

**Town of Windham, Vermont**  
**5976 Windham Hill Road, Windham, VT 05259**  
**Selectboard Minutes**  
**January 6, 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  
Tan Bronson  
Remi and Christine Montagna

**Present on Zoom**

|                            |                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| George Dutton, selectboard | Cathy Fales        |
| Tye Guertin                | Phil McDuffie      |
| Pat Cherry                 | Abby Pelton        |
| Pat McLaine                | Barbara Jean Quinn |
| Russ &/or Joyce Cumming    | Tom Widger         |
| Antje Ruppert              | Joseph Monroe      |
| Ginny Crittenden           | Becky Philips      |
| Tom & Louise Johnson       | Frank Seawright    |
| Maureen Bell               | Marcia Clinton     |
| Ellen McDuffie             | Gail Wyman         |

- 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** – Updates on the Meeting House and Listers were added to Staff Reports.
- 3. Announcements** – Folks were reminded that anyone running for office must file the appropriate paperwork by January 27<sup>th</sup>.
- 4. Act on the minutes from the December 30, 2024 selectboard meeting**  
**Motion:** To approve the December 30, 2024 selectboard minutes; Michael moved, and all agreed.
- 5. Public Comments** – There were no public comments.
- 6. Correspondence** – Emails were received, but there were none that won't be addressed with this meeting's agenda.
- 7. Payroll/Bills** – There were none to approve. Kord noted that it had been suggested that two people sign all checks. In fact, all three selectboard members review the check warrant reports and decide if the treasurer can sign them.

**8. Staff Reports with Discussion and Possible Decisions**

A) Road Foreman – Remi and Christine, who live on the private section of Woodburn Road, asked to have their part of the road plowed by the town. Kord said that section of the road would need to become a town road instead of a private road. There is process for that change which might involve an expense paid by the residents there to upgrade the road if it is not in good condition. Kord recommended that all neighbors on that part of the road sign a statement to the selectboard requesting the change, and Richard would then evaluate the cost of upgrading the road.

B) Grant Strategist – Cathy reported on her research into the possible acceptance of Imerys' offer to give the town the land they own. She received advice from the Windham Regional

Commission. They have money for initial assessments and planning. Their Phase 1 would be an environmental assessment of the property with information about contamination there. Phase 2 would include drilling and further testing for contamination to determine whether the land is usable. That could not take place until May with results in August. Those two phases would cost the town nothing. Phase 3 would provide analysis of the options for the land and could cost up to \$50,000. WRC has some money for cleaning up contamination, as do other sources. However, results of Phase 3 would not be known before June of 2026, and Imerys wants to fully close the business by the end of 2025, so if we accept the land, we need to do so before then or make another agreement. There are many considerations and actions required. Cathy said we might ask Imerys to pay WRC for Phase 1-3. Kord noted that Bob Fisher, town attorney, has also made recommendations for the town's response to the land offer. Michael said we need to consider what our end goal would be for the land. Is this worth our time and money to pursue? Kord said the Reese family owns neighboring land, and they don't want to be responsible for possible problems of runoff from Hamm Pitt Lake. Imerys offered to buy the Reese land and give it to the tow as well. George said he would spearhead further developments on this issue.

**Motion:** To proceed with Phases 1 & 2 as provided by WRC. George moved, and all agreed.

C) Planning/Energy – Bill reported on the success of the recent Window Dressers work. There were 200 new or repaired windows made in Windham for residents here and in nearby towns, and 10,400 new or repaired ones made throughout New England. That included 575 windows provided at no cost to households with economic struggles. Bill said the Planning Commission will meet in a week to finalize their recommendations for RVs. There will be a public meeting in January or early February regarding changes to the zoning regulations. These will bring Windham into compliance with new state regs, as well as fix confusing language in our current town regs. Bill wants to make sure people are aware of upcoming changes. He sent info to the News & Notes, but it wasn't in the recent issue as he expected.

D) Town Clerk – Ellen announced that her assistant Carrie Tintle has moved, and Tye Guertin has taken her place. Ellen described Tye as a quick learner who wants to serve on a ongoing basis. She said the deadline to be on the ballot is January 27. Petitions to run of office require four signatures, and the candidate must sign a consent form to run. Proposed articles for Town Meeting are due on January 20 and require 17 signatures (5% of Windham's voters). Ellen also said the remaining abatement hearings need to be rescheduled.  
**Next Step:** Schedule the remaining abatement hearings after budgeting is completed.

E) Meeting House – Maureen said there wasn't much going on. The committee didn't meet in December but will in January. They are trying to understand the grants received for the Meeting House. Imme Maurath has resigned from the committee, and they need to choose a new treasurer. Maureen will take change of the petty cash until the committee decides who will continue to maintain the petty cash.

F) Listers – Antje reported that the updated and finalized Grand List was sent to the state on December 30, as required. In January, she will run various reports. She is still learning her job and enjoying it. She is working on a report now for the auditors' Town Report regarding lister activities in 2024.

## 9. 2025 Budget and Warning planning

A) Update on budget planning – Michael reviewed some updates for the budget spreadsheets, based on more accurate information. He reminded everyone that the spreadsheets for the General Budget and the Highway Budget include costs that will be separated and presented to voters as articles for their approval at Town Meeting. They are included in the spreadsheets to

make it easier to understand the town's anticipated total revenue and total expenses.

- *Tax Revenue:* Property taxes for the General Fund are \$376,983.81. We are waiting to receive an expected \$200,000 in unpaid property taxes. Ellen said a letter is usually sent requesting tax payment, and funds usually come in after that.
- *Total Revenue:* \$475,058.81
- *Surplus:* This is estimated to be \$300,000 - \$376,000. Cynthia Stoddard from NEMRC who is helping us in this process said this amount will change as the budget is completed. She recommended using \$150,000 to offset General Fund expenses and \$100,000 to offset Highway expenses.
- *Total General Fund Expenses:* These are likely to be higher than in 2024, even with the offsets. Kord said we can try to use the surplus to get to our 2024 level. George said the only costs we can lower this amount would be to eliminate health insurance for the town clerk and town treasurer, to not provide funds for the schoolhouse, to not accept the increase in our trash service, and to cut a few other expenses. He recommended that we create an article about hiring a third person to the road crew.

Phil asked where Cynthia is in terms of reconciling 2024 accounts. Michael said she is still reconciling some accounts. Phil said there should be a way to record grants to show the amount approved, the costs incurred and spent, and the funds received after the work is done. Michael said Cynthia is working on that.

**Next Step:** Kord will talk to Kathy and Delinquent Tax Collector Paul Wyman about sending out this letter to those who haven't paid their property taxes.

At this point, Frank presented an idea of his. It was difficult to understand him as his voice was loud and muffled. What was understood was a suggestion that an inventory of all private culverts in town be conducted by high school students, giving them valuable experience. The data collected would be used to get grants to fix those culverts. Frank questioned how Imerys' land would be used. He said he and others have ideas. Kord said he welcomed all input and wants agreement from the town's voters before moving forward.

**Next Step:** Revisit Frank's ideas in the spring.

B-D) Continue discussion re warning articles as needed, including discussion on changing town clerk and town treasurer to appointed/hire positions and changing the structure of the board of lister – All three agenda items were discussed at once; comments are organized in these minutes for clarity and are not in the exact order they were spoken.

Michael reviewed the current draft of possible articles for the warning, commenting that the articles about adding health insurance and funding the schoolhouse might be removed. George wondered how taxes would be affected if the schoolhouse was funded, and Michael said it will have minimal impact on taxes. There was some discussion about offsetting the General and Highway budgets with surplus funds from 2024 with the intention of lowering expenses. There were no conclusions at this meeting. Phil asked where funds for abatements would come from. Michael said they are not currently factored into the budget. He said Cynthia is aware of the possible expense, but it is likely to be a small amount.

The possible articles were reviewed.

