**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes**

**December 16, 2024 Regular Meeting**

**Held at the Meeting House and on Zoom**

**Present at the Meeting House**

Kord Scott, selectboard chair

Michael Pelton, selectboard

Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk

**Present on Zoom**

George Dutton, selectboard

Cynthis Stoddard, NEMRC

Antje Ruppert

Maureen Bell

Howie Ires

Kathy Jungermann

Tom & Louise Johnson

Abby Pelton

Bill Dunkel

Becky Phillips

Cathy Fales

Cathy Stover

Sharon Guzik

Gail Wyman

Barbara Jean Quinn

Phil & Ellen McDuffie

Pat McLaine

Imme Maurath

**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 to be agenda.

**3. Announcements –** There were no announcements.

**4. Act on the minutes from the December 2, 2024 selectboard meeting**

**Motion:** To approve the December 2, 2024 selectboard minutes; George moved, and all agreed.

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

**6. Correspondence –** George exchanged emails with Bob Fisher, town attorney, about how to keep better track of Bob’s time spent on Windham matters.

**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**

1. Grant Strategist – Cathy Fales reported on the process for getting residents’ input on the future of the schoolhouse and the possibility of the town buying the building. There will be two public meetings, one in mid-January and one in mid-February. One will be in the daytime and one in the nighttime. A third meeting in later February will present the findings. This will allow time for the schoolhouse to be discussed at Town Meeting in early March. If sale of the schoolhouse to the town is to be discussed at Town Meeting, it needs to be on the school board’s warning for Town Meeting, or it could be presented later at a special town meeting. George said it should be discussed at Town Meeting. Michael is putting together figures on what it might cost the town in maintenance, insurance, etc.

Cathy said a two-year schedule has been set to implement the MERP and Bruhn grants for the Meeting House, which will be presented to the selectboard in January. Kord asked Cathy to look for funding sources to conduct a feasibility study regarding the purchase of land on White Road which is being vacated by Imerys, owners of the former talc mine.

**Next Step:**  Cathy will talk to the VLCT and others to see about funding a feasibility study. (See more discussion on this below in 10 A).

1. Listers – Antje said she is still rectifying some of our figures with the state’s records, and NEMRC is helping. Abatement hearings set for last week were cancelled due to bad weather.
2. Auditors – Pat reported that notices have been sent saying all reports are due to the auditors by January 6. Other dates are dependent on the date the selectboard sets for Town Meeting.
3. Planning/Energy – Bill reported the final numbers on window inserts prepared at the Window Dressers’ community event – 179 new ones and 21 repairs. He said Efficiency Vermont has new rebates available, and he encouraged people to see what savings they might receive. There will be no Energy Committee meeting in January, due to a conflict with the Planning Commission which had to reschedule their meeting. The PC will discuss setbacks for recreational vehicles. A Board of Adjustment meeting was held to consider a request by the Corriveau’s to demolish an old barn which is in the historic district in South Windham. That demolition was granted.

Bill welcomed Will Goodwin as Windham’s new zoning administrator, and he thanked retiring ZA Michael Simonds for his years of diligent and thorough work.

Bill reported that he and Kord met with Bob Fisher to discuss noise levels for the Frendly [sic] Gathering. It looks to Bill like a conditional use permit will be required, as our regs said that no noise exceeding 39 decibels should be heard in town from 9:00 PM to 6:00 AM. Phil pointed out that 39 decibels is low, similar to voices in a conversation, and this seems like an unreasonable standard. Bill agreed and said Bob told him we have the option to issue a waiver after a hearing.

**Next Step:** Bill, Kord, and Bob will meet with representatives of the Frendly Gathering to resolve the noise situation.

1. Zoning Administrator – Will, the new ZA, was not present.
2. Town Treasurer – Kord reported that Kathy had a cat scan with serious results, and she needs to step down prior to Town Meeting. Gail, Michael, and Cynthia have stepped up to help.

**9) Preparations for Town Meeting/Miscellaneous**

1. Budget discussion/planning – Michael said he is pulling numbers together, including budgeting for possible ownership of the schoolhouse. It has cost about $40,000/year to maintain. He is trying to get firmer numbers. Cynthia said she corrected the “current use” numbers, and she updated the highway figures as requested, breaking down some categories to more clearly show separate costs. There are other matters to resolve, in particular numbers related to grants that might need to be recoded, and Imme is helping with that resolution. Cynthia will be working for Windham all day this coming Thursday to prepare the balance sheets. She feels the work remaining is limited, and we are close to a final report. Thanks were given to Cynthia for her help. George said having a professional audit completed will help us hire a qualified treasurer. Michael noted that we need to have a General Fund balance with limited money left over, in order to justify the high taxes.
2. Discuss/Approve final ARPA funds obligation plans – Kord said we need to “obligate” all of the ARPA funds received by December 31 in order to satisfy federal requirements. Maureen raised questions about how the funds could be used from her involvement in 2021, and Cynthia explained that the determinations have been changed. Cynthia said she had received the verbiage from Katie at VLCT on how to obligate funds by moving them into the General Fund. The $44,000 that was designated for the Meeting House can go there, as well as the remaining funds, which appear to be $6,077. As the chair of the former ARPA Committee, Mac asked about the remaining funds, as she thought all but the $44,000 had been spent. Cynthia will look into this and will send Mac a report.

