

West Windsor Selectboard
Draft Minutes
May 26, 2020

Present on conference call: Win Johnson, Brett Myers, Matt Kantola, Martha Harrison, Mike Spackman, Nancy Gaynor, Deb Shearer, Cathy Archibald, Erik Schutz, Ken Parrot, Natalie Starr

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Win Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.
- 2) Changes or additions to the agenda – Under item #4, parking lot usage and Town Hall usage; and under “Other Business,” the Farnsworth survey of Sheddsville Cemetery burial plots. Brett asked about the Town Hall garden. Matt said he got most of the shrubs pulled out before he broke the 4-wheel drive on his tractor, but he will finish the rest manually this week. Brett said there are weeds and shrubs growing up around the big trees in front of the Town Hall; the ones that have lights on them. Matt said he will take care of that too.
- 3) Announcements/Public Comment – Matt said the port-a-potty has been in the town forest parking lot for a week; it’s out of view and so far there’s no smell.
- 4) Updates – Emergency Management Coordinator: Mike had nothing to report. Health Officer: Nancy said it’s been quiet. Work site health & safety practices: Win said he thinks we’re going to have limited access to the Town Hall, by appointment only, with masks required, for quite a while. Cathy will get some disposable masks for people who don’t have one. Win said, thanks to Erik Boedtke, we have a supply of hand sanitizer but we need more disinfectant before we have any small meetings, so the meeting host can wipe down surfaces, door knobs, etc. Brett said she got some disinfectant at Market Basket. There was discussion about thermometers and Mike said, according to CDC guidelines, we have to have one. Mike said he will check the one he got for accuracy. If it seems accurate, the Selectboard agreed that Mike should purchase another one for the Town Hall. There was discussion about meetings taking place outside when possible, and indoor meetings being limited to six people upstairs or four people downstairs, with the windows open. Matt said that’s probably fine if everyone is washing their hands, wearing a mask and staying six feet apart. Win said it’s likely that we’ll continue the status quo at least through the end of the year. Parking lot usage analysis: Win said Ascutney Outdoors (AO) has been keeping track of the vehicles parked in the main lot and the town forest lot. The highest number has been 15 and most are from Vermont or New Hampshire, although some are from Massachusetts and there are a few from other places. Win said these numbers don’t concern him, but he thinks it’s useful information. Matt said he doesn’t think it’s necessary to keep track since our trails are underutilized, but Brett said that could change.
- 5) Town Clerk’s orders – Win said the orders are in the public folder and asked Matt and Brett to contact him or Cathy if they have any questions.
- 6) ECFiber update – Ken said ECFiber has constructed 1,100 miles of fiber and has about 4,500 connected customers. The “take rate” is about 4.2 customers/mile, which is lower than the projected take rate of 6 customers/mile. As a result, monthly fees increased somewhat. Ken said, financially, ECFiber is doing okay but needs to increase the take rate. At the last ECFiber Governing Board meeting, the Board voted to accept four new towns into the organization: Windsor, Fairlee, West Fairlee and Corinth. Five additional towns have also asked to join the organization. Ken said West Windsor is currently looking for another delegate and could actually have two more delegates for a total of three. Win asked why the

take rate is lower than projected. Ken said it can be difficult to get people to switch from their current service provider, especially if there are up-front costs (e.g. new conduit). Most current customers appreciate the advantages of fiber-optic service but ECFiber and Valley Net are going to have to develop some promotions to reach beyond the technology geeks. Ken said, other than Hartford and the new towns, all member towns are supposed to be built out by this winter, so the organization can shift its attention from building the network to attracting new customers. Win said he's been happy with ECFiber until recently when he began experiencing phone service problems. Ken said he has the same problem and has discussed it with the Governing Board. An RFP for a new phone service provider is going out to at least a dozen vendors on Friday, but a solution may not be in place until September or October. Ken said because of the Covid-19 situation, and the increased awareness of the importance of broadband service, there are a number of federal grants available to improve rural connectivity. However, if a past recipient of federal grant funds claims a specific service area, no one else can get grant funds to provide service in that area. Ken said VTel claims about 85% of Vermont as its service area even though it's service is slow or unavailable in towns like West Windsor. Ken said our legislators need to know that the regulations giving one company a monopoly on grants need to be changed. Ken encouraged anyone who is having problems with their ECFiber phone service to contact them.

