

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
March 18, 2024 Special Meeting
Held at the Town Office and on Zoom**

Present at Town Office

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Mary McCoy, selectboard clerk

Present on Zoom

Cathy Edgerly Fales
Bill Dunkel
Imme Maurath
Maureen & Vance Bell
Gail Wyman

Barbara Jean Quinn
Ellen McDuffie
Abby Pelton
Crystal Corriveau
Pat McLaine
Phil McDuffie
Mike McLaine

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:34 PM.

2. Elect Selectboard Chair and Vice Chair for the ensuing year

Motion: To elect Kord Scott as chair; Michael moved and all agreed.

Motion: To elect George Dutton as vice chair; Michael moved and all agreed.

3. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda – A discussion of the bidding process for the purchase of a truck was needed in New Business. (However, this addition was overlooked and not included later.)

4. Announcements – Cathy invited everyone to Winters Table on Saturday to enjoy some “egg-traordinary” eggs and maple syrup. Maureen reminded everyone of game day on Wednesdays at 12:30.

5. Act on the minutes from the 2/19/24 and 2/26/24 selectboard meetings and the 3/9/24 Annual Town Meeting

Motion: To approve the 2/9/24 & 2/26/24 selectboard minutes; George moved and all agreed.

Motion: To approve the town portion of the 3/9/2024 annual Town Meeting minutes; Michael moved and all agreed.

6. Public Comments – There were no public comments.

7. Correspondence – An email was received from Russell Cumming offering his support for the listers. George received emails in support of his reelection. Several emails were received by the selectboard regarding the future of the school building, but that is out of the purview of the selectboard, at this time.

8. Payroll/Bills

Motion: To approve the check warrant reports from the town treasurer. George moved, and all agreed and signed the reports.

9. Reorganization for 2024

A) Review, revise, adopt Selectboard Letter to Town Officials and/or Committees – Michael drafted a letter to be sent to all town officials offering them the selectboard’s appreciation and support, which George and Kord read and liked.

Motion: To send the letter to all town officials along with other relevant policies (to be approved this night). Kord moved, and all agreed.

There was discussion about how to share the letter and policies. The selectboard also wanted to speak to folks directly to discuss how their committees work and how the selectboard can support their efforts. Committee heads need to confirm their active members and new additions.

Next Step: Mac will send the letter and policy statements to all town officials, via email. She will also set up a schedule to have two or three committee chairs at each of the upcoming selectboard meetings.

B) Review, revise, and adopt Conflict of Interest Policy

Motion: To approve the Conflict of Interest Policy. Kord moved, and all agreed.

C) Review, revise, and adopt Rules of Procedure

Motion: To approve the Rules of Procedure. Kord moved, and all agreed.

D) Review, revise, and adopt Purchasing Policy

Motion: To approve the Purchasing Policy. Kord moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Kord will send Mac a copy of the Purchasing Policy.

E) Review, revise, appoint Town Officials/Committee Members – Kord has not yet contacted people about their interest in being reappointed. However, we know that Kate Wright wants someone else to take her place on the Planning Commission. Kathy Jungermann will not be continuing as co-coordinator of the Emergency Management. Bea and Jordan Eliastam were never officially appointed as Website Managers.

The following appointments were made, based on people present who stated their willingness to serve:

Motion: To appoint Kord Scott as Road Commissioner. Michael moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Imme Maurath as Grant Administrator. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Cathy Fales as Grant Strategist. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Bill Dunkel as Representative to the Windham Regional Commission. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Mary McCoy as Selectboard Clerk. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Imme Maurath as Emergency Management Coordinator. George moved, and all agreed. (She will complete this role as a solo manager.)

Motion: To appoint Bill Dunkel as Energy Coordinator. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Vance Bell to the Energy Committee. George moved, and all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Ellen McDuffie as Green-up Co-coordinator. George moved; all agreed.

Motion: To appoint Barbara Jean Quinn to the Social Services Committee. Michael moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Ellen will find out when all appointments have to be approved. She will prepare the Oaths of Office for each new or reappointed person to swear to and sign.

10. Staff Reports with Discussions and Possible Decisions

A) Road Foreman – Richard was not present, as he had nothing to report.

B) Grant Administrator – Imme was no longer present, as she had nothing to report.

C) Grant Strategist – Cathy presented an overview of five options for a Municipal Technical Assistance grant through the Windham Regional Commission. (1) A needs assessment of the town based on current status and changes ahead; (2) an assessment of the Meeting House for possible programming there; (3) assistance for the Planning Commission as they update zoning regulations; (4) a recreational plan for the town; and (5) a plan for improving the Town Garage. Discussion followed. It was thought that the needs of the Meeting House and the Town Garage could be included in a needs assessment of the whole town. Bill said the Planning Commission could use help.

Motion: To pursue two possibilities – a needs assessment of the town that includes advice on programming for the Meeting House and on the needs of the Town Garage, and professional support for the Planning Commission regarding the revision of zoning regulations. George moved, and all agreed.

D) Planning Commission – Bill reported that they are looking at the zoning regulations regarding population density, as the state wants more dense housing in some areas. Our current regs have language that is inconsistent and confusing. The PC is also considering regs related to property with steep slopes.

Bill said Ellen has made some good changes to the zoning permit application. Vance Bell has created a drawing with a list of what has to be included with the application. The listers said they need the permit to include info on subdivisions that include a survey. Richard Paré told Kord that a drawing would also help with access and logging permits. Bill said he would incorporate these changes. There was a time urgency to approve the form and get it printed.

Motion: To approve the form with the changes discussed and with a final review by Bill. George moved, and all agreed.

E) Meeting House Committee – Maureen said the committee is reconsidering the purchase of a generator, perhaps going instead with Powerwalls (batteries). There was discussion about whether or not the Meeting House could be used as an emergency shelter, which would make the need for a generator more likely. The committee will meet on Thursday to discuss the exhaust hood. Jenna from the Historic Preservation Trust said installing the exhaust hood would not be an issue for them. Questions were raised about the possible uses of the Meeting House and the poor state of its electrical system. Bob Kehoe was suggested to address the issue. Cathy said she would look at the MERP analysis of the electrical system. We could pursue an electrical upgrade for the building when applying for the MERP grant.

Next Step: Cathy and George will talk about the electrical situation and relay info to Maureen before the MH Committee's Thursday meeting.

The need to share information widely was discussed. Maureen requested that more info related to the Meeting House be sent to her. Others advised that info be shared freely and widely, and they said we could do so using the Cloud. Michael said the selectboard is working on transparency and sharing.

Next Step: Discuss using Microsoft 365 to share information.

F) Town Clerk – Ellen said Tuesday 3/26 is the annual meeting and election for the Leland & Gray budget and the West River Modified District budget. Ballots are available for early voting on Wednesday, 3/20. She said all dogs need to be registered by April 1. On March 21 from 10:00 to 11:00, people can bring their dogs to the Town Office for rabies shots.

G) Town Treasurer – Kathy was not present. Kord said she is working on the budget reports for the selectboard to include revenue that offsets the expenses.

11. New/Old Business

A) Discuss updated zoning permit app for review – See Bill Dunkel’s report above in 10D.

B) Discuss new phone system – George is waiting for reports from the town treasurer regarding our current phone expenses.

C) Evaluate Town Meeting 2024 – In general, everyone was pleased with the logistics of the day’s events. The following comments were made by the selectboard and others present:

- Audio-visual -- The hookup between upstairs and downstairs worked well, after the initial connection problems were solved. George suggested that in the future, the owl system could be used downstairs with addition equipment for connections. He recommended some new A-V equipment to improve the situation – extra wires, wired and wireless mics, and Bluetooth speakers. These could be used primarily at the Meeting House as well as transported to other locations. The cost of around \$1200 would come for ARAP funds designated for this purpose. There were questions about whether this would serve our purposes for Town Meeting and whether we should continue with BCTV. Maureen was thanked for moderating downstairs.

Next Steps: George will send Maureen the specs for the equipment. The purchase of George’s suggested A-V package will be decided at a future selectboard meeting.

- Length of Meeting – It was long, perhaps “epic” at eight hours in length, and this was far from the norm, due to the great number of articles this year that included several contentious ones with long discussions. The attendees numbered over 170 in the beginning, but there were only about 50 in the end. Michael noted that in the future, we won’t be voting for town officials, as that will be done by Australian ballot.

- Childcare – This worked well, thanks to Sally Newton and other volunteers. The selectboard needs to determine how to provide this service in the future, so that parents with young kids can attend.

- Name Tags and Numbers – This new system was a success and should be continued, although we need a better way to distribute the name tags when people arrive. We could have tables near the entrances where folks could more easily get their name tags.

- Safety Issues – These were successfully addressed. Next year, the fire issues will have been solved, and it will make things easier.

- Parking – This was a difficult problem. People were parked on both sides of Windham Hill Road, making traffic a challenge. With 150+ people at the meeting, there weren’t nearly enough places to park. We need to keep the spaces near the building for elderly people to park or be dropped off. We could create a shuttle system, using the school bus or the transportation services of Neighborhood Connection. Valet parking could be an option. Creating more parking near the building would be very helpful. Paving blocks could be added to the east side of the building to allow three rows of vehicles.

- Voting – Ellen did a great job in preparation. However, it was hard for some folks to manage the narrow space between the pew and the voting tables. It was suggested that for future town meetings, the front row of pews could be unscrewed and moved.
- Aging Population – We need to take whatever steps are necessary to address the needs of our older citizens. They need easier parking, easier access for voting, and a shorter meeting.
- Moderator – Mike McLaine did a great job. There was one complaint that he limited some speakers’ time and didn’t limit others’ time, but generally everyone was very grateful to him.
- Timing – When the legislation caused by Covid expires, we won’t have the same flexibility for scheduling Town Meeting. We will only be able to change from the traditional Tuesday if we have an approved plan. There was support for returning to the traditional Tuesday and similar support for keeping Town Meeting on Saturday. Kids are out of school on the traditional Tuesday as well as on Saturday. We could do a Survey Monkey to find out what most people want. Cathy suggested we could add it to a survey to get folks input for the town’s needs assessment.

Next Step: Conduct a Survey Monkey when we have more questions to ask.

D) Report on MRGP report and fee due 4-1-24 – Kord will complete this report for Act 64 regarding road erosion repairs.

E) Discuss need for further research on exhaust hood – This was discussed in 10E above.

F) FHWA project update, including guardrail discussion – We have received a partial invoice, with about \$40,000 left to be invoiced on the project. The contractor may have damaged a home owners’ leach field, and that will be looked at by a septic engineer. There was also a complaint about driveway culvert being damaged. Any cost could be charged to the project. The request to make the guardrail more aesthetically pleasing was discussed, and it was agreed that the cost involved, which was \$5000 to \$6000 more than the cost of a metal guard rail, was too much.

12. Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:37 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**Next Regular Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, April 1, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

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