

**Town of West Windsor
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 12, 2024 @ 6:30pm
Town Hall and Zoom**

Present in Person: Matt Kantola, Mark Harley, Mark Higgins, Amy Yates, Mike Spackman, Matt Frederick, Ted Siegler, Barbara Gerstner, Ken Parrot

Present via Zoom: Deb Shearer, Amy Rusiecki & Rob Mather (VT100), Lauren Dorsey (VT Standard)

1. Call to Order

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

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

Mark Higgins asked to have a discussion relating to Town Meeting planning. This discussion took place during agenda item #17, Other Business.

3. Announcements/Public Comment

None.

4. Approve Minutes of 1/8, 1/10, 1/12, 1/15, 1/16, 1/18, 1/29

Mark Harley motioned to approve the minutes of the Selectboard Meeting on January 8th, as well as the minutes of the Special Selectboard Meetings held on January 10th, 12th, 15th, 16th, 18th, and 29th. Mark Higgins seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

5. Town Clerk's Orders

Matt K mentioned that he signed the Town Clerk's orders. Amy noted that the electrical bill for the Hotel Rd Water Pump was significantly higher than usual. Matt F will follow up with the water operator, P2 Environmental, to see if they've noted anything amiss.

6. Event Permit – VT100 Endurance Race

There was a discussion on the details of the VT100 Endurance Race event, which will take place in July. Amy Rusiecki relayed that the event's operational details would be the same as in previous years, and that VT100 organizers and neighboring property owners had worked together to mitigate the past concerns.

Matt K motioned to approve the event application. Mark Higgins seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

7. Flood Mitigation Study Follow-up

Matt K has spoken with most landowners in the immediate study area, and they are in favor of the project. Leslie Barilli and the management team of the Holiday Inn are interested to see the study results pertaining to any potential erosion to the bank below the guardrail on Hotel Rd.

The Flood Mitigation Study would be paid for using ARPA funds and has a quoted cost of \$26,000.00. There was a discussion relating to the scope of the study, the potential impact on the flood hazard area, and the local permitting required.

Mark Higgins motioned to approve the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$26,000.00 to Fitzgerald Environmental Associates for the Flood Mitigation Study. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and, after a thorough discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Ted Siegler stated that the Conservation Commission would like to expand the scope of the study to also include mitigation along Beaver Brook and Willow Brook. Ted stated that the Conservation Commission has estimated that the additional proposed work would add \$10,000.00 to the study. Ted mentioned the benefit that planting trees has had on certain properties at risk of flood damage. He stated that the goal would be to walk flood-prone areas of Mill Brook, Beaver Brook, and Willow Brook to identify where improvements could be made.

There was a discussion regarding the merits of merging the Conservation Commission's requested additional study with the current Flood Resiliency Study. Ted mentioned that the Conservation Commission would revisit their previous geomorphic assessment to identify the key areas. At this time, the Conservation Commission's proposed study and the approved Flood Mitigation Study will remain as separate items. The Conservation Commission will engage with Evan Fitzgerald to work on a scope and pricing for their expanded study proposal and report back to the Selectboard.

Ted expressed the Conservation Commission's disappointment with the Selectboard's decision to not fully meet the WWCC's funding request for 2024. There was a discussion regarding the reasoning for this decision, the history of the Conservation Fund, and the plan for that money. Mark Higgins noted that one goal of this Selectboard is to have the budget "cleaned up" for a more functional accounting of funds. There will be a more thorough discussion on this topic at a future Selectboard meeting.

8. Discussion: Zoning Bylaw Changes

Deb Shearer spoke about the Zoning bylaw changes proposed by the Planning Commission. There was a lengthy discussion regarding short-term rentals, potential enforcement of regulations, the process of separating out certain items from the proposed bylaw changes into specific ordinances, and the timeline necessary to move this project forward.

Mark Higgins and Deb Shearer will work together on the next steps for this process and report back to the Selectboard.

9. Discussion: VCRD Community Visits Program

In the spring of 2023, representatives from the town met with Vermont Council on Rural Development's Executive Director at the time, Brian Lowe, regarding participating in their 'Community Visits' program, which invites local feedback on potential town initiatives over the course of several community meetings. The West Windsor Selectboard decided to move forward with the program, though because of employee turnover for both organizations, no further communication was made.

There was a discussion at this meeting reaffirming the commitment to VCRD and moving forward with the 'Community Visits' program. Matt K suggested this project may be something for the Planning Commission to spearhead. Matt F will follow up with VCRD and the Planning Commission.

10. Campbell Fund Appointment to Fill Vacancy

Matt K motioned to appoint Betty French to replace her husband, Bob French, who passed away on January 8th, as a Campbell Fund Trustee through the end of Bob's elected term in 2025. Mark Higgins seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

11. MERP Energy Audits – Memorandum of Agreement

Mark Higgins and Mark Harley gave an overview of the MERP Energy Audits, which allows for funding for town buildings to be reviewed and recommendations made on ways to improve energy efficiency. Matt F noted that, while the town applied for audits for three buildings (the town hall, the highway garage, and the library), at this time the state is only offering two audits per applicant due to funding constraints. As a result, the town was awarded energy audits for the town hall and the highway garage. If further funding does become available, the library will be added at that time.

Mark Higgins motioned to approve the Memorandum of Agreement. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

12. LHMP Certificate of Adoption

There was a brief discussion relating to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, which has received initial state approval after their mandatory review.

Mark Higgins motioned for the signing of the Certificate of Adoption for West Windsor's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Matt F will submit the signed CoA to the State of Vermont, allowing the state to formally approve West Windsor's LHMP, which will then be in effect for a period of five years.

13. 2024 Certificate of Highway Mileage

Matt F spoke about the 2024 Certificate of Highway Mileage and the need to address the removal of the last approximately 750 feet of Jewett Rd from the highway maps and properly recognize that section as a private road. The Town of West Windsor and Happy Canyon Landowner's Association have a signed agreement in place allowing highway department vehicles to utilize the end of Jewett Rd as a turnaround in exchange for snow removal services along that section of road.

Matt F will get the proper paperwork together to complete this discontinuance, and file that with the Certificate of Highway Mileage submission.

14. Highway Foreman's Report

Mike Spackman noted that the highway department has been dealing with downed trees around town again. Mike noted that, statewide, the grant relating to the planned tree removal on Cross Rd has been put on hold.

Mike proposed that the town sign a contract with G. Stone Motors in Middlebury for an F-600 when replacing the current F-550. There was a discussion about the details on the potential new truck, trade-in values for the current truck, and that the estimated delivery time for the new truck would be September of 2024.

Matt K motioned to approve the purchase of a 2024 Ford F-600 for \$72,235.00 from G. Stone Motors and the purchase of the corresponding dump body from Viking Cives for \$71,300.00, for a grand total of \$143,535.00. The current F-550 will either be sold to a private buyer or used as a trade-in for the new truck. Mark Higgins seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Mike spoke about the need to move forward with the plan for the body for the incoming 2026 10-wheeler due to increasing costs and the timeframe to receive it. Mike noted that an order placed now for the truck body would not be available for delivery until the spring of 2026, while delivery of the truck itself should only take around 9 months. No money would be exchanged until the body is ready, but this will allow us to “save a slot” and lock in the price.

Matt Kantola motioned to approve the purchase of the body for the 2026 10-wheeler for \$99,850.00 from Viking Cives. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Mike spoke about the need to post seasonal weight limit signs on town roads, preventing heavier vehicles from potentially damaging soft roads. He stated that the highway department would like to post all town roads, both paved and unpaved, effective immediately and remaining in place until after mud season. This would not affect Route 44, as that is a state road, but will help to maintain the integrity of all town roads. Specific permission for vehicles weighing in excess of the posted limit traveling on posted roads may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the highway foreman. Road postings automatically expire on May 15th and may be rescinded earlier if the conditions allow for it.

Mark Higgins motioned to approve posting the roads as proposed by Mike Spackman. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Mike noted that multiple weekends in a row there have been signs stolen, including road signs, regulatory signs, and warning signs. This has been an ongoing issue, resulting in significant costs to the town for replacement signage. Mike will put together a proposal for Selectboard review for cloud-based cameras to record areas where this has happened frequently, and the Windsor Police Department is notified each time another sign is stolen.

The highway department has begun hauling gravel while the roads are frozen, and spot grading when roads are soft enough to fix some of the worst of the existing ruts.

15. FEMA Update

Matt F spoke about the current state of FEMA projects. One obstacle remaining is documentation relating to the maintenance of the dry hydrants along Mill Brook. There are four fire hydrants connecting to the brook, but each of the fill pipes in the brook is now buried under a large accumulation of silt from the July floods. To receive FEMA reimbursements for the necessary repairs, there would need to have been an agreement in place prior to the flooding stating that the town would be responsible for the upkeep of those hydrants. Matt F and Erik Boedtger are working with our FEMA reps to find a solution, if one exists, to this issue.

16. Review January Windsor PD Log

There was a brief discussion of the Windsor PD log for January. There was consensus that the items listed are “routine”.

17. Other Business

Matt K spoke about the ARPA budget and plans for the remaining funds. There will be an item on the agenda for the next Selectboard meeting on this topic. All ARPA funds must be obligated by the end of 2024, and all projects using ARPA funds must be completed by the end of 2026. Any remaining funds at that time are forfeited.

There was a discussion on planning for the 2024 Town Meeting. Mike Spackman mentioned that West Windsor used to hold a “Pre-Town Meeting”, which was a practice run of the official town meeting to work out any issues and make sure all preparations were in place.

It was decided that West Windsor will host a “Pre-Town Meeting” this year, to be held on Saturday, March 2nd at 10:30am at Story Memorial Hall. No articles will be read in full, and no voting will take place. As in previous years, the goal for this event will be a dry run to help ensure a smooth Town Meeting. Anyone interested in attending is highly encouraged to help make sure we’re ready for the actual event. Matt F will make a post to Front Porch Forum and the Town Website to let residents know of this event in advance.

18. Adjourn

There was a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm. The motion passed on a vote of 2-1.