- *Articles 1 – 11* are standard articles with wording from previous warnings.
- *Article 12* has a probable amount of \$3,000 for a town-wide reappraisal of properties.
- *Social Services article:* Barbara Jean, who is part of the Social Services Committee, said the group thinks their designations should be limited to organizations that provide direct services to people and animals. It was suggested that the Brattleboro Development Corp. and the Windham Historical Society have separate articles in

order to be funded. How to list the social service requests was discussed, and it was decided to list all in an article in the Warning, not the General Fund budget. Barbara Jean will contact Skip Raymond, chair of the Soc. Serv. Comm, to set a meeting soon.

- *Emergency Response article:* Tan said \$2000 is a good amount for this, but he asked that the proposed wording of the article be changed to allow more options. The following wording was agreed upon: Shall the voters appropriate \$2,000 to be used to fund emergency communications for the Town of Windham. Voted in 2024: \$0.
- *Professional Audit article:* Michael said an additional \$10,000 was needed to have a total of \$30,000. Our request for bids for an audit received only one response, which was for \$30,000. All agreed to that amount.
- *Schoolhouse article:* It was clarified that this request was for 2025 only. There was no further discussion.
- *Staff Appointments:* At this point, there was lengthy discussion about four proposed articles related to the clerk, treasurer, and lister positions being appointed/hired rather than being elected and how to get qualified people in these positions. George said what was needed were two articles to hire a clerk and treasurer from out of town if no one local is elected to the positions.

He also spoke in favor of keeping the current structure of the listers, consisting of three people. Kord questioned if we need three listers, as one person does 99% of the work. Antje (a current lister) agreed, saying it is hard to divide the work, and there is often little for more than one person to do. It is enough to have one person who does the computer work plus a professional zoning administrator. When we need a professional assessor, we can hire one. Phil said we should have three local listers so they can keep an eye on properties and make sure all of them are correctly assessed. Frank said he had volunteered to be a lister and wasn't given the position. He wants to provide GIS data.

George returned to his point that there should be two articles (one for clerk and one for treasurer) saying the selectboard can appoint someone from out of town if no one is elected to the position. Kord said the selectboard already has that ability. George said if no one is elected, we currently do not have to ability to hire someone from out of town except on a temporary basis.

Michael said we need to know we have the best people in town jobs, and Cynthia recommends appointing/hiring a professional treasurer. Kord said the selectboard doesn't want more work, but there would be oversight of others if they were appointed/hired. Phil said if there is an article, as proposed that the clerk and treasurer positions be changed from elected to appointed/hired, no one will run in the election.

Tan said offering a good salary plus benefits will attract good people. Ellen said it is now required by law to offer health insurance to anyone who works 24 hours a week or more, and she and Kathy actually work more than 24 hrs/wk. Another option is to offer these employees a choice of either receiving health insurance or having an increased salary. All on the selectboard agreed that offering health insurance or increased pay would help attract good people. Due to budget concerns, we should only offer single (not family) coverage.

Maureen asked if the employee handbook had been finished, noting that it would be especially useful if out of town people are hired. Kord agreed that it would be useful.

**Next Steps:** George will draft possible articles to allow the selectboard to appoint/hire someone from out of town if there is no one elected for a job. Kord will speak to the VLCT about the best way to incentivize interest in our town jobs. A decision will be

made about offering health insurance. The employee handbook will be finished.

- *NEMRC Account article:* All agreed that we need to close the 2024 NEMRC Account and transfer the balance of \$3,000 from that account into the General Fund. However, the correct name for the account needs to be determined.
- *Dog Fund article:* All agreed to move the Dog Fund into the General Fund. These are unrestricted funds. Ellen said she sends the funds to the state. Michael said there is a line under Town Revenue in the General Fund for revenue from dog licenses.
- There was a question about why articles are needed to close accounts. It was explained that this is required, as the town's people voted to open these accounts, so now they need to vote to close them.

E) Discuss/schedule additional meetings re the budget and warning – It was agreed to hold a special selectboard meeting in one week to continue the work needed for the budgets and articles.

**10) and 11) New Business and Old Business** were postponed until the next meeting due to the late hour.

**12) Adjourn special meeting and stop recording.**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 8:05 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**The next Meeting is scheduled for  
Monday, January 13, 2025 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk  
*Approved January 13, 2025*