**Motion:** To apply the remaining ARPA funds to the General Fund surplus. George so moved.

Kord said we need make a motion based on the exact dollar amount and the exact wording from the VLCT in order to satisfy the federal report requirements. No vote was taken.

1. Review timeline for Town Meeting preparations – Pat said that all reports are due to the auditors by January 6. She will send a more detailed schedule once the date for Town Meeting is set, as the schedule is dependent on that.
2. Decide Town Meeting date (Sat 3/1/25 or Tuesday 3/4/25) – Kord asked if the auditors had a recommendation. Pat said that setting it on Tuesday, March 4 rather than Saturday March 1 would give the auditors an extra week to prepare the Town Report. (The State sets that timeline.) Holding Town Meeting on March 4 would also give an extra week to those filing a petition to run for town office, which will be conducted by Australian ballot.

**Motion:** To hold Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 4. Michael moved, and all agreed.

Whether to mail all 330 registered voters a ballot in advance was discussed. Ellen pointed out the expense of postage and said people wanting to vote in advance could get a ballot at the Town Office or could call and have her mail them a ballot. Cathy asked about the town getting a bulk mailing permit, but Kathy J. pointed out that the WCO’s bulk permit costs them $320 a year plus the discounted cost of mailing each item. It was agreed that the town wouldn’t use the bulk permit enough to have it be a cost savings.

**Motion:** To tell voters who want to vote in advance of Town Meeting that they can either pick up a ballot at the Town Office or ask the town clerk to have a ballot mailed to them. Michael moved, and all agreed.

Ellen said anyone wanting to be on the ballot to run for an office needs to submit a petition for that by 5:00 PM on January 27. The petition must use the wording required by the state, which is on the Secretary of State’s website, and it must be signed by four registered Windham voters. Candidates must also sign the State’s required consent to be on the ballot form. Suggestions were offered to make sure people know all of this.

**Next Steps:** Ellen will send out the information to everyone on the town’s email list. It will be in the upcoming News and Notes, which goes to all registered voters. Ellen will also ask Bea to post the information on the town website.

1. Discuss feasibility/process for changing the structure of the board of Listers – Antje said she received great support from Michael Simonds, and she would like all town officials to be as helpful. She feels that some people have been elected to offices who are not able to perform or truly interested in their jobs. Also, she said that for years only one of the three listers has managed the necessary software programs for the property records. That ensures consistency across the three software programs. The other two listers have little to do that could not be done by the computer person. She recommends that one listers be appointed by the selectboard to do the computer work, as that would ensure the person is qualified and committed, and that when appraisals are required, a professional assessor be hired by the selectboard. Kord said that Vermont Statute 172651, subsection G, covers this arrangement.
2. Discuss feasibility/process for making Town Clerk & Town Treasurer appointed position – Kord said Vermont Statue 172651, subsection F, covers having the selectboard appoint a town treasurer. This allows a selectboard to hire an interested and qualified person, including someone who is not a town resident. Some concern was expressed about giving the selectboard the power to appoint town officials, as it takes that power away from the electorate. But it was noted that if appointing the officials doesn’t work out well, the town can always vote to return to electing them. Pat said voters need to be aware of the pros and cons of this change. Phil said this change would allow the selectboard to set the necessary requirements for the job and recruit a qualified person. It was noted that this change could also apply to the town clerk’s job, which Ellen is resigning. There is a certification process for town clerks that could be used. Ellen offered to stay on as an assistant to help acclimate and support the new town clerk.

**Next Step**: George will look into the exact process for changing these positions from being elected by the town’s voters to being appointed by the selectboard.

1. Discuss setting special selectboard meeting(s) to finalize the budget for 2025 – Kord suggested meeting next week. Michael said we need to look at finances as soon as possible. It was agreed to meet Monday, December 23 at 5:30 PM and to focus on the budgets for the Highway and the General Fund. Michael will gather information from Cynthia prior to the meeting.

**10) Old Business**

**A)** Imerys: Discussion regarding Town Agreement for White Road Siphon (Hamm Pitt Lake) – Kord and George have had separate conversations with Bob Fisher, who recommended what needs to be considered if the town were to accept this property from Imerys. A feasibility study is needed regarding the possible uses of the land and the expenses involved. There are insurance liabilities and environmental issues to be determined and considered. Pat said there are also public health issues to be considered. Managing the property currently costs Imerys $10,000 per year. A large solar field there might offset the expenses, but what would be involved in creating that field? There is limited time to resolve this issue before Imerys goes out of business at the end of 2025.

**Next Steps:** Cathy will ask for advice from the VLCT, as well as the Nature Conservancy. George asked to be a part of those calls, and he will speak to Bob about this. Pat will look at the info that is found. Mac will keep this on the agenda.

**B)** Discuss re-scheduling (3) abatement hearing requests – Kord said these three hearings need to wait until after all work is completed in preparation for Town Meeting.

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

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 7:37 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**Special Meeting on the Budget is scheduled for**

**Monday, December 23, 2025**

Respectfully submitted,

Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk