

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
February 5, 2024 Regular Meeting
Held at the Town Office and on Zoom**

Present at Town Office:

Kord Scott, selectboard chair	Bea Eliastam	Becky Phillips
Michael Pelton, selectboard	Rachel Stecker	Pat McLaine
Mary McCoy (Mac), sb clerk	Bill Dunkle	Cathy Edgerly Fales
	Abby Pelton	Gail Wyman

Present on Zoom:

George Dutton, selectboard	Bill Casey	Phil McDuffie
Grant Johnson & Katie Murtaugh from Curly Sprout Creatives	Imme Maurath Russell & Joyce Cumming Maureen Bell	Marcia Clinton Richard Paré Tom & Eileen Widger Frank Seawright

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 – Kord noted that the new Owl audio-visual system was being used for the first time.

4. Act on the minutes from the 1/22/24 selectboard meeting.

Motion: To approve the selectboard minutes from 1/22/24. George moved, and all agreed.

5. Public Comments – Maureen said the minutes from 1/11/24 were a misrepresentation related to Library funding, as the discussion was not about paying the trustees, who have never been compensated, but about funding the Library, which is self-funding. She noted that Pat McLaine’s concerns about holding Town Meeting in the Meeting House were “brushed aside” and were never discussed by the selectboard. She also stated that videos from recent meetings have not been posted on the town’s website. Bill Casey said he wants Town Meeting to be a hybrid meeting due to safety concerns. He said this was the only way to guarantee one-person-one-vote. Cathy said the town might mail out a card that folks could return with their phone number and email address, so more people can receive notifications of meetings and emergencies. Phil said he had looked at the budget, and he is concerned that we are paying over a quarter of a million dollars from 2023 surplus funds, and we won’t have these funds available next year. Frank read a letter he had sent to the selectboard in favor of replacing Town Meeting with the Australian ballot, due to health and fire safety concerns. He said holding Town Meeting at the Meeting House disenfranchises older voters who can’t attend meetings in person due to physical issues, noting that 54% of Windham voters are over age 60. Rachel asked if information could be provided at Town Meeting regarding taxes – the CLA, COD, “gold town,” and grand list, and what might be done to lower Windham’s taxes.

6. Correspondence – One letter was received from Frank Seawright, the one he just read.

7. Payroll/Bills

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

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

8. Staff Reports with Discussions and Possible Decisions

A) Website Manager – Bea said she, Michael, and others met with Katie and Grant from Curly Sprout Creatives to discuss the town’s website needs, and Katie and Grant submitted a proposal based on the discussion, which was sent to the selectboard members. Michael noted that the proposal offers a “soft start” that can be added to later. Kord asked if a new server and storage would be an extra cost. Grant said it can be set up for around \$40/month. Kord asked about dedicated email, and Grant said they were not offering that. Bea suggested using Google Workspace, where meetings can be scheduled and meeting videos can be stored. Grant said Google charges \$12/month for that. YouTube can also be used for posting videos. That is free, but there would be ads showing along with the videos. Cathy commented that the AARP grant administrator questioned the town using Google addresses and not a dedicated address. David said that personal emails are open for review if there are legal actions. Maureen suggested changing the domain from .com to .gov. Grant said the guidelines for .gov are stringent and must comply to ADA. Michael suggested going forward as a .com and changing to .gov later. Bill D. said currently our website calendar is not showing upcoming meetings. He noted that the dates for Planning Commission meetings need to be changed. Pat said the News & Notes has a calendar. Phil said a shared calendar for easy posting would be helpful. Bea said the Google approach satisfies that need. Katie and Grant could start work on March 4 if their proposal was approved by March 1. Bea said the selectboard also needs to clarify her job.

Next Steps: Decide at the next meeting about this proposal from Grant and Katie after input is received from Kathy Scott regarding finances for the website. Also, clarify Bea’s job.

B) Road Foreman – Richard said all is going as well as expected. Kord noted that Windham Hill Road, which has been closed due to the work on the culvert in South Windham, is expected reopen by Friday 2/9. He asked Richard about sharing roadside mowing with Timber Ridge, and Richard said it was feasible and the mower rental company the town uses is flexible. Maureen said she had contacted the home owners’ group there, and they will contact the selectboard if they want to pursue this option.

C) Town Clerk – Ellen was not able to attend the meeting, but she told the selectboard that dog registrations will soon be due. Also, she stated concern that the town’s email list was not extensive, leaving many without a way to be notified.

Next Step: Find a way for folks to sign up for emails through the town’s website and address the issue as to who is responsible for sending out mass town emails

D) Town Treasurer – Kathy was not present.

E) Grant Administrator – Imme said she continues to work on reimbursements.

F) Grant Strategist – Cathy reported that the Bruhn grant determinations will be announced later this week or early next week. She is meeting with others about the Village Designations, and the Windham Regional Commission will do the mapping. The MERP Level 1 Audit of the Town Garage will be 2/14; the Level 2 Audit of the Meeting House has not been scheduled. She is working on a grant for the Fire Company, which is due 3/8. The next Winters Table event will focus on Indian food, conducted by an Indian chef. It will be held

from 4:00 to 6:00 PM on Saturday 2/24, and reservations will be required. Attendance will be held to 40 people. Sign up at WintersTable.com.

G) Planning Commission – Bill D. said Antje Ruppert has been hired as the PC’s clerk. Beginning, this month the PC meetings will be moved to the second Monday of the month, starting 2/12. Bill has had multiple conversations regarding the Home Act and affordable housing. Some current Windham zoning regulations will have to be changed to comply, including the definition of “accessory building.” Bob Fisher, town attorney, is helping.

H) Meeting House Committee – Maureen said the heating had not been working, but has been fixed. Game Afternoons will be held, with the first one this Wednesday 2/7 from 12:30 to 2:30 PM. The time was set during the day, as older folks don’t like to drive at night. Kord reported that he spoke with the town’s insurance agent, who said that if there was a fire started by frying on the kitchen range with or without a suppression hood and with or without a sign that says “no frying,” the insurance would cover fire damage. The agent is coming Friday 2/9 to see the hood and situation. Maureen will try to attend. Regarding the fire alarm, Kord said a service rep from Silent Night, makers of the Meeting House alarm system, is coming to look at the system. Other attempts to access the alarm system upper level programing have been unsuccessful. George said the fire marshal has not provided his report, but George hopes to be in touch with him the next day 2/6. George suggested having a special selectboard meeting to discuss the report and consider folks’ request for Australian ballot instead of Town Meeting or ways to ensure safety if Town Meeting is held in-person. A meeting was set for 2/12, but that date was changed later in the meeting.

9. New Business

A) Discuss Town Meeting prep plans – If held in person, the WCO has announced that they will organize the lunch. Imme said she would help out. The Widgers also volunteered to do it, as they did last year. Maureen noted that she removed the cushions from the pews, and these would need to be replaced. Michael said his research showed that the Covid risks are trending in the right direction and are unlikely to be a problem. He favors holding Town Meeting while taking precautions – windows cracked, and masks and hand sanitizer available. Kord said he liked Town Meeting as it was last year, and he noted that there was as much push to meet in-person as there was for the Australian ballot. Bill C. said safety wasn’t the only issue. He said Town Meeting was “unconstitutional” as it deprives one-person-one-vote. David said if Town Meeting is limited to 120 people, as stated by the previous fire marshal, the selectboard should consider who to allow to attend. Perhaps only voters (and no children) should be allowed.

B) Discuss improving management of the SB Parking Lot (To Do List) – Kord asked Mac if she had suggestions, and she said she needs feedback from the selectboard. They agreed that the new Next Steps report was useful.

Next Step: The selectboard will give Mac feedback on the Parking Lot.

C) Discuss priority items on the SB Parking Lot

Next Step: The selectboard will discuss this at a future meeting.

D) Determine date of next selectboard meeting due to Holiday/School Break – George expected the report from the new fire marshal by the end of the week. The Annual Report, which states where/how Articles will be discussed and voted, is scheduled to go to the printer this week. If the selectboard decides to go to Australian ballot, the Annual Report will have to

be changed and sent later in order to give time for candidates to state their intention to run and for an informational meeting to be held. A selectboard meeting to make these decisions and to conduct other business will be held Tuesday, February 13 at 5:30 PM.

Next Step: Decide if another selectboard meeting is needed in February.

E) Determine who will prepare the next report for the WN&N due 2/15 – Michael agreed to write the report.

F) Discuss VLCT info on funds raised by committees – Cathy explained that, according to the VLCT, the selectboard determines what happens with any money raised by a town committee, with the exception of funds raised by the Library and Cemetery trustees. Other committees should check with the selectboard prior to fund-raising to determine if their efforts will be supported by the selectboard. If funds are raised and are not approved for the purpose stated to donors, those funds have to be returned to the donors. 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.

Next Steps: Mac will send the VLCT info to the selectboard. It will also be shared with all town committee members, along with other useful information, including the conflict of interest policy, once the committees are reestablished for 2024.

G) Discuss completing roadside mowing for Timber Ridge (updated rates) – This was discussed earlier in the meeting. (See 8B above.)

10) Old Business

A) Report from Fire Marshal on storage of exhaust hood – This was discussed earlier in the meeting. (See 8H above.)

B) Update on creating a Cota account to move heating oil from the school – Michael said the WCSU is working on setting up this account to do the transfer.

C) Update on Town Office propane tank repairs – George said the blocks under the tank are not level, but the problem cannot be addressed until after winter. A slab under the tank would be best, but new cement blocks might work. George said the oil line should be shielded. We can’t do any of the work ourselves, due to insurance issues.

Before ending the meeting, Michael asked how folks thought the new Owl A-V system worked, and there were positive responses and no negative ones.

11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM. George moved and all agreed.

**The Next Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved 2/19/2024