

**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting
Wednesday August 9, 2023**

Present:

Selectboard Members: William Adams, Lisa Hagerty, Nick Donza, Jo Sabel Courtney, Paco Aumand

In Person attendees: Jeff Sereni, Paul Sakash, Diann Percy, Heather Snyder, Willie Noyes

There were 6 participants on Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Lisa Hagerty called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Approve the Agenda

On a motion by Mr. Paco Aumand, seconded by Ms. Jo Sabel Courtney, the Board approved the Agenda as presented.

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes of 7/26/23
2. Municipal Website RFP Award
3. Water/Sewer Allocation – 78 Main Street
4. Water/Sewer Allocation – 2438 Mountain Road
5. Water/Sewer Allocation – Landing Circle
6. VLCT Voting Delegate
7. Errors & Omissions
8. Liquor Consent Items

The Board briefly discussed Consent Agenda Item A-2, Municipal Website RFP Award. It was noted that the capital project was originally approved by the voters at Town Meeting for \$35,000, but the Selectboard increased the amount to \$70,000 after initial feedback from vendors on pricing. However, the final RFP Award was to Granicus for \$21,900 with an annual service fee of \$18,880 (prorated to \$14,160 for FY'24) to be allocated from the IT General Fund budget.

On a motion by Mr. Billy Adams, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board approved the Consent Agenda as presented.

Short-Term Rentals – Department of Fire Safety

The Selectboard continued discussions from the 7/26/23 meeting discussing Short Term Rentals and fire and safety. Shawn Goodell of the Department of Fire Safety was present on Zoom to answer questions. He noted that when his department received complaints, either from the Fire Department or renters, they do a follow up inspection and offer education to the STR owner, with fines being an option if necessary. While the department has the right to inspect any STRs as they are deemed public buildings, they do not currently have the staffing to proactively inspect units before being rented out. He explained that an inspection can take anywhere from 2-5 hours to complete. He stated that an ordinance requiring inspection would be difficult for his department to manage, however the Fire Department could be trained to do inspections as well. He did explain that new construction requires inspection. It was asked if the Town may have access to past inspection records, which was not clear. He noted that many people call with questions related to Fire & Safety with STRs. Many owners may not be aware of the codes they are required to meet. Ms. Courtney stated that a registry would be a way to communicate to owners the requirements of the State. Mr. Nick Donza asked if Mr. Goodell felt there were issues in STRs that are not known because there haven't been any complaints filed, and Mr. Goodell responded that there are some out there with violations, but they won't know how many or how bad they are without getting into

the building to do an inspection. Mr. Goodell said he has currently inspected about 25-30 STRs in Stowe. Of those inspections, he reported issues related to improper fire detection systems, basement bedrooms without a second egress and windows that are not the correct size to be considered a second egress. Mr. Willie Noyes questioned when a building would be considered a lodging facility, which Mr. Goodell explained was when it was listed as over 8 people per residence, and that would fall under Lodging and Rooming codes.

Ms. Heather Snyder commented that education is really important to assure safety in STRs, and encouraged the Town to do a registry as a way of providing education on requirements and gathering data on the STR market in Stowe.

The Board then discussed what future discussions related to STRs they would like to have. It was suggested that a few local realtors be invited to discuss the housing market and the impact STRs may be having. Mr. Aumand suggested having a public forum to discuss topics related to STRs that the public can come and speak at. Other topics included speaking to administrators in Towns that currently have STR registries on their experience, and discussing amongst the Selectboard where they feel they are at regarding a registry or ordinance.

No action was taken at this time.

Social, Community and Economic Development Appropriations Policy

The Selectboard requested time be set aside to discuss the Town's Social, Community and Economic Development Appropriations policy. Town Manager Mr. Charles Safford explained that State Law authorizes social service appropriations, and currently the Town of Stowe policy requires a form be completed by the agency annually before budget deliberations, with those requesting new or increased appropriations coming before the Board to discuss their requests. Mr. Safford stated that some Towns have policies to require agencies to collect a petition of 5% of the registered voters before a funding request is considered by voters. Mr. Safford provided the Town of Vergennes policy which allows a waiver of petition for several reasons, including if there is no change in the amount of funding requested. Mr. Safford also prepared a draft with changes to the current policy to move the deadline for filing funding requests from December 15th to October 15th to allow the Board more time to consider requests without occupying too much meeting time during budget deliberations.

The Board discussed other ideas such as creating a committee of citizens who would make recommendations to the Board for funding, but the decision would still need to be made by the Selectboard. Another suggestion was to utilize an existing organization such as the Stowe Community Fund to distribute funding, however Mr. Safford stated this would not be allowed under State law and Mr. Adams noted that did not align with the current goals of the Stowe Community Fund. The Board also discussed ideas such as collection of funds outside of property taxes, and limiting the number of new applications considered each year. Ms. Susie Clark suggested hosting fundraising nights for non-profits or other ways to show support to non-profits.

Mr. Aumand made a motion, seconded by Mr. Adams, to adopt the recommended changes to the Selection Social, Community and Economic Development Appropriation Policy through FY'25.

It was discussed that this timeline might be too tight for this year, with administration needing time to get the word out to agencies that they must request funding sooner. It was then suggested that the deadline be changed to November 15th for this year to see how that change may help improve the process.

Mr. Aumand made a friendly amendment, seconded by Mr. Adams, to his motion to adjust the deadline for appropriation requests to November 15th. The motion passed unanimously.

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Manager's Report

Mr. Safford provided the results of the Stowe Electric Department Customer Survey.

Mr. Safford provided the July FY'24 YTD financial reports, as well as FY'24 4th Quarter Local Option Tax receipts.

Mr. Safford provided an ACT 250 Permit for a project located at 3418 Mountain Road.

Mr. Paul Sakash requested the final cost of the Welcome Sign capital project, which Mr. Safford said he would provide. He then asked about a settlement with a former employee. Mr. Safford indicated that a settlement was sometimes in the best interest of the Town. Mr. Sakash then asked about the legal issues with the Stowe Reporter, which Mr. Safford explained was the Town following the advice of legal counsel and seeking a judicial determination on releasing documents. The Town has complied with the judge's order. Mr. Aumand noted that the Selectboard was aware of the situation and had authorized the decision to seek judicial review before moving forward, following the advice of legal counsel.

There being no further business, Chair Hagerty adjourned the meeting at 7:42pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Bourgeois.

*Note: The video recording of the meeting is available on the town's website www.townofstowe.org