

Town of West Windsor Selectboard Minutes
Monday, December 11, 2023 @ 6:30pm
Town Hall and Zoom

Present in Person: Matt Kantola, Mark Harley, Mark Higgins, Cathy Archibald, Amy Yates, Mike Spackman, Matt Frederick, Rita Rice, Peter Varkonyi, Jim Curry

Present via Zoom: Colin Eggleton, Chris Dolan, Deb Shearer

1. Call to Order

Matt Kantola called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

None.

3. Announcements/Public Comment

Mark Harley spoke about a Public Safety Community Engagement Session at the Vermont State House on December 18th from 10:00am to 3:30pm. Pre-registration is required, and the event does include lunch. Mark detailed the topics that will be discussed, including public safety concerns, issues with repeat offenders, ideas for policy improvement, and current human services programs.

Jim Curry thanked the town for the Christmas Tree lighting at the Town Hall. He gave specific thanks to the road crew, the fire department, and “maybe a thousand other people” for their good work the last nine years. Jim estimated that this year there were close to 200 people in attendance. Jim noted that “the kids love it, Santa comes in on a fire truck, and it is small-town America. You just can’t get any better than that.”

There was talk about the condition of the trees at the Town Hall, and the potential need for tree care to keep them healthy for the future. Jim also gave thanks to Cathy Archibald for her 29 years of service to the town.

4. Approve Minutes of 11/27, 12/4

Mark Higgins motioned to approve the minutes of November 27th and December 4th. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

5. Town Clerk’s Orders

Matt stated that he had signed the orders today. Cathy mentioned that she hadn’t sent them to the rest of the Selectboard yet, but that she would do so on Tuesday, December 12th.

6. Reading-West Windsor Aging in Place – Funding & AED Request (w/ Rita Rice)

Rita Rice introduced herself as the Reading-West Windsor Aging in Place nurse and gave an overview of the services provided by her organization. Rita also spoke about the Visiting Nurse & Hospice Association, and the money that is annually appropriated to them from West Windsor. Rita asked that the Selectboard consider reducing or eliminating the VNH appropriation in favor of more money being appropriated to Aging in Place considering the disparity in services provided to the community by those two organizations.

Rita also spoke about the community events that are held in the town hall, which often include many seniors, and of the need to provide an Automated External Defibrillator at the Town Hall for medical emergencies that may arise. Matt K mentioned the potential uses and places for an AED on site at the Town Hall. He also mentioned that there is funding available for it.

Chris Dolan recommended a conversation with Windsor Ambulance regarding AEDs and which they would suggest to ensure compatibility with their monitors. Matt K asked Colin Eggleton, as a member of the West Windsor Fast Squad, to take on the task of coordinating the AED research. Colin and Matt F will report back to the Selectboard with further information.

7. DLL Permit: BB&P – 12/15

Peter Varkonyi spoke about the requested catering permit, which is for the Town of Weathersfield's holiday party on December 15th. The event will be held at Ascutney Outdoors and is expected to include 35 to 40 attendees. Matt K made a motion to approve the DLL permit, and Mark Higgins seconded the motion. All were in favor.

8. Discussion: DLL and Event Permit Process Review (w/ Peter Varkonyi)

Peter Varkonyi spoke about how DLL and Event Permits are handled in other towns, which is mostly through a town clerk or town administrator instead of going through the Selectboard for basic permits. There was a discussion about how the Vermont Department of Liquor Control handles licenses, and the different types of licenses and permits required depending on the event.

There was discussion about the event permits and what the process would look like if they were to be approved by the Town Clerk instead of the Selectboard. Mark Higgins spoke about the options available and how information would be communicated. There was no immediate resolution on the topic, but further discussion on the process will occur going forward and this conversation will be revisited.

9. Discussion: Better Connections Grant 2024 (w/ Martha Harrison)

Martha Harrison spoke about the Better Connections Grant, also known as Brownsville: Between the Bridges & Beyond. There was discussion about the best way to move the project forward, and how to organize the potential steering committee. Mark Higgins suggested Martha proceed as the point person for this project, and Martha accepted the role.

10. Highway Foreman's Report

Mike stated the one-ton truck has spent 3 weeks at Ford of Claremont, and the brake lines are still not repaired. Mike mentioned that this may be the last time he uses that vendor and may instead look to use Ted Green Ford in Stockbridge, which was where the truck was purchased.

Mike spoke about a culvert inventory project and some challenges they've had with using the new software the state requires for data entry for the tablets they use for GPS tracking.

Mike stated that there are still some hazardous trees awaiting removal, but they may need an outside contractor to complete the project due to the danger involved with the removal. There was talk about some remaining trees, and a plan to remove some more hazardous trees over the winter.

Mike stated that the highway department purchased a new Husqvarna chainsaw to replace the old Stihl chainsaw. They now have 2 Husqvarna chainsaws.

There was discussion about brining the roads prior to storms. Mike stated they don't have the equipment or enough paved roadways for it to make sense for West Windsor. Mike spoke about the process of brining the roads, which is applying liquid salt to the roadways prior to the storms.

Matt K asked how long the town would have the current one-ton truck. Mike stated that it is scheduled to be replaced in 2025.

11. FEMA Update – Moved to Agenda Item 11

Matt F spoke about the state of the FEMA reimbursements, and that we are waiting for our FEMA Project Manager to send us EEIs for our next project. Matt F noted that FEMA has "obligated" the reimbursement funds to the State of Vermont for the first 2 projects, and that the town has reached out to our Vermont Public Assistance Officer Kim Canarecci for guidance on the process to claim the funds from the state.

12. 2024 Budget Discussion

There were continued budget discussions on the proposed 2024 budget. Deb Shearer spoke about the Zoning budget, and there was talk about potential necessary increases to the Zoning budget for Fiscal Year 2024. The bulk of the discussion was related to the General Fund. There was also some discussion of the Sheddsville Cemetery budget and appropriations.

There were conversations around the timeline for the Selectboard to address possible changes to the Zoning bylaws, and specifically the Short-Term Rental Ordinance. Mark Higgins stated that the Selectboard would be able to begin to look at this topic in January after budget discussions are finished, but that it would be unlikely they would be able to complete the process in time to meet the monetary reimbursement deadline of January 31, 2024, given the need to hold a public hearing and the warning process involved in that.

Matt F asked about the procedure for snow removal on town sidewalks. The highway department doesn't have the proper equipment to clear the snow, and they currently use their heavy equipment to the best of their abilities as time permits.

13. Other Business

The Selectboard will meet again on Monday, December 18th to continue budget discussions.

There will be a celebration at the Grange Hall on Friday, December 29th at noon to celebrate Cathy Archibald. All town employees and members of the public are encouraged to stop by and wish Cathy well in her retirement after 29 years of service to the Town of West Windsor.

Evan Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Environmental Associates will be meeting with Matt K and Matt F on Tuesday, December 19th to investigate potential options to mitigate future flood risks along Mill Brook behind the fire station.

14. Adjourn

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Selectboard unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:14pm.