

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
March 5, 2024 Special Meeting
Held at Meeting House and on Zoom**

Present at Meeting House

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Carolyn Partridge

* there for part of meeting

Present on Zoon

Johnny Gifford, BCTV*
Bob Fisher, town attorney
Cathy Edgerly Fales
Bill Dunkel*
Becky Phillips
Carrie Tintle & Ron Cohen
Phil McDuffie
David Cherry*
Imme Maurath*
Barbara Lettenberger

Maureen Bell
Barbara Jean Quinn
Gail Wyman
Ellen McDuffie
Antje Ruppert
Russell & Joyce Cumming
Pat McLaine
Marcia Clinton*
Abby Pelton*
Kathy Scott*
Pete Newton*

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 to the agenda.

3. Announcements – Michael reminded us that the next day was Primary Day for the presidential candidates.

4. Act on the minutes from the 2/19 and 2/26/24 selectboard meetings.

Michael had not read the minutes, so the vote to approve was delayed. Maureen noted a change that was needed in the 2/26 minutes. They should state that after Covid if Town Meeting is on a Saturday, it must be the Saturday *before* the traditional Tuesday date.

5. Public Comments – Imme commented on the recent News and Notes, referring to the most recent issue that contained articles supporting the closing of Windham School. She said the N&N did not follow its policy of not printing opinions. She also questioned printing the two articles right before the Town Meeting and the vote on closing the school.

6. Correspondence – Correspondence was received from Pat McLaine about the capacity of the Meeting House, wondering if the building had passed inspection. Maureen sent correspondence saying that when the selectboard refers to correspondence they should summarize or read what the correspondence said and then follow up on a future agenda as necessary. She also relayed her disagreement with the March 9 date for Town Meeting. Crystal Corriveau, Russell Cumming, and Nancy Tips corresponded about an issue to be discussed at this selectboard meeting in item 9A.

7. Payroll/Bills

Motion: To approve the pay orders from the town treasurer. George moved, and all agreed. The pay orders will be at the Town Office for the selectboard to sign.

8) Staff Reports with Discussions and Possible Decisions

A) Road Foreman – Richard was not present. Kord said the culvert project in South Windham should still be completed in time. Ed Brown has contacted him about making the culvert more aesthetically pleasing by coloring the concrete or installing wooden guardrail. That expense would not be paid by FHWA and could cost the town \$3,000 to \$4,000.

Next Step: Gather information about alternatives and costs, to discuss at future meeting.

B) Grant Administrator – Imme said she submitted all of the paperwork for FEMA last week and was told that it all looked good. The deadline has changed, now set for January 2025, so we are way ahead of that deadline.

Next Step: Kord and Imme will discuss funding for beaver deceiver and other possible FEMA work.

C) Grant Strategist – Cathy announced that Windham received the Paul Bruhn Historic Preservation Grant for \$75,000 for improvements to the Meeting House, including work on the doors, porch, ramp, and windows, and painting of the building including the spire. The full project cost is \$187,000. Of the remaining \$112,000, \$42,000 will come from the ARPA designation for the Meeting House and the \$70,000 from the Friends of the Meeting House. This might be adjusted, based on receipt of other grants. All Bruhn-funded work must be approved by the U.S. Dept. of Interior and completed by 2026. It was agreed that first in line for repair are those needed to meet fire and access requirements. Many thanks were given to Cathy for her work in securing the Bruhn grant.

Cathy also reported that the MERP energy assessment of the Meeting House will take place this Wednesday morning, and we will receive their evaluation in 6-8 weeks. She will then apply for a MERP grant, and if we get it, some of matching funds needed for the Bruhn grant work can come from MERP. In addition, Cathy reported that she has been advised by the director of the Windham Regional Commission that Windham can apply for a Municipal Technical Assistance grant. The selectboard needs to select one of five options for support.

Next Steps: Cathy will write up a description of these options for the selectboard to consider.

D) Planning Commission – Bill said the Planning Commission has submitted changes in the zoning permit application to the selectboard. He received information from a lawyer regarding subdivision applications which are approved by the zoning administrator. The listers need a survey for any subdivision, and that requirement needs to be on the zoning permit application.

Next Steps: The selectboard will discuss this at the next meeting; Mac will put it on the parking lot. The zoning permit application needs to be updated for required surveys.

E) Meeting House Committee – Maureen said that according to the Wade Measure of PACIF, the heating system needs to be inspected. Kord said it was inspected when serviced, but the necessary tags weren't installed. Cota & Cota will verify that the heating system passed inspection and tag it. Maureen said the committee wants to send requests for bids for a generator. Russell said that specifications for the generator bids need to include a tank and its installation. Kord said the fire alarm has been serviced and the well has been repaired.

Next Step: Kord will send Maureen a copy of the purchasing policy in preparation for soliciting bids for a generator.

