

Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
November 18, 2024
Held at the Windham Meeting House and on Zoom

Present at Town Office

Kord Scott, SB chair
Cathy Fales
Pete Newton
Mike McConnell

Present on Zoom

George Dutton, SB
Michael Pelton, SB
David Cherry
Imme Maurath
Antje Ruppert (for Mary
McCoy (Mac, SB clerk)
Tan Bronson (KC1KFW)
Carrie and Ron Cohen
Dave & Ginny Crittenden
Tom Widger

Abby Pelton
Phil McDuffie
Bill Dunkel
Maureen Bell
Crystal Corriveau
Howie Ires
Meg Staloff,
BDCC/SeVEDS
Barbara Lettenberger

1. Start Recording and Call to Order

Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:16pm.

2. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda – Ellen sent a request which was moved to New Business under item C.

4. Act on the minutes from the meeting on November 4, 2024 – Michael moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Public Comments – Maureen asked if the previously canceled joint meeting of the school board and select board was rescheduled? Kord replied that a new date has not been set yet.

6. Correspondence – No new correspondence.

7. Payroll/Bills – Michael noted that the exterminator hired for the town office charged more than expected. Kord suggested discussing this matter further since the exterminator had quoted Ellen one price and then charged another. He moved to approve all other pay orders and the motion passed unanimously.

8) Guest and Staff Reports with Discussion and Possible Decisions

A) Windham Regional Commission – Mike McConnell (MERP grant award) Cathy and Mike McConnell reported on receiving almost the full grant. The request was for \$492,000 and the town received \$465,000. The select board needs to sign the acceptance form.

This money in addition to the \$80,000 from the Bruhn grant from the Preservation Trust of Vermont could be used for a geothermal heating system and for restoration work on the Meeting House. Cathy noted that the Preservation Trust also agreed that this is a once in a generation opportunity. There is enough money to hire an architect and a construction manager, preferably Pete Newton, but that would have to go out for bid. Kord asked if there was a town match for the funding, but Cathy replied that there is not.

Ron noted that geothermal systems use a lot of electricity. And who would service the equipment? And what about back up if the power goes out? Cathy responded that a generator or a backup heating system would be included. The budget for this system is \$300,000.

Michael moved to accept the grant and the motion passed unanimously.

The work will need to be completed by the end of 2026, but the goal is to get it done by August or Sept. 2026 in case of weather or other issues. Cathy suggested forming a Meeting House Committee to get everyone up to speed and to serve as advisory board to the Select Board. It should be consisting of a representative from the Select Board (Michael Pelton), the Energy Committee (to be decided at the next PC meeting), Tim Jeffers as HVAC consultant, the Meeting House Committee (Tan Bronson), Friends of the Meeting House (Pete Newton), Mike McConnell from the WRC, Jenna Lapachinski from the Preservation Trust of Vermont, and Cathy as the grant advisor. Kord, Michael, Maureen and Bill congratulated and thanked Cathy for her outstanding work.

B) Cathy has had a conversation with Jessica Savage from the Vermont Council of Rural Development about the \$10,000 that is available to invest in a feasibility study on the school building (to involve an architect, engineer and town planner) and to dovetail it into the needs assessment which is to begin in February. The time frame for the money would probably by next year.

George asked about the grant money for the salt shed which is something the town really needs. The board cannot just assume that the town is interested in purchasing the school building. Crystal does not think money should be spent on a feasibility study. She does not agree to demolish the school building, but the money would be better spent for the salt shed. Tan said that the use of the school building costs money and that a feasibility study would be a good approach. George moves to use the money for the feasibility study to evaluate different options for the school property and building, but also requests to revisit the town shed issue. Michael is in favor of Cathy's proposal to induct the feasibility study, and requests that the results be available for Town Meeting. Cathy said that's the plan. Michael noted that the building has heat and hot water until the end of the fiscal school year. The school board may not be willing to continue to manage the school building starting with the next fiscal year. George's motion passed unanimously.

George thinks that there needs to be some kind of policy for notifying members of changed timelines of meetings.

Cathy wanted to quickly inform the board that there is a grant from the Preservation Trust of Vermont for residents to repair, restore and save their barns with a 50% match. Anyone interested should get in touch with her. The grant is due on December 2, 2024. Michael asked if Cathy could send an email to Bea about this so she can publish it on the website.

C) Brattleboro Development Credit Corp.(BDCC) – Meg Staloff wanted to thank the Town of Windham for the \$750 in support of SVEDS (So. VT Economic Development Strategies), and explain briefly what her organization does with that money. SVEDS is a BDCC affiliated non-profit organization that helps develop economic strategies with benefits for the entire region. Meg helped strategize the Meeting House project and very much appreciated being part of it. Cathy highly praised the great work Meg did for the Town to get the Bruhn and MERP Grants. Meg put together town impact reports specific to all of the 27 towns her organization serves and will send that to Mac by December 10 to have for Town Meeting. Kord asked if the funding request will be separate. Meg said that the town should have received a letter asking if the

request will be put on the Town Meeting agenda, so that BDCC can keep track of it. They like to attend as many Town Meetings in their district as they can.

Michael thanked Meg.

D) Listers – Antje Ruppert (Errors and Omissions form). Antje explained having received a notification from Cy Bailey, the District Advisor, about an error in GMP’s property evaluation. They used last year’s CLA of 63.43%, but due to the town-wide reappraisal, a CLA value of 100% needs to be applied. Since this pertains to the As Billed Grand List, the SB needs to approve the form so that a new tax bill can be issued and the changes be implemented in the NEMRC and VTPIE software. George moved to approve the Errors and Omissions form. The motion passed.

E) Planning/Energy – Bill Dunkel (update on activities)

The Energy Committee with the help from Jonathan Bigelow from Landgrove, Bruce Frowman from Londonderry and many volunteers built about 200 storm window inserts in the beginning of November. Bill thanked everyone for a job well done. Kord stated that the windows have made a huge difference at his house. Imme thanked the WCO, especially Kathy Jungermann for providing food and helping with clean up.

Planning Commission - there will be a public hearing for the Corriveau’s conditional permit to take down the horse barn connected to their house on Dec. 9 at 6pm at the Meeting House. By law alterations of structures in the Historic District require a public hearing.

Bill hopes to have another public hearing in January or February about changes in the zoning regulations that align with the new housing laws of the State, proposed changes to the language of the density standards and definitions that is confusing and conflicting, and recommendations regarding the regulations for recreational vehicles.

Michael asked if the PC would consider a meeting/conversation about short-term rentals. Bill will put that on the agenda.

9) A) New Business Discuss appointment of Will Goodwin as ZA – Kord/Bill

The Windham Regional Commission recommended and referred Bill to Will Goodwin who is the ZA for Weston, Peru, Landgrove, and Londonderry. Bill and Kord met with Will and were very impressed with his extensive experience. Bill noted that having a ZA who is not a resident may have its advantages because he has to be able to confront people and there is no possibility of any perceived conflict of interest with friends or neighbors. Kord noted that he is asking for \$25/h. Kord moved to hire Will Goodwin as a ZA for the town. Michael supports the motion, but worried pushing the budget too far. The motion passed unanimously.

B) TAP/Hazard Mitigation Grant for West Windham Road stream bank damage - Kord stated that there is another grant available, the Hazard Mitigation Grant, for stream bank erosion damage on the West Windham Road. It is a \$500,000 grant which is due at the end of December. Since FEMA does not seem to want to get involved, the town has to find other resources to deal with this problem. Kord, Richard, Everett and Imme met with Collin from the Windham Regional Commission who will help with the grant application.

Antje asked to clarify TAP and Kord explained that the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Grant was received for the salt shed, the Hazard Mitigation Grant is for stream bank erosion problems.

C) Ellen's request - She asked for a policy about behavior at the town office. There was an issue about someone sharing their political viewpoints that made people at the office uncomfortable. Michael thinks it is a reasonable request to not politicize at the Town Office. Instituting a policy at the town office could be difficult because the SB does not have any control over the different offices. Michael will reach out to the VLCT to ask how to go about this. Michael suggested putting up a sign to keep politics out of the town office.

10) A) Old Business – Discuss outreach letter to residents re town job openings – Mac drafted a letter which describes the positions that the town is trying to fill at this point. Michael thought that the letter was well-written. Crystal suggested facilitating internships to educate potential interested parties. Maureen asked if the letter will be mailed out to residents. Kord responded that the decision is still pending, but that this is the plan. Carrie pointed out that the town clerk could really use a more full-time assistant because she has an enormous amount of work on a daily basis.

Imme said that a job description and work protocol would be helpful. Maureen noted that role descriptions are available on the Secretary of State's website. Kord added that the VLCT site offers good job descriptions as well. Michael suggested waiting for the final draft of Mac's letter and approving it then.

B) Update re School Building – Michael. From his research, Michael found that the land the school building is sitting on was deeded to the school district not to the town. The electorate has the authority to authorize the school board to sell the building. It is not something the Select Board would handle. Going through the deed, Carrie and Jonathan found out that if the school is to be sold to the town it would be for \$1. Crystal said that she has a newspaper article that states the electorate's decision from 2018 authorizing the school board to sell the building to the town for \$1. Michael asked for a copy of that article.

C) Discuss process & schedule budget development - Kord
Kathy sent out the October budget report that day. Kord would like to send it out to the department heads to examine how they performed this year and what they expect for the next year. Michael thinks it would be beneficial to examine the reports, find out where the increases stem from, and include the school building in the budget. He has had a conversation with Daniel Roth who thought that the annual operation costs of the school building is somewhere between \$40-50k.

Kord asked how the feasibility study would impact that. Cathy responded that whoever occupies the school building or what is done with it that will impact/perhaps lower the operating costs. Even demolishing the building is a substantial expense. Michael strongly recommends using the feasibility study data if it is available at the time of budgeting.

Cathy asked if the Australian ballot will have an impact on timelines for data. Michael responded that it could very well affect the timelines. There will need to be an informational meeting prior to an Australian ballot vote, and the school board could choose to include the sale of the school building in the Australian ballot vote. Ellen would know the timelines for an Australian ballot vote. The SB has not yet set the date for Town Meeting.

11) Executive Session re “the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee” (include motion & stop and restart recording)

Kord moves to go into Executive Session. The motion passed.

The Board exited Executive Session and returned to the regular meeting at 7:10pm. The action taken during the Executive Session was to determine road crew compensation offered during annual meeting/evaluations.

12) Adjourn regular meeting & stop recording at 7:13pm.

The next Regular Select Board Meeting is Monday, December 2 at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Antje Ruppert
for Mary McCoy (Mac), Select Board clerk
Approved December 2, 2024