- 7) ECFiber representative: accept resignation & consider appointment – Win noted that Bob Joyal has resigned and asked Martha to draft a note thanking him for his service. Three people have expressed interest in filling the vacancy: Justin Burrows, Alessandro Iuppa, and Steve Carihfield. Win suggested inviting the interested parties to attend the next ECFiber Governing Board meeting, and asking them to review the organization's financial information and talk with Ken. Ken agreed to talk with the candidates and give them information about the organization and the next meeting.
- 8) Highway Foreman's report – Mike said the speed cart has been on the Brownsville-Hartland Road since Friday. The salt shed has been moved and the salt will be moved sometime this week. LE Environmental has installed and sampled the monitoring wells and expects lab results around June 5th. The highway crew has been cleaning out ditches and culverts and replaced a culvert today on the access road to sewer pump station #1. Natalie asked about the speed cart's recording capabilities. Mike said it can record but we have not started using that feature yet. Matt asked about the Churchill Road project. Mike said he wants to do some road work first, but they'll probably get back to that project in the next week or two. Once it's stumped, ditched and re-seeded, it's done.
- 9) Update on Burke property project – Win said the slopes have been seeded and hopefully grass will start growing soon. There have been some negative comments about the appearance of the salt shed. Mike said when the sand pile is in place, the salt shed will be less visible. In the long run, Win said, we might want to do some work on the salt shed roof.
- 10) Stream Alteration Permit for Harrington Rd project – Martha said Shannon Harrington signed the application as the abutting property owner, but someone needs to sign on behalf of the town. **Brett moved to authorize Martha to sign the stream alteration permit application. Matt seconded the motion.** Win asked when the contractor plans to begin work. Martha said he has to attach the plans and submit the application to Scott Jensen for approval. Then he has to get a permit from the Army Corps, which will probably take at least a month because trees are being removed. Mike said Green Mountain Power has not seen any

plans yet either. **Win called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.** Mike said Crown Point can't start until July 1st anyway.

- 11) Report on Interpretive Trail at the Mountain – Win said he heard from Glenn about a site visit with the National Park Service and two consultants to further discuss an interpretive trail on town property on the mountain, so he attended. Win said the location of the trail has changed from down near the hotel to up above the Ascutney Outdoors Center, which makes the slope more of a challenge. Win noted that a professional team has been hired to develop the plans and interpretive materials, which will be presented to the Selectboard before the project is implemented. Natalie said the trail will provide another way for people to enjoy the area and learn about its natural history and ecology. Win said it will also provide an opportunity to introduce the history of the native peoples, which we heard about when there was a proposal to change the name of the mountain. Martha asked if the trail will be accessible for the visually impaired. Natalie said it's not going to be ADA compliant, but she will pass along Martha's question. Win said he is hoping that the lower portion of the trail, while not wheelchair accessible, can be wider and more welcoming. Deb said there is a distinction between the terms "ADA accessible" and "ADA trail," and asked if the trail could meet the criteria for the latter to make it as accessible as possible. Win said we can ask that question. Natalie said they're trying to proceed without having to amend their Act 250 permit. Win said, according to Jim Lyall, we can do some trail widening without jeopardizing the Act 250 permit. Natalie said we can widen it but we can't move it.
- 12) Consider amendment to Agreement with Ascutney Outdoors (AO) – Win said the interpretive trail project and the work the ATA is doing on the connector trail through Mile Long Field led him to propose an amendment to the agreement with AO. The amendment calls for AO to update the Town on plans for major projects every six months. Matt said he talked about it with Erik and Jim today and they're fine with it. Win said he talked about the amendment with Ted Siegler and Ted supports it as well. Win said Glenn is going to submit a report on projects planned between now and September. Erik said he thought Jim was communicating with AO about the ATA's work. Win said he probably was; this is just a process amendment to make sure the Selectboard is up to speed on what's planned. Erik said ATA plans to post agendas and minutes on their website when it's up and running. **Brett moved to approve the amendment to the agreement with Ascutney Outdoors. Matt seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- 13) Sewer and Water projects – Water: Martha said when the contractor was digging, he came across three conduits, two with electric power and one with telecommunications, and they're too close to the new water lines. Green Mountain Power wants the water lines to be above the conduits with a concrete pad in between so that needs to be reconfigured and GMP will be on-site to make sure the work meets their requirements. Win said what we've done is an improvement over what was existing. Martha said they may be closer now than they were before; the water lines and the conduit are only a few inches apart and it's an electrocution risk. Win asked if it will require a lot of re-work. Martha said yes, a fair amount; they haven't provided a time or price estimate yet. Win asked if A+E should have discovered this issue ahead of time. Martha said A+E contacted GMP during the design phase and, according to Jeff, GMP said "it's a mess up there," but apparently they didn't pursue it any further. Win asked if we're stuck or if we have an argument. Martha said we have to comply with the electrical requirements; it has to be up to code. Matt agreed and said once you expose something, you have to fix it. Brett asked if GMP has any responsibility for brushing it off

since there are going to be added costs. Martha said, at the site visit on Friday, Jeff asked Dan Austin if GMP would be willing to do any cost sharing and Dan said they wouldn't charge for his time and they wouldn't charge to have someone onsite while the work is being done, but they wouldn't share the cost of excavation or materials. Matt asked if GMP owns the line. Martha said GMP does own some lines up there and she thinks they do own that particular line. There was discussion about whether the water lines would be moved or the power and telecomm lines would be moved. Martha said the water lines are going to be moved so they're above the electric lines; right now they're below. Win said if we move the water lines up, all the grades are going to be off. Martha said A+E is going to have to figure that out. Win asked Matt to go up and take a look at it. Matt said it sounds like there should have been a time out before they ran the new water lines. Martha said with our highway projects, if we know there's going to be an issue, the Town usually contacts GMP way in advance. Martha said if GMP told me something was a mess, I would have tried to get more information. Brett asked about the cost. Martha said she hasn't heard any numbers yet. There was discussion about whether the contractor or the engineer is responsible. Win asked Martha to include Matt if there is another site visit or more discussion about this. Matt agreed to participate but said the Town is paying A+E to manage the project for us. Sewer: Martha said Jeff Lewis met with Mike Avery on Friday and will send us a summary of their discussion. While Dan was onsite, Ben asked him to look at the sag area by the Bennington building so we don't have any surprises when that excavation work is done. Dan is going to have a crew come and trace the lines this week. A+E has asked Daniels to bid on the sag, but it would be nice to get a couple more bids as well. A+E suggested Willey and All Seasons and asked if there are other local contractors the Town would like to get bids from. Matt suggested Miller Construction. Win agreed.

- 14) Solar update – Martha said Green Mountain Power is going to add the accounts for pump station #1 and the pump stations at the Town Hall and Fire Station to our contract starting in mid-June, which will take some pressure off the school, which has way too many solar credits. Martha said she also contacted VLCT and asked if there are other towns or schools in this situation and if we might lobby GMP to extend the amount of time customers have to use their credits. Karen Horn said she would mention it to the House Energy Committee.
- 15) Other Business – Sheddsville Cemetery survey: Win asked Brett and Matt if they have any questions. Basically, Win said, it just surveys some additional burial sites. Matt asked if the stonewall is on hold for a while. Win said it's on hold for a year or two so he thinks the Selectboard should consider that when setting the tax rate this year. Brett said that makes sense. Win asked Martha to make sure it's okay to defer an approved expense when setting the tax rate. Matt said we might be able to have a Selectboard meeting upstairs in the Town Hall if we're far apart. Win said we might want to consider that for the tax rate discussion.
- 16) Approve Minutes – **Brett moved to approve the minutes of May 11th. Matt seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- 17) Adjourn – **Brett moved to adjourn at 8:16 PM. Matt seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison