

Pat Haller explained that in the past we've done many speed studies. Almost every study comes back that 85 percent of people are obeying speed limits, but we have a small percentage of heavy speeders. We appreciate the studies, but Pat would love to get them to focus on traffic calming beyond the intersections. The studies don't seem to focus on what we can do to our roads to make people slow down. Ben reminded Pat of the suggestion in the previous report to do an intersection realignment feasibility study. Another thing that came up is to place the officer just beyond a radar feedback sign, and that's where they have impact on that other 15%. Pat doesn't think we could legally promote the private 'traffic wardens' as a town. There is a difference between private individuals taking photographs of other private people and a municipality endorsing such. He believes it may be an invasion of privacy. Bill explained the prevailing traffic calming for dirt roads is to narrow the roads, however people also complain about when roads are narrow. It can be a double-edged sword. It's a tough issue. He hopes we can get some good data to do something about it.

Sheila Franz was present. She and Joe Franz had put together a document summarizing their various complaints about traffic on Woods Hollow Road. They feel the traffic flow is a long-term planning issue and that the town plan should be adjusted to deal with this. Woods Hollow has become a major artery, having twice the number of cars as the next busiest road in traffic studies. While most people are law abiding, those that go very fast are incredibly dangerous. In terms of accidents and crashes people go off in all sorts of weather conditions. Sheila feels these often go unreported. She believes citizen input will be important for this reason and that traffic calming measures where there is more density might be able to be accomplished.

Barb Peck was present. She knows there's a difference between traffic calming on paved roads vs dirt roads. If we are thinking about traffic calming through Westford on VT Route 128, the perfect time to do that with VTRANS is when they resurface the road in 2026. As far as the dirt roads she's not sure how anybody is ever going to control that. She'd walked down Cambridge Road when a truck passed by her very closely. She submitted that license plate to the police and it was taken care of.

Carol Winfield was present. She pointed out that the idea of narrowing roads to make people feel less safe so they'll drive slower is short sighted. People that are speeding are not worried about safety. Narrowing makes law abiding citizens and pedestrians using the road feel less safe. She is against the concept of narrowing the roads with the intent of slowing people down.

Wendy was curious when the MERP work would be executed. Ben explained once we get the Level 2 Energy Audit results back and for them to publish the final application.

MINUTES

Casey motioned to approve the July 11, 2024 Minutes as amended. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, went over the Road Schedule from July 12, 2024 to July 25, 2024. Bill motioned to approve the Road Schedule as presented. Casey seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Correspondence was received disagreeing with the technique we use for grading roads, feeling the roads were purposefully pushed out to be wider. Sean disagreed. They do not try to purposefully push the road wider for any reason.

FY'24 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'24 Budget Status Report.

GOODRICH TRAIL

Pat Haller and Wendy Doane walked the Goodrich Trail with a group of landowners and the Conservation Commission (CC) on 7/17. The meeting was well attended. Wendy thinks things are in a good place right now. She is looking forward to the document that the CC is going to come up with that will help the landowners have a better understanding of what to expect and for the CC to explain that they understand how they can make this work for the landowners. She and Pat came away positively, with lots of goodwill capital with among all parties.

Pat explained they'd heard a lot from the property owners that they are nervous about the goals of the town for the trails. Pat suggested we look at our trails differently when they are private property versus our public property trails. The property owners were nervous that the town's intention was to make the trails a more park-like setting and encourage more and multi-use. Pat thinks a good way forward is maintaining the trails for hiking and horseback riding as they are now, not necessarily upgrading for bicycle use.

Wendy thinks that signage needs to be agreed up on by the CC and landowners about trail use expectations so that users understand it is a town ROW/Ancient Road and that the trails cross private property. Bill asked if we'd installed the kiosk for Goodrich Trail. There was a kiosk at the trailhead of the Repa Road end. The landowners would like to reduce the size of the kiosk. Wendy thinks this is the area of negotiation. We need to make the signage so it's both acceptable to the landowners and has a clear message on it. The CC made it clear the Kiosks are useful and necessary for the trail users to understand the expectations. Pat understands how the homeowners could feel it's too large, however. He believes there is a happy medium that can be met. Ben knows that all the landowners appreciated Pat and Wendy's presence during the trail walk. There's been a lot of goodwill that's developed and room for negotiation.

Kirsten Tyler from the CC was present. She echoed the words of Pat and Wendy and said the CC is heartened to be part of the conversation about the concerns landowners have; some of which the town and CC didn't even know existed. She urged anybody who lives on or uses the trails to come to a CC meeting and/or contact them with concerns. The meeting was great; people felt heard and came to understandings. The CC plans to create a document that outlines what was heard. They will be reconvening sometime in the future to come to some compromises with landowners. She reminded everybody that a compromise means that nobody gets 100% of what they want, but that there's give and take so that issues and concerns can be addressed while the ROW of the public trail is preserved. The CC also plans to have a landowner communication policy in place so that moving forward when a decision needs to be made about a trail, they can get input from the landowner.

