

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes  
October 7, 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

**Present on Zoom**

George Dutton, selectboard  
Michael Pelton, selectboard  
Imme Maurath  
Crystal Corriveau  
Antje Ruppert  
Cathy Fales  
Craig Bailes  
Bill Lettenberger

Phil McDuffie  
Abby Pelton  
Barbara Jean Quinn  
Ron Cohen and  
Carrie Tintle  
Sharon Guzik  
Keith Gustafsson  
Bill Dunkel  
John Boynton

**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** – The town will receive an award from BCTV; details to come.

**4. Act on the minutes from the September 16, 2024 selectboard meeting**

**Motion:** To approve the September 17, 2024 selectboard minutes; George moved; all agreed.

**5. Public Comments** – There were no public comments.

**6. Correspondence** – There was no correspondence.

**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) Road Foreman – Richard was unable to attend, so Kord reported for him. The proposed agreement for the new truck has not yet been updated. George commented that he feels air disk brakes are preferred and would appreciate Craig Allen’s feedback on that. Richard expects to complete the Winter Roads Policy next week. The problem area on West Windham Road has been inspected by a site inspector from FEMA who said much of the new damage was off the road, so upgrades for the repairs will require mitigation with FEMA. George and Michael said that there needs to be immediate reinforcements to hold the earth by West Windham Road near Cobb Brook Trail.

Crystal said drivers are speeding past her home on Windham Hill Road, going 60+ mph, especially in the late afternoon and evening. She asked about coverage by the sheriff.

**Next Steps:** We will follow through on the mitigation with FEMA for West Windham Rd. Kord will ask Richard to reinforce the problem area on West Windham Rd. near Cobb Brook Trail. Kord will contact the Sheriff’s Dept. to monitor the traffic on Windham Hill Rd.

B) Treasurer – Kord reported for Kathy, saying an RFP to conduct a professional audit was

sent to three companies, and none submitted a bid. Cynthia from NEMRC suggested that Windham auditors provide follow-up on this.

**Next Step:** The auditors will reach out to the three companies and possibly others to pursue this matter.

**C) Grant Strategist** – Cathy submitted a grant proposal to the Municipal Energy Resilience Project (MERP) on September 27, with help from Pete Newton, Tom Jackson, and Tim Jeffers. The \$495,000 request is for improvements to the Meeting House – insulation, weatherization, new heating system, better lighting, and a new refrigerator and dishwasher.

The \$10,000 received from the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) must be committed by October 15 and finished by yearend. These funds have to go for specific usages. Cathy will know more after she talks to Meg at VCRD.

**D) Planning/Energy** – Bill Dunkel reported that the Zoning Board of Adjustments met last week regarding George Wicheln’s woodshed in the historic district in South Windham. The ZBA approved the woodshed renovation with the garage foundation moved seven feet in from Chase Road.

Measurements for storm window inserts must be sent by this Wednesday to the Window Dressers’ headquarters in Maine so they can start building the frames. The work to finish the inserts will be at the schoolhouse, beginning October 31 and ending November 7. The school board would like to have windows made for the schoolhouse in exchange for the use of the building during that week. The windows would cost in the \$600-\$700 range. It was agreed that funds for this will come from the Weatherization Fund, now part of the town’s general budget, listed for the Meeting House. There is currently a great deal of air leakage at the schoolhouse, and this will be a big help for that building’s energy bills. More information, including pricing details, are on the town website, for those who’d like inserts in the future.

**Next Step:** Bill will draft a letter from the Energy Committee regarding this agreement. Kord will talk to Kathy about taking the rent from the Weatherization Fund.

**E) Listers** – Antje said she and Bill Casey met with Jacob Stoddard from NEMRC who helped them resolve some long standing property issues. The listers are entering a slower period. She and Bill will use the time to attend webinars for listers.

**F) Town Clerk** – Ellen reported that everyone on the town’s voter check list has been mailed ballots from the state. If anyone didn’t receive theirs, they should contact Ellen.

Discussion followed about our high education taxes, even though we have a small student population. Kord explained that we are still considered a “gold/sending town” which has to send funds to the state education fund over and above our voted local budget. Craig said his property taxes went up \$2500, and he asked if payments could be made by installment. Kord said they could, and anyone wanting to do that should contact Kathy. There was discussion about the Tax Cap which is supposed to apply to people with lower incomes. But the cap is based on the previous year’s income. Phil said we had a “perfect storm” in Windham. Both the municipal and the education budgets went up, and at the same time the townwide reappraisal significantly raised most property’s value. Michael said it was imperative that we tell our legislators and the state’s tax administrators to express dissatisfaction with the increases. It was suggested that we have one letter with many signatures.

**Next Steps:** Consider drafting a letter and gathering many signatures. Individuals with specific issues should talk to Rep. Heather Chase.

## 9) New Business

A) Update on tax help research – Kord reported that Heather has made a series of calls and visits with state tax officials on behalf of Windham folks. A Legal Aid attorney will send a letter to the tax commissioners supporting “Extraordinary Relief” for lower-income people after they submit their requests. We need as many people as possible who qualify for income sensitivity to apply for this relief.

**Next Step:** Get a list the income-sensitive people to ask them to pressure the state for relief.

B) Discuss/update Tax Abatement Hearing(s) schedule – The hearings will take place on Monday, October 14 for the five parties that asked for tax abatement. Ellen has emailed them the date and also sent a notice to them by USPS mail.

C) Discuss/approve NEMRC Lister Maintenance/training agreement – NEMRC sent a draft agreement for lister support with a reduced hourly rate of \$95 per hour for their onsite visits. There are no guaranteed number of hours. The agreement is backdated to July 1. Antje told Kord the NEMRC service has been invaluable. Most of the help she has received has been free by phone, but hands-on help has been crucial at times.

**Next Step:** Review the NEMRC agreement and decide whether to approve at the next meeting.

D) Discuss Jonathan Stevens’ support offer – Jonathan is a genealogist who has spent many hours in our Town Office. He knows Windham’s history and the various roles played by town officials. He also works in Andover and other towns. He can be hired as a consultant at \$50 per hour to assist with town operations. He will continue to help out in Windham as a resource, as he has in the past at no cost, but that free time is limited to answering questions.

E) Decide who will write the next Selectboard Report for the N&N – Michael volunteered.

F) Discuss moving in-person meeting location during winter (to minimize heat use) – Kord noted that there is always a small group meeting in-person, and we could save on oil and utilities by not heating up the meeting room at the Meeting House. Setting up at the Town Office isn’t feasible. Kord suggested meeting in the small meeting room upstairs at the Meeting House, as it has a separate heater and can be heated quickly. There were questions about how well the WiFi works there.

**Next Step:** Kord will test out the WiFi situation by holding the Tax Abatement hearings there.

G) Discussion re lessons learned in the South during/after Helene – Michael said with climate changes, Windham can anticipate adverse weather, and we can learn from the recent experiences down south due to Helene. We need to understand the problems that happen in logistics, supply provisions, transportation, and communications. In the South, the immediate responses were local, with federal support coming later. Cathy said this might be a good use of the \$10,000 from VCRD. She has talked to Imme about emergency management. The contact info we have on individuals is outdated and needs updating. We need to conduct a survey of home owners. Bill Dunkel said Drew Hazelton went to South Carolina to help, and he could give good advice on how to prepare Windham. Abby said Drew will need downtime after he returns. She also said we need info on short-term rentals to contact visitors who might be there. Michael said the selectboard members needs a way to communicate when a disaster hits. George said we should consider using Starlink for internet, as it was the only way some people connected in the South. Michael noted that water purification was/still is a major

problem after Helene.

**Next Step:** Continue this discussion to create an action plan. Cathy will talk to Meg at VCRD.

#### **10) New Business**

**A) Discuss ideas to simulate more interest in upcoming town official openings** – Kord said we need to get people interested in open jobs as soon as possible so they can learn the job from the exiting official and participate in VLCT trainings. This would create smoother transitions. We need to take a positive approach and overcome any negativity from the past. Ellen said she needs to know by January who wants to run for a job so she can put their names on the ballots. This is because it was voted at the last Town Meeting that elected officials would be voted on by Australian ballot. Any candidate must have four signatures of support to be considered. Abby said we could use our connection with BCTV to interview past officials about the jobs and post that on the town website. Michael suggested combining this mailing with the mailing for info to help with disasters. Cathy volunteered to create a card for people to complete.

**Next Step:** Mac will draft a letter regarding the job openings. Ellen will make mailing labels.

**B) Update on the highway equipment replacement schedule** – Michael said we need to think ahead with information on the status of all current highway equipment. If the plan is long-term, we can avoid putting any large amount in one year's budget. Kord agreed, saying we had asked a lot for this year because we had cut back on previously years' amounts. We know we will have to replace the loader and backhoe before long. Michael said we can try to keep the amount down, but within five years we will need to have substantial increases. We need to raise this over time.

**Next Step:** Michael will draft an equipment replacement schedule.

#### **11) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording.**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 7:13 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**Next Regular Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for  
Monday, October 21, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk  
*Approved October 28, 2024*