9) New/Old Business

A) Discuss comments about the selectboard by Chris Mays of the Reformer – Kord referred to an article in the Brattleboro Reformer that criticized Windham's selectboard and subsequent incorrect information from Chris May, a Reformer writer, which said a selectboard member

had complained to the Reformer about the article. Kord made it clear that no selectboard member had made any comment about the article. Bob Fisher, town attorney, contacted Chris who sent Bob an email with an admission that he was wrong and an apology. Michael said Chris acted irresponsibly and an apology from him to the selectboard would be appropriate. Bob said it was good to publicly state that the selectboard was not involved.

Joyce complained that Bob was at the meeting, and his presence was not warned, as she said it should be if legal advice is being given. Kord explained that Bob was not there to give legal advice but to report on his interaction with Chris and to talk about Town Meeting.

B) Finalize Town Meeting plans – Kord reported that the fire alarm passed inspection. George reported on his conversations with the fire marshal, who clarified that we can have 150 people upstairs with a fire watcher in attendance. The fire marshal has not given an exact figure for the number of folks who can be in the “overflow” space downstairs. Two officers from the Sheriff’s Dept. will be there to serve as law enforcement & fire watchers.

There was discussion about how to handle folks in two locations. The services of BCTV will make it possible. Johnny, from BCTV, said he will connect both places with mics and video. George will provide a 60” screen for downstairs. The cameras will be hooked into a computer for broadcasting the meeting on Zoom. Voters making comments will need to speak directly into the mics to avoid feedback. George will help set up before the meeting. Johnny will come Thursday at 5:30 to make sure we have everything needed. Mike, Maureen, Ellen, and selectboard members will also be there.

Bob said if more than the limited number of people come in person, the meeting can be moved to a larger space or can be postponed until a later date at a larger place. Bob said, based on his experience as Wilmington moderator, if there is a problem with there being too few or too many people at town meeting, those there can decide to move to another location or “adjourn to a date certain”.

Since Ellen had a Zoom connection problem, Mac explained an idea for expediting voting by paper ballot. Each voter would have a card with their name on it, either prepared in advance or written by hand that day. Voters would show their card when they check in and out of the voting line. This will make it much easier on the election clerks who can often not hear people state their names, due to all the noise in the room with people chatting. The cards could also be raised when voting is done by a show of hands, thus eliminating the chance of people voting who aren’t on the checklist. When Ellen connected on Zoom, she said the cards might be printed ahead of time to help expedite matters further. She also mentioned that the BCA can vote to eliminate the check out.

Phil said having people on two floors was not a good idea, as the people downstairs could block the exits of those upstairs. He said the total capacity must be determined, and it would be better to have everyone upstairs. Mike said the plan to have folks on two floors was approved by the fire marshal. There are four exits downstairs.

Someone from the BCA needs to be designated to serve downstairs and coordinate with Mike upstairs by counting votes downstairs by voice and raised hand. Mike said these were the majority of votes and are rarely too close to call. For paper ballot votes, some people upstairs will need to temporarily switch places with voters downstairs. It was suggested that we have voters upstairs and non-voters downstairs, or let everyone go upstairs until we reach 150, and then ask non-voters to go downstairs. Joyce worried that there isn’t enough time to get everything prepared correctly. She wanted to know the maximum capacity for the whole building. Kord said no maximum capacity has been set.

Abby said an effort is being made to provide child care at the school during Town Meeting. She also asked if articles for paper ballot can be combined, and Mike said they can’t.

Kord asked Bob what the process is to change the order of agenda items or to interrupt town meeting to conduct the school meeting. Bob said there must be a suspension of Robert's Rules of Order. A motion for this must be made from the floor, and voters present must approve it. Mike will check to see if this takes a simple majority or 2/3s vote in favor.

Next Steps: Work out all the final details with guidance from Ellen and the selectboard.

C) Discuss expedited voting concept – This was discussed during B).

D) Report on new town phone system proposal(s) – Goerge said he needs figures from the town regarding our current phone costs. He has reviewed a few possible systems, and the one from Ooma Office looks like it will be best. It seems to be the least expensive and will provide more lines, each with voice mail, at \$20 per month per line. Ooma Office provides boosters in case the internet connection is weak. This system would provide lines and answer capacity for six to eight town officials/locations. We would need a line for the alarm system.

Next Step: George will get current phone bills from Treasurer Kathy Scott and do a cost comparison to present at the next meeting.

Before closing the meeting, some additional comments were made.

- The exhaust hood will be loaded onto George's trailer and moved to another location before Town Meeting. Kord will recruit a crew to move the hood.
- Maureen said the MERP assessment will be Wednesday morning, so that is not a good time to move the hood.
- Cathy said she had another offer to buy the exhaust hood.
- Ellen said there should be bottled water for town meeting and suggested getting small bottles, and George said Dutton's might donate some water bottles.
- Abby said as school board chair, she encourages everyone to attend Town Meeting to hear about the budget and give their input. She also stated her hope that everyone will be kind and listen to each other.

9) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:27 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**Next Regular Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, March 18, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved 3/18/2024