

Windham VT Selectboard Minutes
March 17, 2025 Regular Meeting
Held at the Meeting House and on Zoom

Present at the Meeting House

Kord Scott, selectboard chair
Michael Pelton, selectboard
George Dutton, selectboard
Mary McCoy (Mac),
selectboard clerk

Present on Zoom

Will Goodwin
Maureen Bell
Becky Phillips
Antje Ruppert
Bill Dunkel
Imme Maurath
Abby Pelton
Tom & Louise Johnson

Russell Cumming
Barbara Jean Quinn
Cathy Fales
Crystal Corriveau
Phil McDuffie
Tom Widger
Tan Bronson

1. Start Recording and Call to Order -- Kord called the meeting to order and started the recording at 5:30 PM.

2. Selectboard members take the Oath of Office – Mac (who is a justice of the peace) administered the oath to which the three selectpersons said, “I do.”

3. Elect Selectboard Chair & Vice Chair – George said the selectboard’s work should be spread around more so Kord didn’t have to do as much as he does. Michael acknowledged Kord’s contributions and suggested further discussion on was needed. George nominated himself to be vice chair, and Kord nominated Michael. It was agreed that all selectpersons should be able to run the meetings.

Motion: Michael nominated George to be Vice Chair, and all agreed.

Next Step: Discuss and determine a plan for sharing the selectboard’s workload.

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

5. Announcements – Kord said he spoke to Wren at the West Townshend Post Office about lack of USPS mail delivery, and she said the carrier had been ill for two weeks and then had car trouble. Imme said she has updated the local emergency plan.

Next Step: Sign the emergency plan at the next selectboard meeting.

6. Act on the minutes from the February 24, 2025 selectboard meeting and the March 3, 2025 Annual Town Meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes from the February 24, 2025 selectboard minutes and the March 3, 2025 Annual Town Meeting; George moved, and all agreed.

Next Step: Kord will find out how and when the minutes should be approved for the Tax Abatement Board meetings.

7. Public Comments – Crystal urged people to attend the West River School District informational meeting on March 25 at 7:00 in the Dutton Gym at Leland & Grey and to vote on March 26 on the WRSD Budget. Crystal said she will submit to the News & Notes an article about our two graduates from Leland & Grey and our three graduates from Townshend Elementary.

8. Correspondence – An email was received from Tan saying he has purchased antennae for the emergency communication project. An email was sent from Phil McDuffie right before the meeting, but no one had read it.

9. Payroll/Bills – There were no pay orders to approve. New Town Treasurer Courtney Roth is being trained by former treasurer Kathy Scott. Kathy will serve as Courtney's assistant until Courtney is prepared is oriented.

10. Staff Reports with Discussion and Possible Decisions

A) Grant Strategist – Cathy Fales (grant updates) – (1) In an emergency meeting with the Windham Regional Commission, they approved our requests for assessments of any contamination at the schoolhouse and the Imerys property. How soon those will take place is to be determined, but it is known that the Imerys assessment is needed asap. Town Attorney Bob Fisher said this independent study is needed before the town negotiates with Imerys. Michael asked that Bob speak with the school's lawyer. (2) Last week the WRC did an audit on the accessibility at the Meeting House. Cathy does not expect this required assessment to change anything. A similar audit may be done on the schoolhouse. (3) More funds for the Meeting House may be available from Efficiency Vermont. (4) Cathy has received from the VLCT five pages of ideas for funding sources for schoolhouse changes. (5) The Vermont Council on Rural Development will soon start a community needs assessment. They want a committee of 15 people that they will select from our town officials. They will contact those people as soon as next week.

B) Zoning Administrator – Will Goodwin – Will explained that Windham currently does not charge for zoning compliance reviews, while other towns typically charge \$25 for this. Also, other towns charge around \$130 to conduct a hearing, such as the recent hearing regarding the Friendly Gathering. Will advised reviewing our fee schedule. He also noted that our charge for new building permits is based on their square footage, not a standard one set price for all. Michael said he would prefer keeping fees low. George said people building bigger houses can afford to pay more.

Next Step: Will and Cathy will gather and review information from other towns and suggest revisions to our fee schedule.

Will also suggested using the CAI mapping system, which gives property owners detailed, interactive information about their property, including wetlands and slopes. It costs \$1700 per year. Kord noted that there are free services that give this information, including NEMRC and VT Parcel. Russell said the Agency of Natural Resources also has info like CAI that is free.

Next Step: See demonstrations of the possible services. Will can present CAI. Michael will get info on NEMRC's system.

C) Listers – Antje Ruppert – Antje and Bill Casey took a webinar about the Grand List. They have been working on property transfers, and they are following up on permits and the resulting changes to properties and their value. Russell said the Lister's year ends on April 1, by which reassessments should be completed. Antje said any transfers or permits received after that date will not be shown in this year's Grand List. Howie Ires, recently elected lister, has begun work. He is learning quickly, and has good computer skills.

