



**Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard**

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 13, 2024 (corrected)

These Minutes are considered a DRAFT until accepted into the public record (with any corrections noted) at a future meeting of the Whitingham Selectboard.

The Whitingham Selectboard held a regular meeting at 6:30pm in the Selectboard office of the Whitingham Municipal Center on Wednesday, November 13, 2024.

Selectboard members present: Scott M. Reed, Chair; ~~James Weber, Vice Chair~~; Lyman Tefft, Jr., and Travis Wheeler.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; Stanley Janovsky, Jr., Road Commissioner; Rick Gramlin, resident.

Ritu Pancholy, property owner; Cory Ross, Executive Director of Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District; Evan Fitzgerald, Fitzgerald Environmental Associates.

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Scott M. Reed called the meeting to order at 6:37pm. Changes to the agenda were noted on the meeting copy.

Hearing of Visitors for concerns not on the agenda Due to technical difficulties, we couldn't get the Teams meeting going, Ritu Pancholy phoned in so we moved highway to top of the agenda. Mr. Fitzgerald was later able to invite us to a Google meeting for the Hazard Mitigation project. There is no recording of this meeting.

Highway:

Ritu Pancholy from Ryder Pond expressed her concerns about Ryder Pond Association being a small HOA, members facing extreme difficulties keeping up with the maintenance on the road. Mr. Reed noted that it has been a private road since the 1970s. Mr. Janovsky explained the process for having a private road taken over by the town, it starts with a petition. The association must bring the road up to state required specifications, which can be very expensive. Highways are in Title 19 of Vermont Statute; Gig will share a link with Ms. Pancholy.

Review and approve access permit Mr. Janovsky presented an access permit for Bryan and Lee Ann Chupp at 533 Merrifield Road. He recommended the board approve the permit noting that no culvert is needed. **A motion was made by Scott M. Reed to approve the access permit for Bryan and Lee Ann Chupp at 533 Merrifield Road with no restrictions and no culvert needed, seconded by Travis Wheeler, all in favor.**

Hazard Mitigation: presentation by engineers of berm removal and potential bridge removal

This project came out of exploring WISPr projects (state ANR funding related to the sewer project). It will improve and protect water quality at this location. Grant for the scoping study closes very soon. Two project alternates were presented, the first is removal of a smaller portion of a berm on the property of Brian Sullivan at 18 Gates Pond Road, the second, is removal of a larger portion of the berm on Mr. Sullivan's property as well as removal town highway bridge 44. The property owner of 63 VT Route 112 would then gain access to their property by sharing bridge 45. This project would include changing their driveway. Mr. Janovsky asked if the construction phase could include repairing the bridge and guard rail. Mr. Ross will look into it.

The Selectboard members present, and Mr. Janovsky, are in favor of the larger project. Mr. Ross will provide a template letter of support for the board to sign when they move forward applying for a grant for design and construction.

Accept resignation of Greg Brown, review and sign Notice of Vacancy

Greg Brown verbally resigned from the Selectboard to Gig on Thursday morning, November 7th. The board accepted his resignation with regret. Mr. Brown has served on the board in many terms over the last 20+ years. He was instrumental in getting the sewer project going after the Jacksonville plant was shut down by the state in 2018. Discussion ensued around appointing now or waiting for Town Meeting in March. The board reviewed the Notice of Vacancy stating the position will be filled by election at Town Meeting on March 4, 2025. **A motion was made by Travis Wheeler to approve the Notice of Vacancy and to appoint Scott M. Reed to sign it, seconded by Lyman Tefft, Jr. , all in favor.**

Emergency Management: adoption of VT-Alert for town wide alerts

Gig, as Emergency Management Director, recommends that the town adopt VT-Alert for town wide alerts, she and Dennis Pike will take the course required to be allowed to use the state system. **A motion was made by Lyman Tefft, Jr. to adopt VT-Alert as a public safety notification system for town wide emergencies, to appoint Gig Zboray as the primary administrator and Dennis Pike as the alternate and to appoint Scott M. Reed to sign the letter of adoption to Vermont Emergency Management, seconded by Travis Wheeler, all in favor.**

Discuss, schedule, and sign Warning for Special Town Meeting

The board discussed their desire to have the voters change the Treasurer and Delinquent Tax Collector positions from elected to appointed. To do in time for annual town meeting in March we would need to have a special town meeting. Gig suggested December 18th, the board agreed. The board reviewed the Warning for Special Town Meeting, **a motion was made by Scott M. Reed to approve the warning and sign it, seconded by Travis Wheeler, all in favor.**

Approval of Payables Warrant – November 14, 2024

A motion was made by Scott M. Reed to approve Payables Warrant #W2520, dated November 14, 2024, seconded by Skip Tefft, all in favor.

Approval of Payroll Warrant – November 14, 2024

A motion was made by Scott M. Reed to approve Payroll Warrant #W2519, dated November 14, 2024, seconded by Travis Wheeler, all in favor.

Review and approve Minutes of October 30, 2024

A motion was made by Scott M. Reed to accept the Minutes of October 30, 2024, as written, seconded by Lyman Tefft, Jr., all in favor.

Budget: determine cost of living increase for 25/26

Traditionally the town treasurer has started the budget process and then the board reviews and adjusts the draft budget. The 2023 update of the Personnel Policy says that pay/cost of living increases are traditionally based on the Social Security COLA for that year. The 2024 SS COLA will be 2.5%. A motion was made by Travis Wheeler to set the cost of living for the 25/26 budget at 2.5%, no second was made, so he rescinded his motion. **A motion was made by Lyman Tefft, Jr. to set the COLA at 4% for fiscal year 25/26, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

Cancel regular meetings scheduled for November 27th and December 25th

Due to the holidays, a motion was made by Scott M. Reed to cancel the regular meetings scheduled for November 27 and December 25 and to appoint any one Selectboard member to review and sign the warrants, seconded by Lyman Tefft, Jr., all in favor.

Other business

Mr. Janovsky noted the highway received reimbursement of \$90,170.60 from Green Mountain Power for roadwork/supplies for their buried lines.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Scott M. Reed to adjourn, seconded by Lyman Tefft, all in favor.

Scott Reed adjourned the meeting at 7:32pm.

Respectfully submitted,
~Gig Zboray