

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 23, 2025

Draft

Members Present: David Babbott-Klein, Chach Curtis, Fred Messer, Brian Shupe, Larissa Ursprung

Staff Present: York Haverkamp, Town Administrator; Steve Lewis, Town Treasurer

Others Present: Curt Lindberg (Conservation Commission)

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Brian Shupe. The meeting was held in person at the Waitsfield Town Office and remotely via Zoom.

1. Review agenda for addition, removal, or adjustment of any items per 1 VSA 312(d)(3)(A).

A Selectboard Roundtable and Town Administrator's report were added, and the Consent Agenda was modified.

2. Public Forum.

Nobody requested time to speak.

II. Regular Business

1. Conservation Commission (CC)

Fairgrounds Property – Mr. Shupe provided some background on the donation of this 112-acre parcel to the Town, and the donating landowner's intent that was expressed as part of that donation. This intent included the use of the property's forest and floodplain being managed for ecological well-being, and the fairgrounds portion of the property to be used for community purposes, which have been discussed as potentially including housing or wastewater disposal. The Conservation Commission has begun discussing ongoing management of the parcel. Mr. Shupe explained that Hadley Gaylord has historically used the fairgrounds portion of the parcel for grazing cattle, and would like to continue to do so, but the Town has expressed that continuation of this use will require that the cattle be fenced so as to prevent their access to the stream adjacent to the grazing area.

Mr. Lindberg outlined that ecological assessments and trail evaluations have been completed for the CC, and a long-term management plan is being developed, including trail access connectivity to the adjacent Wu Ledges Forest. The CC is looking for clarity regarding the inclusion of the fairgrounds portion of the parcel in the management plan, particularly the use for grazing and efforts to control invasive species, considering that the ultimate use of that section may be for some type of development. Access to a trail network that joins the Wu Ledges trails may be possible through the pasture area, with parking potentially available at the adjacent church property. Mr. Lindberg pointed out that the pasture area itself is a possible location for parking.

Public discussion will be an important aspect of planning for the property, and it was discussed how to address the fairgrounds portion in those conversations. There is a grant opportunity for funding fencing to keep the cattle from the stream, which would be provided with a stipulation that the area be used for grazing for a minimum of ten years. The fencing would allow for

continued use by Hadley Gaylord for this purpose and provide the means for the Town to keep the cattle from the waterway as required, but would also preclude any type of development or other use of that portion of the parcel for those ten years. It was discussed that there may be other strategies for funding the fencing that would not come with this time restriction. It was agreed to include discussion of this topic in the public engagement process, but to be specific in the RFP to be published for consultants' proposals for management plan development about the fairgrounds section. The RFP should indicate that this area will be held in reserve for future uses, only trail access and invasive control should be addressed when the plan is initially drafted.

Ash Borer Task Force – Mr. Haverkamp spoke of the ash trees along Main Street and Town Highways and the plan being formulated to address the emerald ash borer. Mr. Lindberg explained that Caitlin Cusack of VLT had provided information at the most recent CC meeting about various forms of treatment that might be used to address the ash borer. He suggested that a task force meet with Ms. Cusack in order to develop a plan for treatment/removal of ash trees within the State and Town Highway ROWs.

It was agreed to form an Ash Tree Task Force, comprised of the two Tree Board members, two Selectboard members, two Conservation Commission members, and Mr. Haverkamp. Mr. Messer and Mr. Babbott-Klein offered to be the Selectboard representatives for this Task Force.

Mr. Lindberg explained that it is possible for members of the public to be added to a distribution list to keep abreast of opportunities to participate in knotweed eradication efforts by contacting him at wcclindberg@gmail.com or 609.647.9832.

2. Reappraisal Contract.

NEMRC had provided the only response to the RFP published for this contract, quoting an amount of \$137,400 to be paid in monthly installments from the initiation date of July 2028 through completion in June 2030, with adjustments made based upon the total number of parcels in Town at that point. It was discussed that there is currently \$124K in the associated reserve fund, with another \$10K allocation for the current year. Mr. Haverkamp pointed out that this work will also mean additional lister time will be necessary during the project. Some Board members sought clarification on details of the contract and work covered. These included:

- Clarification on the costs related to the clause noting a need for computers and software licenses
- An explanation of the methodology used for providing adjustments to replacement-cost valuations of older buildings
- Confirming that there will be a view component included in the appraisals provided

MOTION: *Mr. Messer moved to accept the proposal from NEMRC, pending their providing clarification on the issues outlined by Board members. The motion was seconded by Mr. Babbott-Klein, and passed unanimously.*

94 **3. Grand List and Tax Rate.**

95 Mr. Haverkamp outlined that a recent statutory change regarding utility line assessments has
96 led to a dramatic change in their valuations, and that he and the listers are working to
97 determine if this new assessment level is valid. He explained that the Board may wish to wait
98 until this is resolved before setting a tax rate, although a final resolution may not be available
99 by the end of August, which Sandy Gallup has suggested is the latest date to set the rate.
100 Calculations by Board members indicated that the adjustment needed to the tax rate if the new
101 valuation increase is validated would have minimal impact on the average tax bill. However, no
102 tax rate calculation had been provided at this point, and it was agreed to address this matter
103 again at the next Board meeting.

104
105 **4. Delinquent Tax Sales Legal Representation.**

106 Board members asked for clarification regarding whether there is a policy in place to determine
107 when a tax sale is initiated for a property, Mr. Haverkamp will provide this information once he
108 researches the matter. It was confirmed that the Selectboard needs to approve the initiation of
109 a tax sale for any property proposed to go through this process, and that the specific process to
110 be followed is spelled out in statute.

111
112 **MOTION:** *Mr. Babbott-Klein moved to approve the use of SP&F Attorneys, LLC to conduct the*
113 *Town's current tax sale process. The motion was seconded by Mr. Messer, and passed*
114 *unanimously.*

115
116 **5. Green Mountain Stage Race**

117 It was indicated that this event will essentially be structured the same as it has been in the past
118 several years.

119
120 **MOTION:** *Mr. Messer moved to approve the Public Festival Permit for the Green Mountain*
121 *Stage Race on August 28 – September 1, 2025, and to approve use of the public ROW by the*
122 *participants. The motion was seconded by Mr. Babbott-Klein, and passed unanimously.*

123
124 **6. Work Plan Review**

125 Some revisions had been incorporated based upon discussion of the Plan at the last meeting;
126 further edits were made by Mr. Haverkamp during this review. There was also some discussion
127 of the software capabilities using the free version, Mr. Haverkamp is working to obtain clarity of
128 what can be accomplished with this version and the number of logins provided. Tasks
129 discussed/updated included:

- 130
 - The critical need to fill the Animal Control Officer position, and the related need to
 - 131 update the Domestic Animal Ordinance
 - 132 • Capital Improvement Plan will be high priority as budget development begins later in
 - 133 the year; infrastructure funding in general is high priority

134 **MOTION:** *Mr. Messer moved that there be no implementation of new Town-*
135 *level taxes. The motion was not seconded.*

- 136
 - Streamlining the budgeting of reserve funds through consolidation of the numerous
 - 137 funds in place; Mr. Shupe indicated that he will be putting historical fund creation and
 - 138 contribution in place

- Funding of emergency response and repairs – the potential for needing to do this with less federal funding should be discussed
- Health insurance – Ms. Ursprung has a contact who is able to provide Mr. Haverkamp with coverage information that may be useful
- Ensuring that the Cemetery Trust and the audit report are in agreement was established as a high priority subtask
- Town Garage is a high priority
- Steve Lewis has taken on development of a maintenance plan for the Town Office building
- Next steps to be taken in addressing Town property management should be outlined as subtasks
 - Town Garage – Mr. Haverkamp will work with Charlie Goodman and Josh Rogers to begin work on updating the RFP for preliminary design work
 - Fire Station – medium priority, but there are code issues and the potential need for a ladder truck to be discussed
 - Schedule a joint meeting with Fayston in the autumn, at the Station
 - Wait House – paint work has begun, ramp work is underway, roof is upcoming
 - Ensuring a new fire hydrant is installed with piping from the pond located at the corner of East Warren and Rolston rd was discusses as funds and permission are in place.
 - Fairgrounds – consider responses to RFP discussed earlier in the meeting
- Town easements – Pocket Park, Hastings Road/Wu Ledges provided as examples, some of these resolved, Mr. Haverkamp will begin tracking this information
- Roads
 - MRGP
 - Culvert inventory and maintenance
 - Mr. Haverkamp and Josh Rodgers working on culvert plan replacement considerations for Butternut Hill
 - Creation of a long-term paving schedule
 - 100/17 intersection is in VTrans purview
 - Covered bridge subtasks
 - Miles Jenness to submit plans for headache bar
 - Electronic solutions to be researched
 - Class IV Highways – not a high priority, Josh Rogers is addressing a few this summer
- Grant Administration
 - Change heading to Grant Applications and Administration
 - ARPA allocations – some allocations not yet expended; keep December 2026 deadline in mind for potential review that projects will be completed and reimbursements requested in time
 - Need to coordinate grant planning with SIP and other upcoming work
- Town Operations
 - Add communication with residents as a subtask in this category
- Planning Projects
 - Wastewater

- Consideration of capacity which has not already been included in allocations
 - Other policy questions to be addressed in August/September
- It was agreed to continue updating the Work Plan at the next Board meeting.

7. Selectboard Roundtable.

Mr. Messer reported that the Emergency Management team has reviewed the response to the May flood event, and generated ideas for making future responses more efficient and better coordinated. It was acknowledged that the recent response was very good, and that improvements are always welcome.

Ms. Ursprung noted that the wider shoulders on the eastern side of the covered bridge appears to be resulting in faster moving traffic; Mr. Haverkamp indicated that efforts are underway to have striping put in place as soon as possible.

Mr. Babbott-Klien noted that the MRVPD Steering Committee meeting packets often contain useful information regarding funding opportunities and other matters, and that he will forward those along when pertinent information is included.

Selectboard site visits were suggested, including the Town gravel pit property, the location about which Aaron Shea recently presented information for housing development; and Farley Park, for which a design plan will be available soon for review. Mr. Haverkamp will add these activities to the Work Plan where appropriate.

Mr. Babbott-Klein mentioned hosting a presentation regarding the Community Recreation Visioning project; this will also be added to the Work Plan.

8. Town Administrator Update.

During the work plan discussion, Mr. Haverkamp reported on the following:

- The RRFB for the crossing at the school has been ordered, he is seeking quotes from potential installation firms
 - A meeting is scheduled with VTrans regarding a second one at Carroll Road crossing
 - Mr. Messer spoke of using crossing flags as an alternate solution
- Two of the grants recently applied for to help fund the Wastewater Project have not been awarded.
- Wood4Good – Eric Axelrod is seeking a location for community firewood to be made available through his program. Board members advised Mr. Haverkamp to reach out to Ned Kelley regarding his firewood provision program before moving forward with conversations with Mr. Axelrod.

9. Review Minutes of June 9, 2025

The Minutes of June 9, 2025 were amended and approved.

10. Consent Agenda.

224 **APPROVAL:** *A motion to approve the Consent Agenda passed unanimously.*

225 • Approve Bills Payable and Treasurer's Warrants

226 • Approve Liquor License renewal for 1824 House

227 • Approve Liquor License renewal for Mad Events

228

229 **III. Other Business**

230 **1. Correspondence/reports received** were reviewed.

231 **IV. Adjourn**

232 The meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm.

233 Respectfully submitted,

234 Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary