

SELECTBOARD MEETING
August 22, 2024
Minutes

Present:	Bill Cleary	Holly Delisle
	Wendy Doane	Callie Hamdy
	Casey Mathieu	Greg Barrows
	Deb Jorschick	Sean Cushing

Guests: see page 6.

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein was present. He found out what we needed to do to add the stop sign at the intersection on Old #11 on the traffic study as well as other items. There is the question of whether a consultant would need to be hired. If a consultant is necessary, there would be an 80/20 split on the cost for the town. There were a number of recommendations to implement from the last traffic study. One of which was putting up electronic radar signs. They range from \$3,700-\$4,700 apiece. Ben asked the CCRPC if there were any discounted or used ones available. The Chittenden County Sheriff's Office might have some on hand for less. Ben had other contacts if this does not work out.

We finally received the level 2 energy audit report for the MERP grant. It is 104 pages long. We were told solar panels and arrays would not be a priority, however solar makes up a third of the report's recommendations. Ben has been working with Pat Haller regarding Efficiency Vermont. They have been good about identifying different hardware such as garage doors we might want to switch out etc. Ben had reached out to three different garage door sellers and is working with Sean to have those people come measure and offer a range of suggestions.

The Long-Range Planning Sub Committee put forth a draft ECOS plan that deals with housing, land use, Act 250 etc. There have been major policy changes looking at equity and inclusion, climate change integration, and adaptation of new strategies on a local/municipal level and insuring better, more equitable transportation and housing, especially affordable housing. In past Selectboard meetings the issue was raised in respect to revising the current town map that was submitted to CCRPC. Regarding forestry districts, the question was if we could rely on town owned properties vs privately owned properties. CCRPC offered 1 or more zoom sessions for the Town to explain the process, explain the requirements and provide us with more information regarding revision.

Bill asked Holly to contact the Sheriff's Department to see if there were radar signs we could rotate in town. Chris Dubin at CCRPC had also reached out to see if other towns have extras. Wendy thought there was low hanging fruit in the MERP audit, like the refrigerator. She wonders if we should be thinking about replacing that along with the lights.

The board discussed forestry districts. They wanted to know who had put them in the town plan and why. Wendy thinks there is a push to keep contiguous forests contiguous. Bill wanted to put it on an agenda specifically so the public can speak on it. He did not think a robust

discussion now was appropriate. Wendy also wanted input from the Planning Commission. Barb Peck was present. She believes that there is a difference between what is available to towns vs. what is available to private landowners. As far as individuals go they can be in several different plans the state offers.

MINUTES

Bill motioned to approve the July 25, 2024 Minutes as amended. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Bill motioned to approve the August 8, 2024 Minutes as written. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Wendy motioned to approve the August 16, 2024 Minutes as written. Bill seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, went over the Road Schedule from August 9, 2024 to August 22, 2024. Deb motioned to approve the Road Schedule as presented. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

FY'24 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

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

PLANNING COMMISSION CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Two candidates had met with the PC to introduce themselves on Monday, Max Tyler, and William Dunkley. The Selectboard conducted official interviews:

Max Tyler

Max Tyler was present. He has been a Westford resident for five years. He is invested in maintaining Westford's rural character and wants to focus on affordability. He feels the Planning Commission does important work and likes that they take a long range approach. He is interested in the position because a broad range of topics get addressed such as wastewater and water quality, affordable housing, transportation, agriculture etc. If we want Westford to be viable, we must get people to live here and want them to live here, especially young people. He is used to working in a project-type setting and managing those projects. Wendy asked if he could make a list of goals, he would want to see the Planning Commission take on and put them in order of priority? Max is most worried about housing affordability, our tax burden, reducing suburban sprawl and centering development in the town center, and having wastewater.

Jesse Labrecque

Jesse was present. He has lived in Westford since 2018 and grew up in Essex. He is currently on the Westford DRB and owns a small excavation and planned development business. He is interested in the Planning Commission because of his experience on the DRB. They have to interpret the rules the PC puts forth. He feels some of those rules are hard to interpret, such as the point system. He doesn't want it to be easier to develop, but easier for those hoping to do so. He also wanted to focus on affordability in housing, both in his business and from a Planning Commission point of interest. Wendy asked him to list his priorities for the Planning Commission. His biggest priority would be changing the point system. Wendy had been on the Planning Commission at the time that point system was made. She explained it was built off of the recommendations of the DRB, but she views it as a living document that needs changes. Harmony noted that the Planning Commission had been working with the chair of the DRB on that point system already and is looking to give those changes to the Selectboard soon. Casey

asked Jesse if he is looking to be in both roles? He is, but he would also be interested in an alternate position.

Paul Birnholz

Paul was present. He has been involved with housing and planning since 1978. He has been involved with reviewing various nonprofits that do housing and development and was previously chairman of the Planning Commission. He feels he has a lot of background and experience that could help the Planning Commission. He felt it was important to understand the distinction between what the state wants Westford to do and what residents of Westford want the Planning Commission to do. Wendy asked him to order his priorities for the Planning Commission. His biggest concern is the Regional Planning Commission and the State, he feels they have a single mind and that it will not fit Westford. He thinks the Planning Commission needs to let him show them a different perspective. He feels the Planning Commission has been too stuck in their ways. Wendy asked again for a goal. His goal was for the Planning Commission to reevaluate their current goals. He feels there are other ways of preventing sprawl besides centering development around the Common. He feels we should leave the common alone and push development outside of the village center.

William Dunkley

Will was present. He grew up in Westford next to the Westford Common Hall, studied forestry, and has run his own small business and sugaring operation. He has a background in invasive plant control. He was part of the Town Forest Committee when Maple Shade was coming up. Through his business there are a lot of different land use policies he has to be aware of, stakeholders to balance etc. He has been involved in Westford Mutual Aid. His family has done a lot of service for town, and it is something he wants to continue. Wendy asked her question about goals for the Planning Commission. Will's overarching goal would be to help foster a town that is more affordable for a wider demographic of people, and appealing. There are a few things that stand in the way of young people settling in town. He would like to see rural 10 be modified and up-zoned. He would like to see smaller lot sizes where it makes sense, creating greater planning around protecting forest and agriculture land while building more housing where appropriate, and helping create a stronger sense of community in Westford. He thinks when he grew up there were a lot of working farms and those are not here anymore. Agriculture has diminished in town, and he would like to see policy made that could step in to meet what Westford has lost. He thinks there is more to rural character than just fields with no houses. He thinks Westford is interesting because it is an underdeveloped town surrounded by more developed towns and does not really fit in. He would like to see Westford offer more to the region.

Bill discussed with Holly regarding the creation alternate positions for the PC. Ron Rodjenski had confirmed it was acceptable to do so. He feels the Selectboard could discuss this further in Executive Session.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER & PLANNING COORDINATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

The Selectboard reviewed the job description as had the Planning Commission since both parties have a stake in appointing the person in this role. Bill wanted to change the language surrounding "other duties as assigned and agreed to" and wanted to remove the "agreed to" part of that language. Wendy had no changes from how the document was presented. Wendy did not agree with Bill's proposed changes as she feels the board should have a collaborative relationship with the Zoning Administrator. Bill felt that "agreed to" gives people the ability to dig their heels in and disagree. Wendy thought it was more that they would have a discussion

with the Admin and come to an agreement. Casey and Deb agreed with Bill's proposed changes.

Wendy moved to accept the description as amended. Casey seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

DRAFT SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Holly had used VLCT's template and produced a draft policy that fits what Westford wants from a social media presence. Holly went over the new policy with the Selectboard. Holly noted that we have other town organizations that have Facebook pages such as Rec and the Library. She explained how these would be handled differently than the town's page. The town's page will have no two-way communication while the existing pages will not change how they are used. There is a clause in the policy that allows the selectboard to make amendments. Bill thanked Holly for getting the policy together so quickly. Holly recommend appointing herself, Callie, and Maria to be administrators of the Facebook Page. Casey moved to approve the town of Westford Vermont social media and communications policy with Callie, Holly, and Maria as the admins of the page. Deb seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

SET CHARTER AMENDMENT PUBLIC HEARINGS

The town attorney suggested that the first public hearing be held at the 9/26 Selectboard meeting. The second hearing must be held within 10 days of the first. Holly recommends 10/3 for the second meeting. She also recommends holding them each at the same time, 6:15pm. Bill motioned to set the dates as Holly indicated. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE

The capital budget is in need of update. It is partly to make sure that any items that are listed on the capital plan are appropriately adjusted for inflation. It is also to make sure the spreadsheet has high confidence. This does not exist in any other format than the spreadsheet so needs high integrity. Holly is working with Ron to do this. This process will take a few months. Wendy asked what are the hallmarks of integrity? We should be matching back to how the articles say we should be using reserve accounts. How much we think we have save may not actually be how much we have save. To provide an example, Holly explained the founding of the contingency fund.

NBRC GRANTORS REQUESTING UPDATE

Northern Borders tells us the funds are still there, but we need to produce a reason why they should keep our funds by September 30th. Bill did not have a good answer for this. Wendy wanted to keep the money if we could. The amount is nearly \$500,000 and requires economic development, community needs, or housing related to whatever proposal is sent to them. Because the project was initially Maple Shade, anything we send is a revision and would need to contain some of those components. Ron had suggested we use it for a small community system by the store.

Right now, the Red Brick Meeting House (RBMH) is looking to help several residents around the Common with failures or close to failures of their wastewater systems. There is discussion of a small community system on the RBMH property. Wendy thinks this project may hit the mark the original grant was written for. Greg Barrows was present. The RBMH has had plans in place for a number of years, but they are outdated. John Doane talked with the surrounding neighbors about potentially becoming users of a smaller community system. They have also talked to some neighbors about easements to get enough viable land. They had recently talked about bringing this up to the Selectboard soon because it would behoove them to get things in better shape. The RBMH has also been in contact with Stone Environmental about a plan. Bill did not think it would take the entirety of the grant money. If another community

system could be put in by the store it could be economically beneficial. Bill thought it would be nice if the RBMH could own the project and contract with the homeowners. It could be income for the RBMH to keep them self-sustaining. Greg noted they had explored that already. Bill floated assigning the project to WAC when they restart in September. Wendy was worried this would be too late. The board and members of the RBMH discussed the grant and potential project. Holly noted that the "notice to proceed" is for the original project and that if it were changed to the RBMH idea, it would be a serious amendment and potentially not the town owning the project anymore. The town would have to put together a modified project proposal and see if it still fits NBRC's requirements.

Carol Winfield was present. She did not think this was the time and place to produce a new concept that has not been discussed before for town funds. She feels there is a new project that can be investigated, but we cannot just push it out there for private use. She thought the money could be potentially used for 1705. She would not be comfortable with any particular person going to NBRC as a representative to the town with the exception of Holly. NBRC are open to other scopes of work.

Casey was interested in the project, but we are talking about the RBMH. If we look at the soil maps it is very limited there. Right now, it's being used as an operational business which has much less needed capacity than a residence. Nearby buildings have found almost no capacity. Casey thinks if we want to jump into it, we should do some more testing, but he highly doubts there will be enough capacity to help any residents there. John Doane noted the RBMH is in discussion with an engineer about maximizing their capacity. The first step is metering their water use for a year. Bill noted that we had gotten a quote for capacity for 1705 for around \$5,000. He wondered how expensive a capacity exploration for the RBMH property might be. Bill wanted any conversation to NBRC to include the potential for the 1705 project, although there are not any updates on the property.

1705 UPDATE

There was no update. Residents had contacted Wendy asking to hear more, but there is nothing to talk about. The board is being fully transparent, there are truly no updates on the project. Bill noted it is currently at a stalemate. Carol Winfield wondered if there was a possibility of funding from NBRC. Would having another funding source change the status of the project or not? The board does not know at this time but will put this on their list of questions.

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 Letters

We received thank you letters from VCIL, COTS and one regarding the livestock ordinance from the person that was injured by goats on Brookside Rd.

Other

There was correspondence from Rebecca DaVanon and Clay Wilburn. Bill a potential conflict of interest that Clay is calling out that three members of the Selectboard signed the petition for the charter amendment. The town's attorney told us that was not a conflict of interest. Wendy had wanted the Selectboard to see this communication because we have community members who are upset and suffering, we need to take that into account moving forward.

COMMUNICATION

Fairfax Rescue has a subscription service and wanted us to communicate about it. If you subscribe you will never be charged for emergency services. Essex Rescue also has a similar program.

Maria had put together a fact sheet on Elected vs Appointed Town Clerks and the similarities and differences, some responsibilities are statute regardless of the Town Clerk's status as elected vs appointed. Holly had suggested putting this out on FPF, Town Website, etc. while people are invested in the article question. The goal is to be an unbiased comparison.

Holly communicated about the open road crew member positions.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Bill moved that premature knowledge of matters pertaining to property acquisition and evaluation of a public official would put the Town at significant disadvantage. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Bill moved to enter executive session at 8:48pm for matters of property acquisition and evaluation of a public official and invited Holly Delisle and Harmony Cism to attend. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Wendy moved to exit executive session at 9:43p.m. Bill seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

No action was taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:44p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cleary, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

Evan Hazen
Dave Gauthier
Kim Guidry
Ira Allen
Barb Peck
Harmony Cism
Joan Farmer

GUEST LIST

Lori Johnson
Paul Birnholz
Carol Winfield
Ben Bornstein
Dave Lavallee
Ian Gehlbach
Sue Roediger

Will Dunkley
Max Tyler
Evan Hazen
Tina Scanlon
John Doane
Sheila Franz

ADOPTED THIS 12th DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2024.

WESTFORD SELECTBOARD



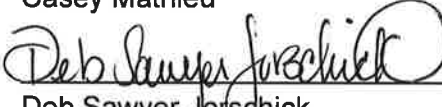
William Cleary, Chair




Patrick Haller



Casey Mathieu



Deb Sawyer Jorschick



Wendy Doane