D) Planning/Energy – Bill Dunkel – (1) The public hearing held on March 10 had no public participation. The Planning Commission approved the proposed changes. The selectboard must now hold a hearing, after which they will vote on approving the changes. (2) Bill said the PC also approved the revised zoning permit. The selectboard has already approved some of the permit changes. The PC wants to add links to sites with details about the land. Bill gave the currently revised permit to Bea to post on the website, as the old permit was still there. (3) Will mentioned that on 4/14 at 6:00 PM there is training about requests for conditional use to build in a forest district. (4) Kord noted that the

Zoning Board of Approval approved a conditional use permit for the Friendly Gathering with conditions, based on public comment. The folks from the Friendly Gathering were cooperative and ready to accept the conditions. They wanted to have 15 security guards, but agreed to have 25, a number based on 1 guard per 100 people, with 2500 expected to attend the gathering. Kord said he expected the event to go smoothly.

Next Step: George will find out if the hearing about changes to the zoning regs can be a part of a selectboard meeting and other details about the process, and the selectboard will schedule the hearing. George will also find out from Bob Fisher what the process is for the selectboard to approve.

11. New Business

A) Discuss Town Meeting – (1) Michael said it went well. There were issues with the heating, as the thermostat wasn't functional, and Bob Kehoe (electrician) had to jump start it. It was agreed to wait until the new heating system was installed to address this issue since it only impacted the upstairs. (2) Crystal said parking continues to be a problem, and she suggested that people park at the schoolhouse and be driven to the Meeting House. Maureen encouraged people to carpool. George said we need to limit parking to one side of the roads. Michael said there should be more parking with the upcoming changes to the Meeting House. Tan said there should be parking in the back of the building. George mentioned using paving stones, and Maureen noted that was an expensive option. (3) Mac said she appreciated starting the meeting with singing "This Land," as it set a tone of unity. (4) George said he thought it was wise to keep the focus on town issues and not divisive national or state issues. (5) Cathy noted that our State Rep. Tom Charlton said our town meeting was the most organized and best behaved town meeting he had attended.

B) Discuss Everett Hammond's recommendation re Abbott Road culvert replacement project – Kord said this culvert will be near the Kehoe's property. Everett Hammond, town engineer, wants to do this project like the one on Chase Road, getting separate bids for the culvert and the work. George said that helps with the delivery too. George asked about the need for a culvert on West Windham Road where Burbee Pond overflowed. He wants Everett's opinion on that and the possible help of a beaver deceiver. Michael said the LHMP also looks at this.

Next Step: Address this needed work on West Windham Road.

C) Award the Route 121 culvert replacement per Otter Creek's recommendation

Motion: To award the Rt. 121 culvert replacement per Otter Creek's recommendation. George moved, and all agreed.

This culvert will be east of the Four Corners intersection on the gravel section that goes to Grafton. There was discussion about possible detours, with the options being limited. Kord said we can get extra signs to direct traffic. He said we can't control how fast the work is done, but we have a plan and will try to do it as quickly as possible.

D) Discuss the Nature Conservancy's offer in lieu of taxes – Kord said they have offered the town a one-time payment of \$100,000 in lieu of the taxes they are no longer paying. Bob is reviewing the agreement. Cathy said the organization has a policy of compensating towns for taxes they no longer pay.

Next Step: Bob will review the agreement and will send his advice to all three selectpersons.

E) Discuss appointing Margo Ghia as MPM for Salt Shed project – Kord said we received the grant for this project in 2023, and it may now be questionable, as it is federally funded. If it remains viable, we still have a few years to complete the project.

Appointing Margo as project manager will show we are moving forward with it. (Margo works for the Windham Regional Commission.) She can help with the research to determine if the land Imerys wants to give us would be a good location for the salt shed and other town equipment.

Motion: To appoint Margo Ghia as MPM for the Salt Shed Project. George moved, and all agreed.

12. Reorganization for 2025

A) Review, revise, adopt Rules of Procedure

Motion: To adopt the Rules of Procedure. Michael moved, and all agreed.

B) Discuss compliance requirements re Open Meeting Law & Municipal Code of Ethics (training and other steps are needed) – Kord said as chair he must go to the meeting regarding open meeting law. All three selectpersons expressed an interest in attending this, carpooling to Montpelier for the training.

Next Step: Michael will research what is needed for the Code of Ethics.

C) Designate day, time, and place of regular Selectboard meetings – There was discussion about establishing a new policy related to holidays, but there was no agreement about it.

Motion: To continue with our current policy of holding selectboard meetings on the first and third Mondays of each month at 5:30 PM at the Meeting House and on Zoom, and to reschedule meetings that fall on a holiday as we have in the past, when all determine that makes sense. Kord moved, and all agreed.

D) Designate locations for posting meeting notices

Motion: To post meeting notices at the Town Office, Meeting House, Firehouse, and town website. Kord moved, and all agreed.

E) Designate newspaper of record for public notices

Motion: To post public notices in the Vermont Shopper. Kord moved, and all agreed.

F) Designate one Selectboard member to sign pay orders on behalf of Selectboard

Motion: To designate Kord to sign pay orders on behalf of the Selectboard. Michael moved, and all agreed.

13. Executive Session regarding appointments for Town Officials/Committee Members

Motion: To go into executive session to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee. Kord moved, and all agreed.

The recording was stopped at 7:05 PM, and selectboard went into executive session.

Motion: To end executive session. Kord moved and all agreed. The executive session ended at 7:39 PM.

Motion: To return to regular session. Kord moved and all agreed. Kord reported that the list of positions to be reappointed was discussed, but no action was taken.

14. Adjourn the meeting.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM. George moved, and all agreed.

**The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, April 7, 2025 at 5:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McCoy (Mac), selectboard clerk
Approved April 7, 2025