

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
September 16, 2024 Regular Meeting
Held at the Meeting House and on Zoom**

Present at the Meeting House

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Cathy Fales

Present on Zoom

George Dutton, selectboard
Michael Pelton, selectboard
Dan Roth, school board
Maureen Bell
Cathy Stover
Gail Wyman
Imme Maurath

Phil McDuffie
Barbara Jean Quinn
Barbara Lettenberger
Ron Cohen and
Carrie Tintle
Crystal Corriveau
Pat Cherry
Pat McLaine

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:30 PM.

2. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda – There were no changes.

3. Announcements – The Zoning Board of Adjustment will meet again on October 2nd regarding the house in South Windham’s historic district. Ballots will go out soon for the upcoming November elections.

4. Act on the minutes from the September 3, 2024 selectboard meeting

Motion: To approve the September 3, 2024 selectboard minutes; Michael moved, and all agreed.

5. Public Comments – There were no public comments.

6. Correspondence – Crystal Corriveau sent an email asking for more information regarding the funding/tax implications if the town takes over the schoolhouse.

7. Payroll/Bills

Motion: To approve the check warrant reports from the town treasurer. George moved, and all agreed. Kord will sign these.

8. Guest and Staff Reports with Discussions and Possible Decisions

A) Grant Strategist – Cathy reported on the Municipal Energy Resilience Project (MERP) grant, the details of which have changed again. After being told that we do not qualify, we are now being encouraged to apply. The state has \$36 million to distribute, with no town receiving more than \$500,000. The due date of proposals is September 27. We have not yet received the MERP audit that was done of the Meeting House, but we can use other documentation to draft a plan, finalizing it when the MERP audit is received. Cathy has asked Tom Johnson and Pete Newton to work with her on this. Our proposal will focus on the Meeting House improvements for energy efficiency with historic preservation, and will include insulation, weatherization, and a heating system, preferably geothermal. Already in hand is an estimate from Jeffers. The grant proposal does not have to include actual bids. Determinations on the proposals will be received by October 18, and the selectboard must approve the project by November 29, with all funds spent by the end of 2026.

Cathy, Kord, and Abby Pelton met with Jessica Savage of the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) which has given us \$10,000 for a facility capital plan/assessment. That

assessment will look at our town buildings and how they can better meet the needs of our town's people. They will also be working with us on an overall community needs assessment. By March or April, the VCRD will begin work with a small diverse group of local citizens to determine ways to involve more town folks. In May, there will be a resource day to gather ideas and encourage involvement, and in June, assignments will be made, based on what is needed. We have already taken steps to improve the town's buildings – we have put solar panels on the Town Office, have the money in hand to improve the electricity systems in the Meeting House, and have begun review of possible uses for the schoolhouse. We will be able to share information with the Fire Company about the firehouse, although that is not officially a town building.

B) School Board – Kord clarified that no decisions will be made tonight, as this is only an initial look at possible options. He also reiterated that the school board is responsible for the decision but both boards plan to collaborate. Dan said the school board is considering various possibilities, and he said he hoped to hear ideas from the selectboard and others. One decision that has been made by the school board is that maintenance of the schoolhouse will no longer be in the school board's budget beginning with the 2026 budget. They want to do whatever benefits the town best.

Currently, the schoolhouse is used for private day care (there is not yet the necessary licensing for an open day care.) The Windham Historical Society has space there for meetings and the display of historic photos and artifacts. Soon there will be a yoga group meeting there. He feels the schoolhouse is not in competition with the Meeting House, which has seating capacity and great acoustics for events like the concert there the previous Saturday. He said arriving at final determinations about the schoolhouse will be part of the VCRD community assessment, which will take time to get right. Jessica from VCRD mentioned that the creation of a community trust may eventually be one option to consider.

George said he agreed with Crystal's email that any decision should take into consideration the tax repercussions.

Phil said he knows the Town Office is over-crowded, and the schoolhouse might serve as a meeting space and as a place for the excess storage from the Town Office that is in the vault and does not need to be there.

Mac asked Imme about the possibility of using the schoolhouse as an emergency center. Imme said they considered this, but the space does not now meet American Red Cross requirements, and more importantly, it is not needed in Windham. Here, neighbors take care of neighbors. Also, many homes now have backup generators or batteries. During power outages, some people without any power come to the Town Office to warm up or charge their batteries. So an overnight emergency facility is not a needed use of the schoolhouse.

Kord & Dan both mentioned that getting the fire marshal to look at the schoolhouse and determine any issues and the number of people who can be there at one time. Cathy will send Dan the fire marshal's contact information.

Michael said the new floor at the schoolhouse invites athletic activities and dances. Phil noted that there is good recreational equipment outside of the schoolhouse. It could be used as a park. Maybe a grill and picnic table could be added for small outdoor gatherings.

Michael noted that he had created some walking paths near the schoolhouse which need to be cleared from fallen trees. Hopefully, they could serve as a level exercise path for folks who want to exercise on a flat terrain.

Maureen said it would be good to create a pickleball court or two there. Cathy said she just saw a grant for pickleball courts, and she will look into this.

Kord concluded the discussion thanking people for their ideas and saying the process

with the VCRD will stimulate more ideas and get more people involved. Michael said it would be a yearlong process, but funding for the maintenance of the schoolhouse will be needed as of March 2025 after it is removed from the school board's 2026 budget. A community trust might be the way to go. Kord said we need more time to develop ideas.

9) Old Business

A) Update on Heather Chase meetings with taxpayers – Kord said Heather has met with Windham citizens with tax issues, and she will meet with the state's tax advocate with her list of these folks and their issues. She'll have more to report after that.

B) Consider temporary changes to interest and/or penalty policy for late property taxes – Kord spoke with Bob Fisher, town attorney, about delaying payments, and Bob said the selectboard cannot change the due date or the interest, as these were voted on at town meeting. He advised that those with tax issues could go to the Board of Tax Abatement. There may be a way to streamline meetings if there are several people with similar issues.

Phil said he had read the requirements, and abatement applications must be handled on an individual basis. The selectboard is a part of the Board of Tax Abatement. (Also on the committee are the town clerk, the town treasurer, the listers, and the justices of the peace.)

C) Update re rental expense for Window Dresser project – Bob Fisher told Kord it is a legitimate for the town to rent the schoolhouse for the Energy Committee's use for the Window Dresser project. The school board should ask the selectboard for what they want in "rent."

Before the meeting was adjourned, a few comments were made. George asked about bids from Everett for the work needed on West Windham Road, and Kord said Everett is working with FEMA on that. A question was raised about the age of West Windham Road, and Michael said he thought the road was there before Windham was a town. Imme suggested that future selectboard meetings be held at the Town Office so that the Meeting House did not have to be heated for that. Praise was given to Cathy for the concert on the previous Saturday at the Meeting House. A video was taken, and Michael will ask Bea to post it on the town website.

12) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:22 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**Next Regular Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, October 7, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved September 16, 2024

IDEAS FOR THE SCHOOLHOUSE
from selectboard meeting 9/16/24

Current Uses

- day care center
- Windham Historical Society meetings
- historical photographs and artifacts
- yoga classes (soon to come)

Possible Uses

- excess storage from the Town Office
- meeting space
- emergency center
- athletic activities
- dances
- a park
- outdoor gatherings/picnics
- level walking trails
- pickleball court or two

Things to consider

- tax repercussions
- fire marshal limitations
- creation of a community trust