 2, 2024, and the MERP audit is expected in February.

Cathy said other grants are available for public safety. She still wants to seek a Village Designation for the Meeting House area, but the state office that makes those determinations is focused on flood damage.

Maureen asked when the exhaust hood for the Meeting House kitchen will be installed. Cathy said installation has to be delayed because no changes can be made to the building until preservation funding has been determined. The installation must be done by someone approved to do preservation work. Maureen said the exhaust hood is dirty, and Imme said it takes up too much space. She said she and Steve, her husband, can move it to the back shed. Kord said he would organize help.

Regarding *Winters Table*, the culinary events funded by AARP along with the exhaust hood, Cathy said the one for December has been cancelled. She asked for volunteers to help her with the events in January, February, and March.

Next Steps: Add the Parking Lot a discussion of what we want to happen with the creation of the West River Wilderness District here. Move the exhaust hood to a place where it is not in the way. Recruit volunteers for the culinary events, with Ellen sending out an email blast.

E) Update from Planning Commission – Bill said the commission has not made a decision about hiring a clerk. This will be discussed again in January.

F) Update on Solar Array – Mac said we need to let Green Mountain Power how we want the energy divided between our three buildings and the firehouse. Although the solar array has the potential to generate far more energy than we need, that is not the case in the winter when the sun produces only about a third of the energy it produces in the summer. She recommended

that we set up the net metering for the Town Office, Town Garage, Meeting House, and Firehouse for now, and in the spring adjust that to include recipients for the excess. She said we could give it to nonprofits with the help of the Social Services Committee or to individuals with the help of the Citizens Advisory Committee, which has a form for evaluation they can adapt for this purpose. Mac noted that this will be short-term, as by next autumn, we might be using more electricity for heat pumps that replace our oil-burners.

Motion: To set up net metering for the three town buildings and the firehouse, and return to this in the spring to decide who gets our excess energy. George moved, and all agreed.

G) Update on Budget Planning – Kord said actual figures for 2023 will soon be circulated to the selectboard members. Once reviewed, the board can decide on the budget for 2024.

Next Step: Selectboard members will review the accounting for 2023.

H) Update on Webmaster transition – Bea and Jordan Eliastam have worked with Vance to update the website, which they will now maintain. Mac will meet with Bea this week to learn how to post the selectboard minutes on the website.

9. New Business – Warning/Budget Preparations

A) Move our first meeting in January to Tuesday the 2nd – It was noted that there will need to be additional meetings in January to prepare the 2024 budget.

Motion: To conduct the next regular selectboard meeting on Tuesday, January 2. George moved, and all agreed.

B) Review NEMRC accounting support proposal for 2024 – The charges we are receiving from NEMRC are more than estimated. NEMRC cannot anticipate all of the factors involved in a system conversion until they do the work – so proposals are presented accordingly. George and Michael expressed disappointment in this unexpected increase. Phil criticized the selectboard for switching to NEMRC and not hiring an expert to adjust QuickBooks, making it possible to stay with QuickBooks.

C) Discuss returning to hybrid meetings – According to state law, we cannot conduct Zoom only meetings after June 2024. The selectboard members agreed that hybrid meetings were in order, as Covid is no longer a big challenge. However, the selectboard wants anyone who is ill to participate by Zoom.

D) Discuss purchase of A-V Owl System – George said we can get a discount if we buy their package. He recommended buying the Owl 3 package for \$1,049 and adding a second Owl system if we need it to cover everyone in the room. There is \$2,500 from ARPA for this.

Next Step: Kord and Mac will take care of buying one Owl 3 system online.

E) Discuss SeVEDS request on the Town Meeting warning – At the 11-20-23 meeting, Meg Staloff asked the town to donate \$1347 to her organization, and Kord said all new recipient organizations have to be approved by town voters at town meeting. Maureen said the amount seemed large compared to others. The request will be considered by the Social Services Committee, which will be meeting in early January.

Any new social services requests require an Article on the Warning for Town Meeting. George mentioned that while we were talking about articles, there are two possible others that

he would like to discuss at a future meeting – one about the constable and one about changing from a (3) person team of elected listers to a hired appraiser and hired lister clerk.

Next Step: Mac will put these items on the Parking Lot to be considered in depth.

10) Old Business

A) Update on Altpfart property demolition – Michael Simonds, zoning administrator, warned Gary Altpfart that the town was going to take action if the demolition of his family’s burned out house was not scheduled. Gary called to say he had hired Scott Carson to do the work and had sent him a check, and Scott told Kord he would start work as soon as he received the check, which was expected to arrive shortly after this selectboard meeting.

B) Update on FHWA project – With funding from the FHWA, a new, large culvert will be installed under Windham Hill Road between the Corriveau’s and Ed Brown’s property. Jason Hill will do the work which must be completed by April 4, 2024. Installation will begin December 26 and will take from six to eight weeks. Electric signs will go up to warn drivers that Windham Hill Road will be closed and alternative routes will need to be used. Back Windham Road is likely to be the main detour, but Michael suggested asking Jamaica about keeping the southern end of Old Cheney Road open as another detour or perhaps have our road crew do that.

Next Step: Kord will talk to others about possible detours.

11. Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:50 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**The next regular selectboard meeting is scheduled for
Tuesday January 2, 2023 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved January 2, 2024