Vicky Ross was present. She wanted to clarify that some landowners objected to the size of the current kiosks. Pat explained that his perception is because the Goodrich Trail kiosk is extremely close to the Hazen's house site, it was an obtrusive structure the Hazen's could see from their residential vantage point. Bill asked for the next steps. The CC will have their meeting and continue to work on documentation. The landowner communication policy will be part of the next step. Kati Anderson was present. She thinks the kiosk is enormous and feels it could be significantly smaller for its use. She also agreed the meeting was a good conversation and they're looking forward to guidelines for everyone going forward. Pat had worked with Kirsten 4 years ago to investigate Kiosks for various town trails. The input then was to make a kiosk large enough to include information. We can modify things going forward. Kati mentioned that they've been working with Holly and Callie the Schultz Trail issue where that trail is the only trail listed in the state's online database. They are looking forward to seeing change. Holly will follow up on this next week with the state.

EWSD SHARED USED MOU W/ WESTFORD RECREATION COMMITTEE

This was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Essex Westford School District (EWSD) is looking to charge for field use, and this would allow the Recreation Committee (RC) to use the fields without paying as a municipal organization. Pat Haller thinks the MOU is very different than the previous one that had been pitched to the RC where there were going to be substantial fees to the RC for use. Ben McElvany of the RC had done a lot of work to remind EWSD that the fields and trails are on town property and the work the RC does maintaining the fields. Pat thanked Ben and the RC for getting us back to a more reasonable MOU. He does wish it was good for more than 1 year. Ben had gone back to EWSD if we could make it a 3- or 5-year MOU and EWSD stated they are most comfortable with a year because the RC membership changes frequently. They don't anticipate it being a heavy lift every year. EWSD said they would take charge of reminding the RC to renew the MOU. Pat made a motion to approve the MOU with EWSD for the RC Facility Use. Deb seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

COVERED BRIDGE REPAIR UPDATE

Caroline Brown and Glenn Rogers from the Westford Historical Society (WHS) were present. Bill Cleary understands that we need to get the Bridge designated as a Historic Structure before being able to get grants for its repairs. Holly explained they applied for the historic designation. The historic preservation grant is a 50/50 match grant. The idea is to apply for this and a conditions assessment grant. Bill doesn't think there will be a problem considering it is a historic structure. Glenn added they need a tight timeline for the grants and assessment. He queried if it were the town of the WHS to take the lead on these items? Holly thinks that she can lead while using the WHS for information, they've been crucial to include thus far.

TOWN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN RECAP

Pat went through the Implementation Plan with the perspective of looking at the parts of the Implementation plans that are a marriage of Selectboard and Planning Commission (PC) work. There are 27 implementations that include Selectboard and PC coordination. Some of those would include the Conservation Commission (CC). The Town Plan (TP) was ratified in 2021 and the statutes require an updated town plan 8 years later. Pat went through the planned items. Items with significant discussion are listed below.

Provide Accessible and Affordable Senior Housing

The zoning fees are now waived if it's affordable housing. There are no discounts for senior housing nor is there a discount on the Developmental Review Board (DRB) review fees. Pat explained that the affordable housing definition is very specific in the TP stating: "Affordable Housing means a house that is affordable to 80% of the median household income and the mortgage and taxes are not more than 30% of the person's income". For Westford in 2018, a \$251,000 home would be considered affordable. The average price that year in Westford was \$413,000. We should also discuss whether we are targeting Westford's affordability or Chittenden County's affordability. Westford is not as affordable as other parts of Chittenden County. Our average homes are not considered affordable. Pat thinks we should think about Chittenden County affordability because those looking to buy houses do not already live in Westford.

Install an Electric Charging Station in the Town Center

Pat doesn't think this is insurmountable. We would not be able to get a level 3 charger because Westford does not have phase 3 power, but we could get a level 1 or level 2. Green Mountain Power has programs for this. We would need to understand how much it costs and where we would place it. Holly noted there are several grants that would pay for a charger. Pat continued that when we look at expanding the town office, perhaps we could think of a good

place for a charging station. It doesn't have to be on the Common. Ben Bornstein commented that this is a huge discussion with CCRPC. There are federal funds for charging stations. Level 3 is the way to go because Level 1 and 2 will soon be obsolete, however we are unable to install level 3. There is a lot of money out there for such things.

Investigate Developing One or More Forestry Districts

This would protect forests and rural character while clustering development. A forestry district would have a minimum lot size greater than what we currently have for areas near significant natural resources. Its intention is to put less focus on development and encourage a lower development density in forested areas. Many of those locations would be some of the higher elevations with steeper slopes in town. Barb Peck commented that the Selectboard and PC should determine how many landowners a Forestry District would affect.

Implement the Project Identified in the Lamoille River Tactical Basin Plan (TBP)

The TBP is a water quality erosion reduction plan that reduces phosphorus loading. This discusses things to do with our roads, best management practices to prevent erosion into the watershed, requirements regarding wetland and floodplain restoration, and protecting river corridors which Pat believes we already do. Holly noted a recommendation from the State that municipalities do an audit of any drainage pipes be it sewer, water, etc. that end up in a river or tributary to a river. Westford hasn't done one of those. During that study, a fluorescent dye pack is placed in a drainage pipe to see where it goes, decommissioning those that are not safe. She plans to talk to the PC about this.

