TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

Draft

Members Present: David Babbott-Klein, Chach Curtis, Fred Messer, Brian Shupe, Larissa Ursprung
Staff Present: York Haverkamp, Town Administrator
Others Present: Bob Cook, Luke Foley (FMR), John Morris, Alice Peal, Joshua Schwartz (MRVPD), Ira Shadis (FMR)

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 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)
Consideration of approval of the FY27 Homestead Declaration penalty waiver was added as item 8B.

2. Public Forum
Nobody requested time to address the Board.

II. Regular Business

1. Cousins Brewing - 3rd Class Restaurant/Bar License
John Morris explained that he would like to add a simple mixed drink menu at his restaurant in order to meet customer demand. He confirmed that all staff are trained and certified, and that no problems have been experienced.

MOTION: *Mr. Messer moved to approve a 3rd Class Liquor License for Cousins Brewing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Curtis, and was approved unanimously.*

2. CVRPC Update
Ms. Peal highlighted some of the items included in a memo she had provided, noting the following work completed or in progress at the CVRPC:

- Update to the LHMP and floodplain reconnection projects resulting from that work
    - Grant monies received for the Fairgrounds project
- River corridor bylaws updates with the PC
- Continued efforts to request that VTrans study the Routes 100/17 intersection
- Involvement in Meadow Road bridge efforts
- Green Mountain Power substation permitting
- Regional Plan and FLU Mapping work
    - Comments on the FLU Map needed by September 1

3. Consider Adoption of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Plan
Mr. Haverkamp explained that the Plan presented focuses on a ‘watch and wait’ policy, noting that there is potential to determine some specimens to be treated with insecticide and possibly saved, but that most ash trees within the Town’s ROW (approximately 2000) would be

monitored for signs of EAB infestation and removed as necessary. He emphasized that a Tree Warden is needed in order to best implement the Plan and that there will be related budgetary needs due to the cost of potentially removing a large number of trees. It was also noted that the Plan includes some educational aspects for residents, and agreed that there will be a need for close monitoring of local trees.

MOTION: *Mr. Babbott-Klein moved to adopt "The Emerald Ash Borer in Waitsfield, VT: A Situation Analysis and Response Plan (A Phase One Approach)," as recommended by the Waitsfield Conservation Commission. The motion was seconded by Mr. Messer, and passed unanimously.*

There was some discussion of the need to fill the Tree Warden position, for which a stipend will likely be supported.

4. Irene 15: Flood Resilience Series

Luke Foley outlined plans for a series of five educational events related to community preparedness for flooding, noting that it is anticipated that the information provided will lead to an increase in volunteer opportunities for providing increased resilience. Four of the events are planned to be tied to information regarding FEMA and disaster prevention and relief, but the first event is being planned as a replication of the celebration that followed post-Irene cleanup, when Bridge Street and the Covered Bridge were closed for a block party. He provided some details on the plans for the event, including activities, speakers, food and beverages, and music. Mr. Foley reported that he had spoken with representatives of MRVAS and the Fire Department, and no foreseen problems had been noted. The Board advised that a Public Festival Permit would need to be approved, noting that the fee would be waived. Mr. Messer pointed out that there is an intent to update the application to add a section on safety plan considerations; Mr. Foley indicated his willingness to include related information in the application for this event.

MOTION: *Mr. Curtis moved to approve the closure of Bridge Street and the Covered Bridge from 2:30 pm to 7:30 pm on September 10, 2026 with a rain date of September 17, 2026, pending receipt and approval of a Festival Permit Application. The motion was seconded by Mr. Messer, and passed unanimously.*

5. Wastewater Project Update

Wastewater Project Manager

Mr. Haverkamp pointed to related information in his written Town Administrator's Report, noting the importance of bringing a Municipal Project Manager on board. It was agreed by the Board members that this is a necessary position, and requested that Mr. Haverkamp develop a scope of work/job description for this position to be reviewed at the August 10 Board meeting.

Easement Update

Mr. Haverkamp reported that easements need to be in place before contracts are finalized, and that draft language had been provided to the Town. The easements are generally tied to the second contract to be awarded, for the work not associated directly with the disposal site. Three types of easements are needed: for pump stations, for force and gravity main lines, and for individual connections. Mr. Haverkamp explained that the easements associated with the main lines are priority, and that there are around 14 of those for properties that will not have individual connections to the system. The work needed on those properties is generally right along the edge of the highway ROW, and will be established as permanent easements in order to ensure continued access if necessary in the future.

6. Joslin Library Park Trees

A quote had been received from Whitney Tree Services for removal of four trees in the Library park, and it was agreed that the trees could not be saved for any suitable length of time through pruning of the dead branches, and removal was the best option. It was agreed to not have the Road Crew undertake the traffic control for this project, as they are otherwise very busy and likely do have the training required for flagging traffic on State highways.

MOTION: *Mr. Messer moved to authorize the Town Administrator to accept the Whitney Tree Service Proposal #9186 for removal of three sugar maples and one boxelder at Joslin Library Park, including stump grinding and traffic control, in an amount not to exceed $6600, funds to be taken from the Street Tree Reserve. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ursprung, and passed unanimously.*

7. Town Garage

Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment Proposal

Mr. Haverkamp reported that multiple items to be explored in more detail were identified as a result of the completed Phase 1 assessment; there was agreement that a Phase 2 assessment is necessary. The cost of this work has been quoted as $30,915, not including remediation work. Mr. Haverkamp indicated that there will be some discussion at the next Town Garage meeting regarding the potential for a different siting of the building if the Phase 2 study indicates this would be prudent.

MOTION: *Mr. Babbott-Klien moved to authorize the Town Administrator to execute the KAS, Inc. work scope proposal dated July 2, 2026 for a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment at 761 Tremblay Road, in an amount not to exceed $30,915, funded from the Town Garage Reserve Fund, and to acknowledge that any remediation, additional site investigation, or subsurface structure removal identified through that assessment is outside the scope of this authorization and would require separate Selectboard authorization and a separate funding source. The motion was seconded by Mr. Messer, and passed unanimously.*

MH2 Architecture Studio Proposal

There was some discussion of what level of funding to approve for design work on the Garage prior to approval of a bond vote to finance the project, including the potential inflationary impacts of delaying construction beyond 2027. Financing logistics, including use of the Town Garage Reserve, the anticipated LOT revenues, and use of a portion of the current unassigned fund balance, were considered. Board members agreed on their preference for continuing to work with MH2, and it was noted that the firm is willing to work on a retainer basis at this point.

MOTION: *Mr. Curtis moved to authorize the Town Administrator to execute an Owner/Architect Agreement with MH2 Architecture Studio, LLC for architectural and engineering services for the Town Garage project, at a combined architectural and engineering (A&E) fee of 8% of the* *estimated construction cost (currently $340,080), plus a fixed site survey fee of $4,240 and bond-vote support of $4,000, for an estimated total design cost of $348,320; with the understanding that the Town's funding commitment will be limited to 50% of the $340,080 A&E fee plus the site survey fee and bond-vote support amounts (total of $178,280) prior to the November 3 bond vote, with any additional work above that being at MH2's risk; those pre-bond design costs advanced from Town reserves to be reimbursed by the bond, as available; and to acknowledge that if the cost increases, the Town Administrator will bring the adjustment back to the Selectboard before proceeding. The motion was seconded by Mr. Babbott-Klein, and passed unanimously.*

Mr. Haverkamp will set up a meeting to discuss this plan with MH2 staff.

Construction Manager Selection
Mr. Haverkamp reported on his efforts to obtain cost information from several firms interested in providing construction management services for the Town Garage project, and outlined the road trip he recently undertook with MH2 staff in order to observe recent or ongoing garage construction projects. It was agreed that a construction manager will allow for a better project, and noted that the related financial and other information received would be discussed in Executive Session.

8. Setting of the Tax Rate
Mr. Curtis reviewed information related to the proposed FY27 tax rate, noting details of the increase in the Grant List, property exemptions, special articles, and other adjustments, resulting in a final proposed rate of .5995 per $100K of assessed value. It was discussed that applying approximately $64K of unassigned fund balance as a General Fund transfer would serve to avoid having the minimal increase proposed, and instead maintain a level tax rate from FY26. It was agreed that maintaining a level rate would be beneficial to taxpayers, particularly with bond votes to be held in the coming months.

MOTION: *Mr. Curtis moved to set the FY27 municipal tax rate at .5837 per $100K of assessed value, and to transfer the necessary funds of approximately $64K from the unassigned fund balance in order to allow for the reduction from the rate of .5995 that would be necessary based upon the approved budget and current Grand List value. The motion was seconded by Mr. Babbott-Klien, and approved unanimously.*

8B. Waiver of Penalty for late filing of Homestead Declaration
It was noted that this waiver has been granted annually for several years.

MOTION: *Mr. Babbott-Klien moved to waive the penalty for homeowners who file their Homestead Declaration later than the due date. The motion was seconded by Mr. Messer, and passed unanimously.*

9. Errors and Omissions – Waitsfield-Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT) Parcel Reassessment
It was noted that the State had agreed to an adjustment of WCVT's assessment, removing the buildings and retaining the poles and lines in the State assessment.

MOTION: *Mr. Messer moved to approve the Errors & Omissions authorization for parcel 099047100, reducing the assessment from $8,022,100 to $3,898,800, as requested by the Assessor. The motion was seconded by Mr. Babbott-Klein, and passed unanimously.*

10. Moretown Route 100B Bridge Replacement – VTrans Detour over Meadow Road Bridge
Mr. Haverkamp explained that he has been in communication with VTrans, and that they are willing to meet and discuss planning for detours during the planned 2029 Route 100B bridge replacement. It was agreed that going forward, Mr. Shupe and Mr. Messer, as well as Don Wexler of the Moretown Selectboard, will be included in related communications.

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

- Approve Bills Payable & Treasurer's Warrants
- Approve renewal of an Outdoor Consumption Permit for Emily's in the Valley
- Approve Public Festival Permit for the Annual Mad River Valley Craft Fair
- Approve to approve placing the Town's Justice of the Peace elections on the
- November General Election ballot and to approve mailing that ballot to all active registered voters, as required by 17 V.S.A. 2680
- Acknowledge Fire Chief Jared Young as Town Forest Fire Warden and Cam Mills as Deputy Forest Fire Warden
- Approve an expenditure by the General Wait House Commission of $1750 for repair of a plaster ceiling

10. Town Administrator's Report
Mr. Haverkamp had nothing to add to his written report.

11. Selectboard Roundtable
Ms. Ursprung reported on a negative interaction with a marathon race official, and expressed that future events should provide more clarity on runner/driver interactions.

IV. Executive Session
MOTION: *A motion to find that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage passed unanimously.*

MOTION: *A motion to enter Executive Session per 1 VSA §313(a)(4) [Employee Discipline] and 1 VSA §313(a)(1)(A) [Contracts] inviting Mr. Haverkamp to join, passed unanimously.*

The meeting entered Executive Session at 8:31 pm and returned to open session at 9:38 pm.

No further action was taken by the Board.

V. Adjourn
The meeting adjourned at 9:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary