

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
November 4, 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
Richard Paré, road foreman
Kathy Jungermann, auditor
Becky Phillips, auditor
Esther Fishman, Solid Waste Group
(Londonderry Transfer Station)

Present on Zoom

George Dutton, selectboard
Michael Pelton, selectboard
Maureen Bell
Pat McLaine
Barbara & Lewis Lettenberger
Russell & Joyce Cumming
Imme & Steve Maurath

Abby Pelton
Crystal Corriveau
Cathy Fales
Marcia Clinton
Cathy Stover
Barbara Jean Quinn
Ron Cohen &
Carrie Tintle

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:32 PM.

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

3. Announcements – Kord announced that the SAM registration deadline of 11/11/24 will be met. He also said that Antje Ruppert will take minutes from Mac on 11/18, as Mac will be away.

4. Act on the minutes from the October 28, 2024 selectboard meeting

Motion: To approve the October 28, 2024 selectboard minutes; George moved; all agreed.

5. Public Comments – Maureen asked about Frank Seawright’s interest in being appointed as a lister. Kord said no action has been taken on Frank’s offer. Maureen asked about the NEMRC contract, and Kord said it was backdated to begin July 1, 2024 to cover any in-person help Antje has received since then. Website help and telephone support are at no charge. Antje and Bill use those options first and primarily, leaving the in-person billable option as a last resort for issues that require hands on help. Russell objected to the contract with NEMRC, saying he had trained himself when he was a lister, and there is no need for current listers to have NEMRC’s help.

6. Correspondence – Four emails have been received regarding the use of the schoolhouse. They were from Russell, Crystal, Bill Casey, and Bob Bingham. Crystal also emailed about using Burbee Pond for recreational uses. Frank Seawright emailed about property transfer issues. These issues will be addressed in future meetings.

Next Step: Kord will forward the emails to George and Michael. Mac will put the issues on the parking lot for future discussion.

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) Londonderry Transfer Station update – Esther Fishman went over changes for 2025. Stickers will be \$15 (up from \$10). Punches will increase to \$2 per punch (from \$1), and cards will be punched for recycling as well as trash with one punch per visit, no matter how much recycling is involved. Londonderry Hardware will no longer sell tickets, but there will be a vending machine for this purpose at the Londonderry Market. A compacter will be bought and installed which will save \$23,000 in hauling charges. Sorting will no longer be necessary. Esther asked who are emergency manager is as she needs to know how to handle

our hazardous waste. She was introduced to Imme. Imme suggested that tickets be checked when people come to the station. Crystal suggested that the plans be changed. Esther said no money has been made from recycling for the past three years, and she could give no assurance that all recycling collected gets reused. In 2023, the five towns involved paid \$69,000 for all of their recycling. Esther doesn't know yet what the 2025 charge will be for Windham, and she was urged by the selectboard to inform them of the costs as soon as possible.

B) Road Commissioner – Richard said the truck has been ordered. Winter sand is being stockpiled, the crew is doing some paving, and other road work goes on as usual. The Winter Roads Policy will be ready by the next meeting. Parking at the Meeting House was discussed. Maureen explained Dawn Bower's idea of having cars on the west side of the parking lot park head first instead of parallel, and Maureen wondered about painting lines to indicate that. Richard said it might be spray painted and will look into that after winter plowing is finished. Michael commented that room needs to be maintained for handicapped drivers.

Next Step: Maureen will ask the Parks Dept. about the painted parking lines at Lowell Lake.

C) Planning/Energy – Bill Dunkel was not present, as he was working with Window Dressers.

D) Listers – Antje was unable to attend.

E) Grant Strategist – Cathy said the Windham Regional Commission continues to say the decisions about the MERP grant proposals will be "soon." If we are offered a grant, it will need to be approved by the selectboard at the 11/18 meeting.

She will ask VCRD about the creation here of a community trust and about the use of their \$10,000 capital grant for building feasibility studies. Cathy thinks this might be best used to evaluate the schoolhouse to see if it would be good for the town to own the building.

Cathy said there are funds available for the development of recreational areas, such as Burbee Pond, but the area must be owned by the town, which Burbee Pond isn't. The funds might be used for the land around the schoolhouse, depending upon who owns the land, creating a pickleball court, etc. There was disagreement among those at the meeting about whether the town or the school district owns the land. This question needs to be resolved before the selectboard and the school board meet on 11/18.

Cathy will meet soon with Jenna regarding the Bruhn grant and issuing separate RFP's for painting work and the front repair/remodel.

Next Step: Determine before 11/18 who owns the land the schoolhouse is on.

F) Auditors – Becky reported that an RFP for a professional audit of the town's finances went out in July with an August deadline; there were no replies. It was sent out again, and two audit providers located in Montpelier responded, both requesting to see our year-end report. The third firm contacted was not interested. Kord thanked the auditors for taking charge of this, as Kathy, the town treasurer, has been busy with taxes. The audit will be conducted on 2023, as that was what the town's voters approved. There has been no professional audit in 12 years. Michael asked how the selectboard can help the auditors, and they asked the selectboard to start the budgetary process as soon as possible. Becky thanked the selectboard for providing the auditors with a new computer, making their work more efficient.

Next Step: Set a schedule for budgetary meetings as soon as Kathy can do the reports.

G) Citizens Advisory Committee – Kord thanked Marcia for her 20+ years of work with the CAC. Marcia said the CAC manages the town's Housing Rehabilitation Program. It was begun in the 1990s with funds from the federal government to help full-time residents make

home repairs. The CAC has since ended their connection with the federal government and is now independent, although they follow most of the original guidelines. They also updated the application form in 2018, and these are available at the town office. Two estimates for the needed repair work are required. A site visit is conducted, and the CAC meets with applicants to decide on a payment schedule and the interest to be charged. There are now two loans out, which are routinely paid. Marcia did not know the exact balance held that could be loaned, but the last figure she saw was over \$70,000. Michael noted that the funds are growing due to the interest paid by recipients, and he asked if the funds could be used for matters other than home repairs (such as help with tax payments). Marcia said the current guidelines say the funds are for repairs only. There was discussion about how to let home owners know these loans are available.

Next Step: Put info about the available loans on the website and in the News & Notes.

H) Town Clerk/Election Officer – Ellen wasn't present, as she was preparing for the election.

9) Preparations for 2024 Town Report and 2025 Town Meeting

A) Review list of possible issues to address

- Schoolhouse status (tax repercussions, fire limitations, community trust – Yes. This needs to be thoroughly researched and addressed.
- Highway equipment replacement schedule – *Yes*. Michael is working on this.
- Survey Monkey re town needs and Town Meeting date – *Maybe*, regarding input from town's residents to determine the date for Town Meeting (March 2, 3, 4 or 5). The process for determining the town's needs is in place with grant support that includes input from residents.
- Constable qualifications, duties and compensation – *Yes*. Michael is working on this.
- Policy for how social services requests are presented in the Annual Report – *Yes*. The Social Services Committee needs to recommend to the selectboard how these should be presented, whether to list all organizations as an article with the new ones designated or to list only the new ones as an article with the rest shown in the general budget. Barbara Jean will see that the Social Services Committee addresses this.
- Changing the structure of the Board of Listers – *Yes*. Kord said transitioning to new listers is challenging, as it is a complex job. NEMRC help is needed. Antje and Bill Casey used webinars and NEMRC support. He said several people have suggested that three listers are not needed. Some towns have only one plus a professional assessor when needed. Kord has seen that in Windham one lister does most of the work until a reappraisal happens and a professional assessor is hired. Russell said three listers are needed, and NEMRC help is a waste of money. He learned the job on his own. He offered to train Antje, and he will train anyone who becomes a lister. Michael wondered if reducing the number of listers would provide a cost savings, and he said that the cost of an addition employee needs to be balanced with the quality of work provided. Kord said we also need to create a smooth transition, and the person leaving might not be the best person to train the new person. Changing the number of listers would require a town vote.
- Changing the town's accounting system from calendar to fiscal year. *No*. Not a priority.
- Changing the town's tax payment from once a year to twice a year. *Maybe*. This might be beneficial for some tax payers. It needs to be considered more from that angle.
- Joining Mountain Town Recreation District. *Maybe*. Cathy Fales will get an update on the status of this collaboration and the cost involved.

10) New Business

A) Update on nuisance animal – Michael reported that the executive sessions this year have

been about Kermit Blackwood's water buffalo Boo. After several complaints about Boo running free, the selectboard got legal advice and took steps to resolve the situation. In June, a letter was delivered to Kermit with instructions on how to contain Boo. These were not followed. The sheriff's animal control officer (ACO) determined that Boo was a nuisance animal, and in October a seizure order was obtained, and Boo was seized and taken to another town. Kermit has since followed the recommendations for containment and paid the fines involved, and Boo has been returned to him. The situation will continue to be monitored. The selectboard hopes to resolve future issues like this in a more expedient manner.

Barking dogs are currently a problem, but there is little the ACO can do about that. The selectboard needs to decide how to address this issue when neighbors complain to the barking dogs' owners and the dog owners allow the barking to continue.

B) Discuss ZA shared services concept – Kord noted that Michael Simonds is not continuing as zoning administrator, and he suggested that the selectboard consider hiring a shared ZA. Londonderry, Peru, and Weston share a professional ZA. Bill Dunkel asked that ZA if he would be interested in adding Windham, and he said he would. Other towns near us also share a ZA. Michael wondered how many hours it would involve, and Mac said Michael Simonds averages about 20 hours a month to deal with an average of about 20 permits a year. This would be a selectboard decision, as the ZA is appointed by them, but the pay would be a line item in the budget.

C) Discuss 3rd road crew member concept – Kord said that Richard and/or Kurt will eventually retire, and a third person needs to be hired to ensure a smooth transition when one or both of them leave. The two men have knowledge of Windham's roads and equipment that needs to be passed on. This has budgetary impact – it will cost the town now, but there would be costs with new people who are not well trained – equipment breakdowns, and work that doesn't get done correctly, requiring it to be redone. Richard told Kord it takes a couple of years to get up to speed. Questions need to be considered. Is a third person needed for the transition only or do we need three permanently? Joyce complemented the crew's good work.

D) Discuss Skip Lisle's info on beaver deceivers – Due to the time and the intention to keep the meetings to two hours, this item was postponed until the next meeting.

11) Old Business

A) Discuss challenges to tax increases – This item was postponed until the next meeting.

B) Discuss outreach letter to residents re town job openings – This item was also postponed.

C) Report on Tax Abatement Hearings – Kord reported that decisions were made regarding the five tax abatement requests. The town lawyer reviewed the decision documents and they will be sent in the next two days.

12) Adjourn regular meeting and stop recording.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:35 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

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

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