Investigate the feasibility of fire department impact fees

This would mean a new development would have to pay an impact fee to the fire department.

Support & Work w/ Affordable Housing Developers in Neighboring Towns

As Pat looked at everything else, he felt this wasn't something that was implementable, it was instead a goal. He doesn't know how much we are currently working with affordable housing developers in neighboring towns. There is also a distinct difference between affordability and aging.

Advocate for Conservation of Land in Westford at the State Level etc.

Due to the crucial role Westford plays as a boundary town between Chittenden County and more rural towns in other counties.

Pat then asked, what do we do with this now? We want to collaborate with the PC. We should start thinking about the things that aren't just easy tasks that will happen without great effort. There is one that stood out for Pat: Revise and Clarify Ledge Outcropping etc. It seems clear that we ought to have some clarity. The DRB has consistently needed clarity on this item.

Bill would like to put things back in Pat's court, he asked Pat to identify a few priorities and come back to the board with the goal of having a joint meeting with the PC. Pat would like to meet with the PC prior to saying what the SB would want to do.

Ben Bornstein stated that he was promised by the PC that before any districts would be declared that the landowners would be included in the process. He would like somebody to reasonably explain to him the computation calculation for steep slope area to be able to do something on. He's met nobody that can explain it. He thinks it's unreasonable.

FAIRFAX RESCUE SERVICE UPDATE

Fairfax Rescue is now covering Georgia which adds a town to their service. Casey Mathieu thought this might dilute our coverage from Fairfax. Fairfax Rescue contacted us and

explained how they've accounted for their increased service by adding another ambulance and staff. Bill Cleary had no problems with it. Casey felt more comfortable.

2023 ALL HAZARD MITIGATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN REPORT

This is annual to make sure we are keeping up with our promises in doing our road work so that it's not creating flood and water quality concerns. No action was required.

1705 UPDATE

There was nothing specific at this point. Pat wondered if we could get a cost estimate of what a 490 gallon per day system would be. We have yet to receive an invoice from Tudhope. It is not yet known how much of the allotted \$5,000 has been spent. Holly will ask him.

Carol Winfield was present and asked where we were with Tudhope. 490 gallons was Tudhope's initial estimate. The town currently has an agreement with George Pigeon where the information is owned by the town until released as a public record. The board chose not to release the information at this time because they are still in negotiations.

FY'24 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'24 General Fund Budget Status Report.

REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrants.

CORRESPONDENCE

Thank You Message from Age Well

Age Well had sent us a message of thanks for our financial donation.

Horseback Riding on Town Trails

There had been correspondence about horse riding on the trails. Someone was concerned that horseback riding would no longer be allowed, but it is still allowed. Pat had spoken with the resident.

COMMUNICATION

Holly had researched how many municipal holidays other towns nearby and of similar size provide to their employees. This was prompted by the request to provide Juneteenth as a municipal holiday. Westford has 10 paid holidays, amongst the lowest of municipal holidays in the area. Overall, regarding Juneteenth, 8 of 11 towns Holly researched currently offer Juneteenth, and 1 is looking to incorporate it. A majority have Juneteenth as a municipal holiday. Bill thinks the other part of the puzzle is how generous we are with sick time, vacation time, paid holiday, etc. Holly can ask the same 11 municipalities that question.

Vicky Ross was present. She thinks it was good to look at all the benefits together. There modernizing that can be done. In her experience, she's found the sick time carryover to be overly generous. Pat Haller thinks sick time is not "fun" time off, he'd rather us have a higher amount of vacation and holiday. He also suggested that although he thinks the emancipation of slaves that Juneteenth celebrates is monumental, he'd like to know how the employees feel. Would they want Juneteenth or a different holiday? Casey agreed, but reminded the board the state of Vermont requires 40 hours of sick time. Bill agreed with Pat.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Bill moved to find that premature public knowledge of matters related to personnel and property acquisition would put the town at a significant disadvantage. Pat seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Bill moved to enter executive session at 9:06 p.m. and invited Holly Delisle to attend. Deb seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Deb motioned to exit executive session at 10:24 p.m. Pat seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

No action was taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cleary, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Lavallee
Dave Gauthier
Lori Johnson
Glenn Rogers
Dick Lavallee
Caroline Brown
Rebecca DaVanon

Vicky Ross
Carol Winfield
Barb Peck
Kim Guidry
Sheila Franz
Ira Allen
Martha Heath

Sue Roediger
Ben Bornstein
Kirsten Tyler
Kati Anderson
Paul Birnholz
Maureen Wilcox

ADOPTED THIS 22nd DAY OF AUGUST 2024.

WESTFORD SELECTBOARD



William Cleary, Chair

Patrick Haller

Casey Mathieu



Deb Sawyer Jorschick



Wendy Doane