

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
February 19, 2024 Regular Meeting
Held at the Town Office and on Zoom**

Present at Town Office:

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| Kord Scott, SB | <i>Bea Eliastam</i> |
| Michael Pelton, SB | <i>Crystal Corveau</i> |
| Cathy Fales, substituting to write minutes for Mary “Mac” McCoy, SB clerk | <i>Bill Dunkel</i> |
| | <i>Abby Pelton</i> |
| | <i>Bill Casey</i> |
| | <i>Imme Maurath</i> |
| | <i>Russell & Joyce Cumming</i> |

Present on Zoom:

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| George Dutton, SB | <i>Maureen Bell</i> |
| | <i>Gail Wyman</i> |
| | <i>Phil McDuffie</i> |
| | <i>Tom & Eileen Widger</i> |
| | <i>Frank Seawright</i> |

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 – Delete Item G and postpone until a future meeting since Mac is not here tonight.

3. Announcements –

Game day: A second game day is planned for 12:30PM on Wednesday 2/21 at Meeting House. Maureen reported there were eight people who all enjoyed sharing games together. All are invited in the future.

Winters Table: Cathy announced there were a few remaining spots left for Saturday.

Kord mentioned an error on announcement for the day for this meeting. Tuesday was listed instead of Monday. He sent out correction via email.

Kord thanked Cathy for taking notes as a substitute for Mac who is traveling.

4. Act on the minutes from the 2/5/24 selectboard meeting.

Motion: To approve the selectboard minutes from 2/5/24. George moved, and all agreed.

5. Public Comments – none at this time

6. Correspondence – four letters:

1. F. Seawright regarding town meeting
2. Rachel Strecker tax rate, CLA, COD,
3. Jill Remick response letter. Letter will be included in the file for public review.
4. W. Casey expressing concern that Russ Cumming is not running for lister. However Kord reported that Russ did agree to help out short term until the new group got their feet underneath them. This letter addressed issues regarding a lack of response regarding several zoning issues. Kord remarked that this was the first hearing of this and asked if some follow up was necessary.

7. Payroll/Bills

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

Motion: To have Kord and Michael sign the pay orders. Michael moved, and all agreed. Kord and Michael then signed the pay orders.

8. Staff Reports with Discussions and Possible Decisions

A) Website Manager – was moved further down the agenda as Bea needed to make her way home to her computer. Once she joined the meeting we returned to this item.

Calendar: from Vance. I think that is all set now. Recurring meetings are being checked to make sure of accuracy. Bea explained the options which included hosting on YouTube. Unlisted account links are attached where videos are uploaded. How long can videos be stored on YouTube? Indefinitely. Length and amount not limited. Curly Sprout might include Google work space accounts but for the time being it will go indefinitely.

Kord: there was discussion regarding the proposal from Curly Sprouts. Their fees exceeded town budget set aside for this. Their proposal was \$3500 but town budget was \$2400. Additional costs covering security and basic charges for the site equaled another \$900. Discussion focused on where that additional money could be found. George remarked that since it has taken this long, could we find more money and get back to them ASAP?

The agenda included a review of Bea's position but this was deemed not necessary at this time. Everyone including Bea is clear on her role as Webmaster. Maureen and Vance Bell complimented Bea and all agreed.

B) Town Clerk – Ellen not here at the time of this item. No report

C) Town Treasurer – Kathy was not present. Kathy forwarded schedule of monthly budget reports for review.

D) Grant Administrator – Imme said she continues to work on FEMA and other grant reimbursements. Grant reimbursement requests need to be reviewed and an overview of what is expected from the FHWA project engineer Everet Hammond. He will provide a report so that Imme will know what's coming.

E) Grant Strategist – Cathy reported that decision on Bruhn grant is still pending. Details will be made public after the Park Service sends out their news release in the next week or so. The MERP Level 1 Audit of the Town Garage was conducted the Level 2. Thanks to Richard and Kord for attending. Margo from WRC was also there. Audit of the Meeting House is scheduled for March 6th. Cathy is continuing working on grants for the Fire Company, which are due 3/8 is working on a state grant that is focused on similar items to the MERP grant. In fact, the grants can be stacked to get full energy needs covered. As discussed, the next Winters Table event will focus on Indian food. Ravi Shimpi, chef at Willow will provide instruction and recipes. There are only a few spots left as attendance will be held to 40 people. Regarding fire company grants, Michael Pelton mentioned need for more radios. Cathy reported that they were looking into that for the AFG. He also asked that in terms of MERP award, would we be looking at heat pumps that could run on excess electricity produced by solar collectors? MERP application won't be out until Fall 2024, but Cathy imagined a new heating system not dependent upon fossil fuels would be part of what we would be seeking.

F) Planning Commission – Bill Dunkel reported that the PC was preparing some changes to zoning application to make it clearer and avoid problems like those encountered in the past. Once completed these recommendations will be sent to the SB and to Ellen for review and evaluation. Michael asked that it be put up for approval at the next meeting. Bill reported that Antje Ruppert, the new PC clerk was doing an excellent job. Bill also pointed out that PC is working on bringing our zoning regulations into alignment with the Home Act. Bill is hoping to have this completed by end of next PC meeting and pass on these suggestions to SB. There will have to be a public hearing by the PC and SB separately. The PC is also looking at zoning rules that regulate slope. At next PC meeting, these changes might be finalized.

G) Meeting House Committee –

Maureen would like to discuss the Fire Alarm. The next meeting of the MH Committee is scheduled for Thursday 2/22 at 5:00 PM. Nothing earthshattering quite yet on agenda. Many issues to think about and fire alarm is one of them. Kord picked up the issue of the fire alarm. Countryside Lock and Alarm are able to service the Honeywell Silent night alarm which is the system we have. They helped us resolved the passcode issue and declared system to be ready for inspection and final service call to get any loose ends tied up. May be other work that is recommended. \$220 for monitoring service.

George reported that he was still waiting for response from Joel Tremblay, the Fire Marshal.

George addressing the fire suppression issue: What are we to do with this hood? What is the future of the kitchen? If we don't install this system, will we be able to use kitchen at all? Is there a limit? Is the number allowed in the building now set at 49 without special provisions from the Fire Marshal? A definition of group gathering over 50 changes to public assembly. Then the requirements are subject to different rules. We have to get this tied down. Is the hood part of the equation? How is the building going to be used going forward? Even if we don't want the hood... what would the requirements be for public assembly? Kord: I think we need a professional to represent us and clarify all the regulations and requirements. Are there exemptions? Perhaps this professional could help us and navigate through this? Maureen asked that the SB let the MH committee discuss it and make recommendations without opening it up to a wider audience for input at this time. Michael mentioned an event related to a wedding planned for this summer. What are allowable uses and numbers of people? Cathy brought attention to the fact that in previous years as a church, the building was subject to different regulations from what the town will have to abide by. Kord reported we will be covered by our insurance even without signs prohibiting grease laden vapor-cooking.

Maureen was trying to get VLCT account access and asked for assistance.

George made a motion to approve Countryside Lock and Alarm for an annual ongoing agreement and an inspection. \$220 and \$245 for the Inspection with an updated sticker. They are available to complete the work on Tuesday 2/27. Kord made a motion to hire Countryside for the proposed work. All voted in favor.

Russ: Sanctuary needs special kind of fire detection. Special conditions for smoke detection below ceiling. Alarm Co should make sure it is set up that way.

125 people exiting in ten minutes? “I think it’s an impossibility.”

Crystal: Question about capacity. Is there a limit on how many people will be allowed in the building?

Kord: That is what is being evaluated.

Phil: What is the implication for town meeting in a less than a month?

Kord: That is what we are trying to address.

Maureen: We have a diagram of the alarm system including sanctuary. 4 heat and smoke sensors and one smoke alarm in the sanctuary. Two heat detectors in the attic. Kord will communicate Russ’s concerns.

Cathy asked about MH Committee and how would town people have a chance to comment ...

Maureen said that she would rather start with the small group first.

9. New Business

A) Discuss Town Meeting prep plans –

Concerns about town meeting plans. There was a wide-ranging discussion about how to address town meeting. No decisions were made and a special meeting to continue this discussion was set for Monday February 26.

Currently, state legislation allows us to be flexible. Next year we won’t have these options.

Ideas addressed:

What about hybrid?

What about going back to floor vote?

An informational meeting with an Australian vote days later?

Shouldn’t current technology allow us best of both of worlds?

We need to cognizant of lead times.

The unintended consequences of a delayed meeting as it would affect the school budget were discussed.

Numbers of attendance were addressed. What if more than the allotted occupancy show up?

Could we have daycare at school during the meeting? Ron tentatively said he could be available if necessary. Could we find others? Crystal said some parents would not use that offering.

