

**Town of West Windsor
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 23, 2024 @ 6:30pm
Town Hall and Zoom**

Present in Person: Mark Higgins, Mark Harley, John Brodie, Amy Yates, Mike Spackman, Deb Shearer, Matt Frederick, Jonathan Nichols (AO), Jill Appel

Present via Zoom: Lauren Dorsey (Vermont Standard), Erin Hill, Sabrina Siegel (Trail Break), Steve Wood (AO), Jason Rickles (NNENSMTB), Erik Boedtker

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Mark Higgins called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2. Changes or Additions to Agenda

Mark Harley stated that he has two GIS projects to be discussed under Other Business.

3. Announcements/Public Comment

None.

4. Approve Minutes of 9/9

John Brodie motioned to approve the minutes of the September 9th Selectboard meeting. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

5. Town Clerk's Report

Amy presented various orders for Selectboard signatures and noted that John Mudgett has delivered the final 2023 financial statements. Amy noted that tax payments are continuing to arrive and that all pending deed recordings have been completed.

General Election ballots will be mailed by the Vermont Secretary of State's office between September 24th and October 1st. Voters may return their ballots early via mail, though the Town Clerk encourages hand delivery of early votes to ensure that all ballots are received prior to the election. To be counted, all mailed ballots must be received by the Town Clerk not later than November 5th.

Voters planning to hand-deliver their ballots to the Town Clerk may do so during business hours or by placing their ballots in the locked box at the entrance to the Town Offices. Those voting in person on Election Day, November 5th, should bring the ballots mailed to them when they go to

their polling location. Voters without their mailed ballot will be required to sign an affidavit swearing they have not utilized their mail-in ballot.

For more information on early and absentee voting or to find out how to register to vote, please visit the [Vermont Secretary of State's webpage](#). To check on your voter registration or ballot status, please follow [this link](#).

6. DLL Permit Request – Trail Break (10/19)

There was a discussion of the DLL permit request by TRAIL BREAK taps + tacos to serve alcohol while catering an approved private wedding celebration at Ascutney Outdoors on October 19th, including the number of guests expected and the layout for catering and serving.

Mark Harley motioned to approve the DLL permit for TRAIL BREAK taps + tacos at Ascutney Outdoors on Saturday, October 19th. John Brodie seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

7. Event App – NNEHSMTB Race @ Ascutney Outdoors (10/16)

Event organizer Jason Rickles spoke about the details of the Northern New England High School Mountain Bike race planned for Wednesday, October 16th at Ascutney Outdoors and nearby trails. Jason noted that the NNEHSMTB series is a 29-team league of northern New England high schools competing in mountain bike races in various locations, including on Mount Ascutney, for the last several years.

There was a discussion of the event details, including the race schedule, course map, and emergency signoffs.

John Brodie motioned to approve the event application for the NNEHSMTB race at Ascutney Outdoors and nearby trails on Wednesday, October 16th. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

8. Discussion: ARPA Funds

Mark Higgins gave an overview of the ARPA Fund, which currently has approximately \$114,000.00 remaining, and reiterated that the Selectboard is focused on adhering to the spirit of the ARPA Committee's recommendations regarding the priority use of these funds.

Ascutney Outdoors board member Steve Wood spoke about AO's request for \$27,660.00 from the ARPA Fund to pay for the first phase of installation of electricity to the "Polo Field" at Ascutney Outdoors, which includes the cost of bringing power from the nearby utility poles to the field. Steve noted that Ascutney Outdoors would fundraise to pay for phase two of the project, which would include underground conduits to various locations of the Polo Field.

There was a discussion of the details of this request, including a breakdown of the quote and the project timeline, as well as the increased use of these Town lands for public events.

Mark Higgins noted that the Selectboard is still in the early stages of soliciting ideas for the remaining ARPA funds, and that a decision on the Ascutney Outdoors request will be made at a future meeting once more information is available regarding other expected projects.

West Windsor Planning Commission member Jill Appel spoke about the Planning Commission's request for ARPA funds to cover a study on affordable housing options in West Windsor, such as "cottage clusters" or "pocket neighborhoods." There was a discussion on the housing situation in West Windsor, with reference to a [Housing Snapshot](#) compiled by the State of Vermont showing housing breakdowns for communities around the state.

There was further discussion on the details of the request, including the need to complete a Request for Proposal process and to procure contractor quotes before this project can be considered for ARPA funding. Mark Higgins noted that he agrees with the Planning Commission that affordable housing should be a priority for West Windsor and asked that they return to the Selectboard with quotes for the housing study.

Erik Boedtke spoke about the current radio setup for the Highway Department, which utilizes a repeater located on private property that allows the crew to remain in contact in most areas of town, though the system is susceptible to power outages and dead zones. Erik noted that the Highway Department is not sure on the exact age of this repeater, but it is assumed to be at least 25 years old, and is at risk of failing, which would leave the department without radio communications.

Erik stated that the Highway Department is currently demoing a digital system, which would have a repeater on top of Mount Ascutney, where there is a generator backup for power outages. The repeater for this digital system is linked to other repeaters around New England, which would not only allow for better communication within town borders, but within the region at large.

There was a discussion on the details of switching to the digital radio system, including lease agreements, the number of radios required for the Highway Department, the costs for the current radio system, and positive feedback garnered from other local municipalities that have tried the new system.

Mark Harley motioned to approve the expenditure of \$4,628.00 from the ARPA Fund for the installation of, and the first year of service for, a new digital radio system for the Highway Department, and authorization for Mike Spackman, in his capacity as Highway Foreman, to execute the rental agreement with Central Vermont Communications, Inc. John Brodie seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

9. Fiscal Year Change Notice Review

There was a review of the Fiscal Year Change Notice drafted by Mark Higgins. This letter will be sent to the residents of West Windsor to help inform them on the pros and cons of the proposed fiscal year change.

There was a discussion on the proposed change, including the possibility of splitting tax bills into six-month payments to reduce the impact of an 18-month transition budget and the governmental process required to make the transition.

There will be a Special Town Meeting at 10:00am on Saturday, November 16th to vote on the proposal to change the Town's budget year from the current calendar year model to the more common fiscal year of July 1st to June 30th. Official notice for the Special Town Meeting will appear in the October 10th issue of the Vermont Standard.

10. STR Ordinance Review

There was a full review of the proposed Short-Term Rental Ordinance, with a discussion on all edits and changes from the previous iteration.

Mark Higgins motioned to approve the Short-Term Rental Ordinance as drafted, to become effective on May 1st, 2025. Mark Harley seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

11. Personnel Policy Review

This item will be tabled until the October 28th Selectboard meeting.

12. MERP Grant Update

Town Administrator Matt Frederick stated that the MERP Energy Audit has been completed on the Highway Garage and the Town Hall. There was a discussion on the audit process and praise for Alyssa Gianotti, the engineer from GDS Associates who conducted the audits, for her thoroughness and knowledge. Matt noted that the highest priority issues from the previous Town Hall energy audit in 2010 have been addressed, with outdated lighting now being the largest energy inefficiency.

Matt will work with Martha Harrison of Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) on submitting the associated MERP implementation grant based on the findings of the energy audits. The grant applications will be scored based on highest energy burdens, so West Windsor may not qualify for the initial implementation funding, though having the completed audits should allow for future funding.

13. Highway Foreman's Report

Mike Spackman stated that there is some rot on a beam on the south side deck of Best Bridge. The bridge will be temporarily closed during the repair, which will likely take one day. Mike noted that there is no immediate danger to the public in the interim, and that the bridge remains structurally sound.

The Highway Department is continuing their fall scraping of dirt roads to remove washboards, and the second round of roadside mowing is nearly complete.

Culvert repairs and replacements are continuing, with the goal of having all necessary culverts addressed before winter.

14. Blood Hill Tower Update

Mark Harley stated that the necessary repairs to the Blood Hill Tower site have been completed, and the site is now properly secured. This item is now considered resolved.

15. Other Business

Mark Harley spoke about two GIS projects, one of which is a town parcel map, and the other is a trail map of Mount Ascutney, which would be beneficial for public safety and rescue efforts. The Town of West Windsor previously utilized Avitar Associates for GIS mapping, though the contract was not renewed at the end of 2023.

There was a brief discussion on this topic, and Mark stated that he will meet with Zoning Administrator Deb Shearer and Lister Clerk Deb Spackman to discuss the parcel mapping project and put together a spec for a new mapping service.

Natalie Starr has been working with MARC regarding GIS trail maps. There was a brief discussion regarding where these data sets are originated, including from bike races and hikers.

16. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The next Selectboard meetings will be a Special Selectboard Meeting on October 21st and a regular Selectboard meeting on October 28th. There will be no regular Selectboard meeting on October 14th due to Indigenous Peoples' Day.

As part of the Special Selectboard Meeting on October 21st, there will be public hearings for amendments to the Land Use & Development Regulations and Flood Hazard Area & River Corridor Bylaws.

17. Adjourn

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Selectboard unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:21pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Frederick
Town Administrator