

Town of West Windsor

Selectboard Meeting

Monday, January 23, 2023

DRAFT Minutes

Present in Person: Peter Varkonyi, Chris Dolan, Mike Spackman, Mark Higgins, Brett Myers, Matt Kantola, Cathy Archibald

Present via Zoom: Martha Harrison, Jonathan Nichols, Deb Shearer, Michael C. Mark Harley

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Matt called the meeting to order at 6:31pm

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

None

3. Announcements/Public Comment

None

4. Town Clerk's Orders

Electric bills and stamps, no questions from board members.

5. Sign Town Meeting Warning

Matt signed the town meeting warning.

6. Sign Agreement with Accounting Firm

Matt signed the agreement and noted that the fees were an estimate because we pay on a per-service basis.

7. Appointment of Officers (Cathy A)

Conservation: Chris Nesbit ('26)

Senior Solutions Polly Oullette

Development Review Board Bruce Boedtke, Jane Hoisington ('25)

Emergency Management: Mike Spackman

Green-Up Coordinator Ted Siegler

Library Trustees: Dick Beatty, Colin McKaig ('25)

Regional Planning Commission: Lauren Stevens, Leah Montalbano

Southern Windsor County Waste Management District: Vacant

Transportation Advisory: Vacant

Assistant Zoning Administrator: Vacant

Fence Viewers: Vacant

Surveyor of Wood: Vacant

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission: Vacant

Matt motioned to appoint all the people that Cathy listed. Mark seconded and the motion passed with all in favor.

8. Highway Foreman's Report

Mike reported that the town's insurance will pay \$25,550 to replace the salt shed roof, which was damaged during a December windstorm. He will begin the process of getting quotes for the replacement.

9. Fine for Cowshed Trail Damage

A resident was issued a fine of \$526 by the town for removing gravel from Cowshed Trail for personal use. The resident submitted a payment of \$400 along with a letter of apology. Matt asked the Selectboard members how they wanted to go forward on the matter. Mark suggested that there were problems with allowing people to choose their own fees. The penalty's purpose, he noted, was twofold: a punitive response to a second offense as well as a measurement of the work and supplies that it took the town to fix the damage. He said that the next time it happens he will call the police because it is theft of service to remove material from a town highway. Brett said that she was in favor of moving on, but that next time there should be a substantial fine. She also worried about what would happen next time if the Selectboard were to set a precedent for allowing residents to alter their fine amounts.

Matt made a motion to accept the amount submitted by the resident with the caveat that the Selectboard expects the balance of the full amount to be paid by the end of February. Mark seconded the motion; the motion carried.

10. Update on Better Connections Grant Application

Martha reported on a recent meeting with representatives from the Agency of Transportation and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to discuss West Windsor's application for a Better Connections grant. The town was invited to submit a full proposal for the grant, which is fairly extensive and is Due by February 17. The purpose of the project is to create and action plan for improving alternative forms of transportation in Brownsville, as well as creating more robust linkages between the village and the mountain area. The overall goal would be to make the village more accessible, inviting, and user-friendly and increase bicycle and pedestrian safety. Martha asked the Selectboard whether they wanted to continue with the application process.

Deb noted that with all of the changes that have occurred on the mountain, it would be good to have a study done that looks at those changes.

Matt made a motion that the town engage in the process. Mark seconded. The motion passed with all in favor.

Matt suggested hiring the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission to do the project management.

11. Jewett Road Discontinuance

Matt Moved the Jewett Road discussion to the next agenda item. He explained that the town had been maintaining a section of private road there, largely because the plows and graders needed a place to turn around. Over time an assumption arose that the road section was town property, however because it is not in fact town property, it needs to be formally discontinued.

12. Certificate of Highway Mileage

Chris noted that the Certificate of Highway mileage is due on February 10, and the discontinuance process for Jewett Road would not be complete by then, so she suggested that the Selectboard sign the certificate with no changes for this year, and then proceed with the discontinuance, noting it on next year's certificate.

Matt motioned to sign the Certificate of Highway Mileage with no changes. Brett seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Mark said that there is an agreement with the Happy Canyon Landowner's Association that will give the town license to use the private section of the road as a turnaround. The agreement is awaiting notarization.

13. Jansen-Largay Wedding Application

The Selectboard considered an event application for a 150-person June wedding at Ascutney Outdoors.

Matt motioned to accept the application, the motion was seconded and the application was approved.

Update on Administrative Assistant Search

Chris explained that the search for a part-time administrative assistant has been tabled for now. The position was created last August to ensure that the town's basic administrative tasks (meeting agendas, minutes, website updates, and Zoom set-up) would continue without interruption until a Town Administrator was hired. With the TA position filled in mid-December, the nature of the town's part-time needs is unclear, so the Selectboard has decided to wait until the position description is more clear.

14. Zoom Equipment Purchase Decision

In an effort to resolve persistent audio issues with Zoom meetings based at the Town Hall, Matt broke down the line-item costs of purchasing an OWL Labs camera-audio system:

- \$1,049 for the OWL device itself (camera and speaker/microphone)
- \$249 for an expansion microphone
- \$149 for a tripod
- \$29 for a 16' extension cable
- Total Purchase cost: **\$1,476**

Matt said that he wants to make the purchase with ARPA money, noting that it clearly falls within the ARPA guidelines and it is the Selectboard's decision as to how to spend the ARPA money.

Mark suggested making the purchase out of reserve funds and then asking the ARPA committee to consider reimbursing for it. He said that it would be bad form to use ARPA money before the committee has made a recommendation. Brett agreed, noting the amount of time the ARPA committee has spent on their work. Matt agreed, saying that he would like the committee's blessing on the purchase and wants to be respectful in requesting it.

Matt motioned to purchase the OWL system out of the general fund. The motion was seconded and passed with all in favor.

15. Butcher and Pantry Event Preliminary Discussion

Peter Varkonyi said that the Brownsville Butcher and Pantry would like to hold a music and food festival at the "polo field" site adjacent to Ascutney Outdoors. The tentative date is September 30. There would be ticketed admission, food vendors, and live bluegrass music. The event would benefit the Vermont Fresh Network and Farm to Plate. The Selectboard asked about numbers, and Peter said he estimated about a thousand participants.

16. Town Hall Phone Problems

In response to persistent problems with the Town Hall phone system dropping calls and losing dial tones, Mark obtained a quote from VC3 to manage our phone system. Chris noted that Key Communications has offered to do a walkthrough analysis of our system to troubleshoot and provide an overview of what we're working with. The Selectboard decided to start with the Key walkthrough and go from there. There was discussion of charging for parking to try to keep car numbers down.

17. Weathersfield Transfer Station

There was a significant increase in West Windsor's contribution to the Weathersfield Transfer Station this year. Brett expressed concern about a lack of transparency on the part of Weathersfield. Mark noted that revenue has been flat, but costs keep increasing; West Windsor residents are paying more to access the transfer station. We do not currently have a signed contract with Weathersfield.

Mark asked what the \$13k is buying us. We don't necessarily need to be underwriting as an equal partner, we just need our residents to have access to the transfer station at either a price that is the same as the Weathersfield resident or at some out-of-town rate. We should be working for access at a flat fee.

Matt said that he wants to get something signed by the end of February.

18. VT Council on Rural Development Community Visit Program

Chris said that she spoke with a representative from the state Council on Rural Development (CRD) about their Community Visits Program. At no cost to the town, the CRD would facilitate some community discussions to narrow two or three specific goals related to long-term town planning. Then, the CRD would link the town with resources to achieve those goals. There is also some other funding available this year for village revitalization,

so that even though the Community Visits program is very competitive, working with the CRD may lead to other opportunities.

Matt suggested that we follow up with the CRD and express interest in the program.

19. Low-Income Water Assistance Program Certification

Chris said that she received a call from the state asking if the town would be willing to participate in a federally-funded program called the Low Income Water Assistance Program (LIWAP). The program provides one-time assistance for qualifying households whose water or sewer bills are in arrears. The town would simply need to sign a form agreeing to accept payment from the program on behalf of any customers who qualify. The Selectboard decided to participate in the program and Matt signed the relevant forms.

20. Other Business

Mark Higgins noted that Vermont statutes list a fine up to \$100 plus the actual cost of repairing the damage for anyone who “injures” a state highway by removing or digging through the gravel layer.

Mark Harley noted that with the passage of H. 42, municipalities will be allowed to make short-term, pandemic-safe changes to town meeting. He asked in the longer term if there was any way to keep Town Meeting as we have it, but make it accessible to people who cannot attend in person for various reasons, including immobility or the inability to take time off work.

Matt mentioned returning to the Australian ballot. Mark Harley pointed out that the bills introduced at Town Meeting can’t be changed in any substantive way, so that by the time of the meeting day, everyone knows what the issues are and what needs to be voted on. He asked whether, if there was Australian ballot voting, but still a full meeting for everyone to talk about issues, that might be something feasible.

Matt concurred that some people simply can’t get off work on meeting day.

21. Approve Minutes of January 9 Meeting

Brett made a motion to approve the January 9 minutes. The motion was seconded and carried with all in favor.

22. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:18pm

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Dolan