326 registered voters. There was discussion of how max voters compares via Australian ballot versus in person. Phil M. calculated that we could receive 211 if using Australian ballot. 127 showed up last year in person. Fire Marshal is saying 150 max occupancy. If 211 showed up, how could those additional 61 people have to have a way to vote? Could they Zoom from downstairs? Could we have second moderator with one upstairs? ASK VLCT. Second moderator downstairs or paper ballot??? Reasonable to accommodate 211 people Unsure even if we take precautions. We will have to have fire watch, and reps from Sheriff’s dept, reach out to Rescue (Londonderry or)

Perhaps non-registered voters stay downstairs and listen on some sort of sound system.

More discussion about days, times, availability for working people.

Other town’s options re: hybrids.

Next steps before Monday 2/26 meeting.

George: Could school board meeting be separated from the town meeting? If so, we could have a later meeting with all the windows open, etc. Occupancy is still an issue. Could take longer? Warning time. Informational meeting. George will call VLCT.

Maureen I appreciate you representing other people's opinions. Match the vibe of town meeting. Maureen doubted there could be upstairs and downstairs meetings simultaneously. Bea: opinion as a young parent in town. Want to be active, but have parental duties. Younger demographics making accessibility difficult. Australian ballot would help this.

Kord. We are a floor -vote town. There is an article to be voted on by floor.

PHIL: town meeting is a floor-town vote and the meeting is already warned. More discussion of pro's and con's of Australian ballot with **no decision or action proposed at this time.**

Could we separate the two meetings? That remains a question that must be researched.

Phil: School board makes its own meeting schedule.

George: What if School board is left as is and we postpone Town Meeting until May. Have better air. More people to come. Floor vote on Phil's question.

Kord: Would we need to re-warn the meeting? What about petition we already have?

Ideas discussed included more participation. Possible use of outdoor tent to accommodate over 150 people.

For 2/26, lay out a plan and then vote on it

What are ramifications? Contingent upon possibility.

B) Discuss Committee recruitment and transparency. Intro by M. Pelton

Thinking about committees Recognize that these people are the unsung heroes of our town and they deserve recognition. Plan is to methodically go through all meeting memberships, rules, mission and duties. Also, perhaps some sort of recognition for 10 -15 years of service.

George: Board could regularly meet with board chairs. Goal to be working to fullest potential. Formalize mission of MH committee for example, job has changed so much from when it was chartered. Mission has shifted but not documented. Recognize and appreciate actions. When we do this? Start with 2 or 3 committees per SB meeting and go through full review

Next Step: communicate with committee chairs. Michael will draft a letter and send it to committees and take their answers and fit them into agenda over next few months.

Using the model of meet the candidate, there could be a session where people could meet committees.

Ellen and Maureen said there was no interest in candidate's forum before Town Meeting

C) Update on audiovisual for hybrid meetings. Motion to have hybrid meetings going forward. All approved.

Next Step: Monitor will be assessed to determine if we have to buy one of our own.

D) Discuss VLCT info related to Meeting House funds Maureen/Cathy/Kord

Need to be clarified. Imme turns \$\$ to treasurer to go the SB.

George made motion that donations to given to meeting house committee be put into MH account rather than general fund

Approved by all

Discussion: All specified donations must be spent as specified, and all unspecified donations must go into the town's General Fund. In addition, anyone making a significant donation should receive a receipt for their tax purposes, stating the amount of the tax-exempt gift

E) Discuss whether to accept Curly Sprouts website proposal –

TALKED ABOUT THIS EARLIER

F) Clarify Bea/Jordan's role as website managers – All

Previously clarified

Noted that it was important to track all committee minutes down and make sure they are posted. Bea: MH, SB, PC, EC. That's it. Are they up to date on the website? Yes. And the videos are up to date.

Smaller committees . Citizens Advisory Committee... awesome resource but not clear not on website. Perhaps best plan forward is to draft list and get the up to date. Town report should list all.

Michael will send email and start moving forward

Maureen: some of those don't meet regularly, may not be in habit of taking and posting notes.

G) Update Parking Lot and discuss how to make it more useful - Mac/all. MOVED TO NEXT WEEK

H) Update on FHWA project – Kord report all is on track to finished by deadline

I) Update on Fire Marshal's report on storage of exhaust hood (use it or move it) - Discussed under Meeting House Committee report. George asked if hood could be moved to storage. Measure if it could be moved into shed while we consider all options and address building occupancy related to fire safety.

J) Update on Beaver Deceiver replacement on West Windham Road - Kord

Should be on priority to get this done. Richard – could he help?

11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 8:00PM. George moved and all agreed

**The Next Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, February 26, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Edgerly Fales, substituting for M. McCoy, Selectboard clerk