

**Windham VT Selectboard Minutes  
February 24, 2025 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  
Cathy Fales  
Ellen McDuffie  
Bill Casey  
Al McLaine

**Present on Zoom**

George Dutton, selectboard	Hunt Fales
Diane Abate, Stevens Assoc.	Tom & Louise Johnson
Bill Dunkel	Gail Wyman
Imme Maurath	Pat McLaine
Tom Widger	Bea Eliastam
Ginny Crittenden	Antje Ruppert
Maureen Bell	Dan Roth
Kathy Scott	David Cherry
Becky Phillips	Abby Pelton
Crystal Corriveau	Tan Bronson
Barbara Jean Quinn	David Osborne

**1. Start Recording and Call to Order --** Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:34 PM.

**2. Additions/deletions and/or changes to agenda –** Three items were added to the agenda – two Staff Reports as 8. F) & G), and one item as Old Business.

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

**4. Act on the minutes from the February 17, 2025 selectboard meeting**

**Motion:** To approve the February 17, 2025 selectboard minutes; Kord moved, and Michael agreed. George abstained as he did not attend that meeting.

**5. Public Comments –** Bill thanked Richard for helping clear fallen debris from his driveway. Al added that the road crew does a remarkable job. Crystal asked the selectboard to address the fact that she and others are not getting their USPS mail daily.

**Next Step:** Mac will put this on the Parking Lot for the next meeting.

**6. Correspondence –** There was no correspondence on a topic that was not included on the agenda.

**7. Payroll/Bills –** There were no new expenditures to approve.

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

A) Grant Strategist – Cathy Fales introduced Diane Abate from Stevens & Associates. Diane stated that she had 25 years of architect’s experience, working primarily with schools. Using screen share, she presented her report about the Windham schoolhouse. Voters are encouraged to review the full report before Town Meeting when they will decide if the school board should sell the schoolhouse and grounds to the town for \$1.00. The full report is on the town’s website at <https://townofwindhamvt.com/feasibility-study-results-available/>. A summary of the report is offered here.

- **The purpose of the study:** To determine the possible uses of the Windham Elementary School Building and the approximate related costs. Possible uses were based on input from numerous town residents, and costs were based on the Facility Condition Assessment from the Vermont Agency of Education, dated July 7, 2023. Diane’s study was funded by a grant from the Vermont Council on Rural Development.

- **Population and demographics:** Windham has 553 residents with an average age of 40.9 years. Children ages 0 to 19 years comprise 18% of the population. Adults 20-39 years = 30%, adults 40-59 = 25%, and adults 60 years and up = 28%.
- **Schoolhouse facts:** The building has 4200 sq. ft. and sits on two plus acres. The septic system is shared with the Town Office and can accommodate 44 people. The building is basically in good to fair condition. Repairs are needed to the roof, windows, lights, and fire safety system. The main aspect judged to be in “poor” condition was the parking area. Some minor changes are needed to make the building ADA compliant. It was estimated that more than \$1 million would be needed to replace the building. A cost for the immediate needs to put everything in good condition was estimate in the 2023 state assessment as \$148,000, with the major cost being \$64,000 to repair the parking area. Additional expenditures for repairs would be needed in the future.
- **Ideas for repurposing the building:** Ideas were gathered from a selectboard meeting, two public meetings specifically to gather ideas, and from emails. The ideas were than grouped by their similarities. All ideas shared similar objectives – to provide a multi-generational place for people to gather, socialize, share our local history, and foster a sense of community. The building could become – an educational hub, recreation center, visitor center, nature center, senior housing, health care center, new town office, emergency evacuation center, fire station, recreation center with swimming pool, small business center, and outdoor “park” with hiking trails.
- **Related costs:** The costs for the various ideas were considered, grouped by their potential cost for building upgrades. The lowest cost (\$150,000 to \$650,000) would be to use the building for recreation and education purposes or as a nature, visitors, or health care center. For a moderate cost (\$555,000 to \$800,000), we could have a new Town Office, small business space, emergency location, and recreation center. A major cost (\$1,800,000 to \$2,400,000) would be needed for senior housing, a new firehouse, of a recreation center with a swimming pool.
- **Things to consider:** A master plan is needed with a phased approach. We should explore grants, have an engineer look at what is wanted and how we might reduce the costs. We also need to test the tiles in the building for asbestos and the water and grounds for any contamination. The voters should be kept involved every step of the way.
- **Comments:** Diane – Multi-generation purposes were a strong objective. Maureen – Clarity is needed so that uses of the school building and the Meeting House are not in conflict. Becky – Grants may be hard to get based on what is happening in Washington DC. David – The town should connect with other towns to see how we can partner. For example, we could provide a music center for kids from various towns. Cathy – There is no grant money to turn the location into a firehouse or town garage. Crystal – Kids and parents won’t come to the schoolhouse, due to their animosity toward it and their focus on the schools the kids now attend. Michael – The costs for upgrades are twice as much if the school owns the building rather than the town. Cathy – If the voters chose to have the town buy the building, the final decision for repurposing it and its acreage will be up to the Selectboard (whose members have said they will listen to the townspeople).

B) Website – Bea reported that Curly Sprouts (which has been contracted to create a new website for the town) is working to make the current content simpler and easier to access. They are missing some information. They want to use Google Workspace, so committee heads can post and update their meeting information. Curly Sprouts has redesigned Newfane’s website, and Bea suggested we look at that and see if we want ours to be like that. Alden asked if there would be a way on the website for people to sign up for emails. Ellen said the

town needs its own list, not just the WCO's. Mac said a card was being prepared for Town Meeting to have people sign up for emails about town meetings and business.

C) Listers – Antje said she attended a NEMRC seminar on their CAMA software. This system is how property values are updated when changes happen to a property. She is also involved with the Board of Tax Abatement, and drafted a letter to state officials and the media regarding the unfair tax burden on Windham, resulting from the townwide reappraisal and some incorrect determinations by the Tax Department. The letter was sent with 53 signers.

D) Planning/Energy – Bill said a public hearing will be held on February 25, regarding the request from the Friendly Gathering for a conditional use permit to change the hours when music above the decibel level in the zoning regs can be played. Another public hearing will also take place on Monday, March 10 regarding changes to the town's zoning regulations. Bill encouraged folks to attend.

E) Town Clerk/WCO – Ellen said the Australian ballots for electing town officials are available through the town office for early voting. The polls will be open on Tuesday, March 3 from 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM at the Meeting House on Town Meeting day.

F) Treasurer – Kathy said this would be the last time she attends a Selectboard meeting as the town treasurer. She has enjoyed the job, although the last 18 months were challenging due to health issues. She will speak privately with the auditors about some matters.

G) Grant Administrator – Imme commented that in the Town Report the auditors said there needs to be more oversight regarding grants. She wondered why the auditors didn't speak to her personally if there was a problem. Kathy said there is detailed oversight required by all granting agencies. Imme said we are receiving the reimbursements and spending them as stated. Becky (an auditor) said they wanted to state in the report what was received and how it was used and didn't have all of that information. It seemed a deadline had been missed. Pat (an auditor) said their recommendations were not about any one person, but grants need to be watched and followed. Kord said Cynthia (from NEMRC) is incorporating more info about grants into the accounting system. He said Cathy and Imme have managed their grants well and provide a great service to the town. Michael said the town has made a small investment through their wages that has resulted in over half a million dollars income in the past year. Abby thanked Imme and Cathy for their good work and regretted that they felt insulted by the auditors.

## **9. Preparations for Town Meeting**

A) Finalize logistics for the day – Ellen said she has prepared the name tags and ordered the bottles of water. It was noted that on the back page of the Town Report it says Town Meeting will be Saturday, March 4, and it should be Tuesday, March 4. Michael said he would move the pews as needed to make room for voting booths. Cathy will send Mac the template for the info cards. George will set up the AV equipment. He will contact the folks from BCTV. Michael will come early on Tuesday to set up. Ellen said the WCO will set up for the potluck on Sunday at 2:00.

B) Discuss schoolhouse article – This was covered in the report from Diane.

**10. Old Business**

A) Bank balance – Michael said the Town Report shows \$3,000,000 in the bank, and this is deceptive as most of these funds are spoken for. About 20% is needed for unexpected expenses, as recommended. We haven't had the professional audit yet, which will add clarity and help make clear what funds we actually have that can be used to reduce taxes. Kord said we need to determine what to set aside for emergencies.

Due to the latest of the hour, the following items were postponed:

- B) Update on Vermont's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Resolution
- C) Update on State Ethics Liaison
- D) Subrecipient Annual Report due 2/14 to Dept. of Finance and Management
- E) Update on highway data for the biannual FHWA-536 report due 2/14

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

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 7:49 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for  
Monday, March 17, 2025 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk