

Wilmington Selectboard/Sewer Commission

June 6, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.

At Twin Valley High School Library

MINUTES

Selectboard Members Present: Thomas Consolino, Margaret Streeter, Susan Haughwout, James Burke and Diane Chapman

Others Present: Scott Murphy, Dawn Baxter, Mike Eldred, Lorraine Morrow, Skip Morrow, Brian Wuoti, Zac Caudell, Ben Presten, Mary Jane Finnegan, Rachel Lazelle, John Lazelle, Cheryl Laflamme Rothman, Kelly Kahler, Susan Lawrence, Renee Galle, Marilyn Ward, Gale Stachelek, Bob Stachelek, Mary Wright, Topper Van Backer, Carolyn Palmer, Andy Schindel, Lee Schindel, Kathy Arnold, Carlotta Gladding, Katherine Longbotham, Joe Arnold, Martha Gehring, Michael Singer, Michelle Park, Michael Gilberg, Liliias Hart, Ann Coleman, Mark Fitzpatrick, Adam Grinold

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Consolino at 6:05 p.m.

1. **Minutes:** Streeter moved and Haughwout seconded to approve the minutes of May 16, 2012. Vote: All in favor
2. Visitors and Public Comments: None
3. Liquor and Tobacco Licenses: None
4. **Action Items: Adopt Policy for “Request for Public Records” Procedure:** Murphy distributed and gave a general overview of policy. Consolino questioned a municipality’s ability to charge a fee for copies and/or town employee research time. Haughwout questioned what the timeframe is for producing the requested records. Murphy referred to the Vermont Statutes for answers to these questions. Streeter made a motion to adopt Request for Public Records as presented. Haughwout seconded. Vote: All in favor.
5. **Interview Applicant Cheryl Laflamme for Beautification Committee Board Appointment:** The Board interviewed Cheryl Laflamme for an appointment to the Beautification Committee. Ms. Laflamme expressed her desire to be a part of the committee and stated that she likes the group and believes they do a great job. The Board thanked Ms. Laflamme for her willingness to serve the Town.
6. **Long Term Community Recovery Champion’s Presentation: Health and Human Services -** Jeannette Linehan, Health and Human Services Project Champion was welcomed by the Board. She explained that her group is focusing on two main projects at this time. The first project is CERT (Community Emergency Response Team). They are attempting to obtain grants in order to train citizens in emergency preparedness, response and recovery practices. The group is requesting assistance from the Town to work with Fire, Police and Rescue so that CERT recruitment can begin in July. The anticipated cost of the training and equipment would be \$1,500 to \$3,000 depending on number of volunteers. Grants are being sought to cover the cost of the training. There will be no out of pocket expenses for volunteers. The second project that the Health and Human Services group is focusing on is the Expansion of Medical Services. The Health Center will be open 7 days a week with walk in service on Saturdays from 9 to 5. They are currently seeking grants for start up funds for the first 90 days. Southern Vermont Medical Center will cover the costs of grant writing. They hope to have this implemented as soon as the funds become available and are shooting for September. The Board acknowledged the group’s efforts in looking at all of the ideas and focusing on what could be reasonably accomplished.

7. **Long Term Community Recovery Champion's Presentation: Historic Village:** Susan Lawrence, Mary Wright, Carolyn Palmer and Rene Galle` came forward to present on behalf of the Historic Village Long Term Recovery Group. All property owners have signed either a lease or a right-of-way agreement. Work can begin on the creation of the lot as soon as the leases are counter signed by the Town. The test cobblestone sidewalk in front of the Maple Leaf has been completed. Replicas of historical lampposts throughout the village will wait until funds become available. The installation of energy efficient light bulbs will be delayed until fixtures are replaced. Ms. Lawrence explained that the downtown area is the core of Wilmington and that the Downtown Designation opens doors to get grant monies. The group has purchased 12 benches and will solicit donations to cover the costs during the Village Strolls. Trash receptacles and the possible extension of sidewalks beyond the downtown area are also in the works. They need administrative help from the Town and its willingness to sign off on grants that they will apply to. Ms. Wright spoke about how it is important to have a brand and focus for the downtown and the need for the Selectboard and the Town to partner with the Group to form a plan and determine where we want to be in 5-10 years. Ms. Lawrence explained that the flood took us to a crossroads and that it is time for plans to come to fruition because we do not want a village filled with beautiful streetscapes and empty buildings. Consolino said that he is proud and excited to have this group working tirelessly and that the Board appreciates all of their efforts. Burke thanked the group for their many hours of work and agreed that the downtown area needs a true identity.
8. **Water District Merger/Acquisition Update:** John Lazelle, Chief Operator of the Waste Water Treatment Plant was on hand to update the Board on the progress that has been made on the merger/acquisition of the Wilmington Water District with the Town. An engineer that has been employed by the Waste Water Treatment Plant is willing to act as an independent party and gather technical and cost information. Murphy and Lazelle will collaborate to draft a Memo of Understanding for the Selectboard and the Wilmington Water District to outline the procedure to move forward on the acquisition. The engineer will submit a proposal outlining the cost and scope of work. This item will be revisited at the June 20, 2012 Selectboard Meeting. Streeter and Consolino thanked Lazelle for his work on this project.
9. **Update of Economic Development Staff Position:** Murphy made the recommendation that since Bill Colvin will be done with his work soon, that that the Town continue to employ Gretchen Havreluk through the end of July to work on the retaining wall matter. Chapman made a motion to extend the Economic Development Staff position until the end of July. Haughwout seconded. Vote: All in favor. Streeter announced that there will be a Bi-Town Meeting tomorrow, June 7th which she plans on attending to support all efforts going forward.
10. **Downtown Designation - Next Steps:** There was positive feedback on applying for a Downtown Designation at the public meeting on May 21st. The Windham Regional Commission offered to consult at a cost of \$15,000, for which grants are available. There was some discussion of putting out a bid for independent consultants. Consolino suggested that this item be put on the agenda for the June 20th Selectboard meeting with a goal of deciding whether or not to move forward with the first step; approval of the Selectboard to authorize the application for a Downtown Designation.
11. **Pros and Cons for Long Term Rental Agreement of Memorial Hall:** The Valley Town Church has been renting Memorial Hall each Sunday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for approximately 10 dates since February of this year. Their contract expires after June 10th, 2012, but they have asked for an extension.

What follows are comments from a discussion on whether the extension should or should not be granted to Valley Town Church:

- The Memorial Hall Board met yesterday and they make the recommendation that the lease of the Hall not be renewed due to disrespect of the building during the tenancy of the Valley Town Church. The Memorial Hall is currently seeking a Cultural Facilities Grant to improve ADA compliance for bathrooms and the addition of a ramp. There is concern that tenancy by a religious organization may affect the status of the grant.
- We welcome the Valley Town Church and are glad that they are here. These comments are not personal, but I agree that the lease should not be renewed because it may interfere with grants. It is not in conformance with religious freedom. Would it be possible for the community to help them (The Valley Town Church) find a new place to be?
- Memorial Hall is not a place to set up shop. The Valley Town Church should purchase a building that is non taxable.
- The Hall should be available for people to rent for all occasions but not to be tied up for an indeterminate period of time. It is against the principals of what the Hall was set up for. Where do we draw the line? I am opposed to granting a long term lease to anyone.
- I hope that Selectboard Member Susan Haughwout will recuse herself from this decision, as she is a member of the church.
- There was no public discussion before lease was signed and this was a mistake right from the beginning. Any discussions by the Selectboard should take place with full transparency and no executive sessions.
- I cannot understand how taxpayers should support a church renting a public building
- The Valley Town Church is paying rent. Who else is using the hall on that day and time?
- Memorial Hall is a public community building and that the Valley Town Church should plant in another building
- I hope that the Selectboard gives full weight to the recommendation of the Memorial Hall Board
- There are two issues. The first is that a long term lease for any group means that the group takes over the identification and ownership of the hall. The second is that Article 3 of the VT Constitution says that citizens should not support religion. The use of Memorial Hall by a church group is illegal and improper.
- Valley Town Church had numerous code violations that have been corrected. Cup hooks were screwed into the fascia of the balcony to hang drapery, pins were put in the walls of the concession area, large grommets were installed to hold electrical wiring, trash was sometimes not removed and black lines were made on the pediments of the windows.
- This should not be an “Us against them” issue. We are not trying to chase anyone out of this town, but granting a long term lease to any group creates adversarial relationships.
- We welcome the church and welcome you to speak about your mission. We plead with you to voluntarily withdraw your request to extend the lease.
- I support the Memorial Hall Board’s decision. I would like to know why Board is not overseeing repairs in accordance with historical preservationist.

- I support the Valley Town Church and feel that the lease was handled appropriately and that there are no problems with the church renting the Hall. Memorial Hall is not a good long term place for the church or any other entity because long term leases cause confusion between entities and donors who wish to give to one or the other often don't know the difference and this is not in anyone's best interest. The devastating flood that we as a town went through together helped to heal and rebuild relationships that were torn apart by previous conflicts. We still have a lot of work to do. I believe that we can find solutions that we can all live with if we do not allow ourselves to turn this into another deeply dividing community fight. That would hamper our ability to rebuild our town.
- The Memorial Hall Board was not consulted before lease. Was this taken before the Board?

Consolino expressed that the comments were quite thoughtful and that it is appropriate for Selectboard to join Town Manager at Memorial Hall Board to have a work session in order to discuss business plan/charge and application form. It is important to have close communications with the Memorial Hall Board, but in the end, it is Town Manager's purview. He is in charge of building and will hold off on any Long Term Rental agreements until after the work session. Streeter said that the Hall is open to everyone. She is also interested in talking with Memorial Hall Board. Champman welcomes the Valley Town Church to our community and also would like to meet with Memorial Hall Board as soon as possible. Burke agrees with Streeter. The Town should not discriminate. The policy is to rent the hall. We have struggled to get people here with children and young families. It takes time to establish a business and a church is a business. They need time to establish themselves so they can find another building. We should open arms not point fingers. Consolino thanked all who participated for their comments. The extension of the lease will continue on a week-by-week basis until the Boards have had an opportunity to meet.

12. Correspondence to/from Selectboard

- Act 250 Log – not updated
- Other Correspondence – none

13. **Other Business:** Chapman said that Trails Day had a great turn out. Burke thanked all who were involved in this year's Memorial Day celebration for their hard work. Streeter agreed with Burke's comments. Consolino announced a Long Term Community Recovery Meeting with the Project Champions on Wednesday, June 13th at the Old Red Mill in order to identify four Champions who would be willing to serve on a steering committee. He will also speak with the Memorial Hall Board about dates for meeting with Town Manager.

14. **Town Manager's Updates:** The Historic Preservation Conference will be on Friday, June 8th. Upwards of 200 people are expected to attend. There is an issue with a North Main Street A-Frame building not being hooked up to sewer. The owners have been paying sewer fees for years believing that they were hooked up to the sewer system. The State is requiring a permit for an engineering study at a cost of \$5,000. It has not been determined who will be paying for this study. It is important that the job be done as soon as possible, and so we should move forward on it and negotiate who will pay what fees after the job is done.

Streeter gave an update on the river retaining wall stating that it may possibly be a FEMA project. A FEMA representative will be coming tomorrow to assess.

Burke motioned to appoint Cheryl LaFlamme to the Beautification Committee. Haughwout seconded. Vote: All in favor.

Haughwout then made a motion to enter executive session to include the Town Manager for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter. Chapman seconded. Vote: All in favor.

The Board and Town Manager entered into executive session at 8:15. The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:25 p.m. A motion was made by Chapman and seconded by Burke to reimburse Police Chief Joe Szarejko \$600. Vote: all in favor.

Being there was not further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m

Respectfully Submitted:

Dawn Baxter

Approved by the Wilmington Selectboard:

Thomas P. Consolino, Chair

Margaret L. Streeter, Vice Chair

Susan Joy Haughwout

James R. Burke

Diane Chapman