

**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting**  
**Wednesday September 13, 2023**

Present:

Selectboard Members: Lisa Hagerty, William Adams, Nick Donza, Jo Sabel Courtney, Paco Aumand  
In Person attendees: Harry Shepard, Barbara Baraw, Shannon Buhler, Jed Lipsky, Paul Sakash, Julie Marks, Arnold Ziegel, Alison Karosas, Barret Ayres, Vincent Buonanno II, Kevin Boldwin, Jeff Jackson, Elise McKenna, Lynn Altadonna, Mary Altadonna, Kelly Shaw, Susan Ciroses, Sandra Kuhl, David Branch, Richard Bland, Diann Percy, Barbara Puddicombe  
There were 34 participants on Zoom.

**Call to Order**

Chair Ms. Lisa Hagerty called the meeting to order at 5:31pm.

**Approve the Agenda**

On a motion by Mr. Paco Aumand, seconded by Ms. Jo Sabel Courtney, the Board approved the Agenda, pulling Consent Agenda item A-5 GMT Banner and making it Business item B-4, adding Consent Agenda item A-9, Jam for the Land Special Event Application, and an amendment to the Cork event on the Liquor Consent item A-8.

**Consent Agenda**

1. Minutes of 8/23/23
2. Ambulance Rehabilitation
3. EMS Billing Rates
4. British Invasion Special Events Application
5. PULLED
6. Name Tax Sale Attorney
7. State Appropriation to Stowe Vibrancy
8. Liquor Consent Items
9. Jam For The Land Special Event Application

Mr. Paul Sakash asked for more information about item A-3, EMS Billing Rates. He asked if there would be a separate rate for residents. Town Manager Mr. Charles Safford indicated that while there would be no separate rate for residents, the rates were based on insurance allowable reimbursable rates and comparisons to other similar towns nearby, depending on the level of service provided. He also explained that the Town's policy for collection was to seek reimbursement for services, but not to pursue collection if the person cannot pay.

On a motion by Mr. Aumand, seconded by Mr. William Adams, the Board approved the Consent Agenda without item A-5, and with additional item A-9, and one amendment to an item in the Liquor Consent Item.

**Introduction of Shannon Buhler, Stowe Mountain Resort General Manager**

Mr. Safford introduced Ms. Shannon Buhler, the new Stowe Mountain Resort General Manager. Ms. Buhler spoke to the Board, stating that she was thrilled to be part of the community, noting that she grew up skiing and working at her local ski resort in Breckenridge, CO. Ms. Buhler has worked for Vail for a number of years at different resorts, including service as General Manager of Snowcreek, MO operations. She noted that she had recently moved her family to Waterbury, VT and was working with local organizations to get a better feeling for the community, including the Town, Stowe Area Association and

Green Mountain Transit. The Board stressed the importance of being connected to SMR through community partnerships.

No action was taken at this time.

### **Short Term Rentals: Julie Marks of VT Short-term Rental Alliance**

Mr. Safford introduced Julie Marks, founder and director of the Vermont Short-term Rental Alliance (VTSTRA). Ms. Marks explained that her organization is a non-profit membership organization focused on education, networking and resources for its members, as well as serving as a representative of the industry with policy makers and education. Ms. Marks stated that she would recommend a Short Term Rental (STR) Registry for the Town of Stowe to allow the town to collect more data and understand the market, provide education to STR renters, offer a complaint hotline for the community and allow for property owners to submit the required State fire & safety forms with the Town electronically. She also suggested utilizing local private home inspectors to ensure safety standards are met. It was noted that previous discussions with the State Department of Fire & Safety has indicated that they serve on a complaint-based basis and do not have the staffing to do inspections of all units.

Ms. Marks cautioned against restricting STR rentals or altering the market. She also recommended clear and attainable STR standards, such as occupancy limits, guest-owner communications and good neighbor policies.

She recommended the Town utilize a third-party STR registration/compliance service, noting that other towns she has worked with have had good success with Gov OS, a similar service to Granicus which the Selectboard had previewed previously. The Selectboard discussed having representatives from towns that currently use a third party service come to discuss their experience and time required of Town staff to support.

It was discussed that the Governor had recently vetoed a bill requiring both a Long-term and Short-term rental registry, although more information was needed on the reason for the veto. Both members of the Board and Ms. Marks stated that they would support a state-wide registry for consistency.

The Board and Ms. Marks discussed the estimated number of STRs in Stowe, which AirDNA puts at around 950. Mr. Aumand questioned what the historical number may have been, however it was noted that AirDNA only has data back to 2017. Ms. Courtney asked about current trends with STRs, and it was discussed that the post-pandemic boom in STR usage does seem to be slowing down, but the market is still quite high.

Mr. Richard Bland stated that he supported a registry, but questioned the impact of STRs on the housing market in Stowe and the State, which it was noted there is not enough data at this time to determine.

Mr. David Sullivan questioned the legal implications of putting any regulations in place. Ms. Marks indicated that heavy-handed STR policies could certainly lead to lawsuits, and have in Burlington. She also noted that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns is also working on the legal aspect of STR policies.

Stowe Representative Mr. Jed Lipsky spoke to the importance of allowing homeowners to stay in their homes, which may require utilizing STRs to help with property tax payments. He also spoke to the importance of STRs to the Town, both for owners and for the income generated for Local Option Taxes. Finally, he cautioned against using STRs as a “scapegoat” for the state and nation wide housing crisis.

### **Short-Term Rentals: Public Input Session**

The Selectboard opened the session up to all public comments related to Short Term Rentals (STR).

Mr. Lynn Altadonna spoke to the need of many homeowners to have STRs to afford their property taxes.

He spoke to the need to reform education funding in the State to remove the burden on property owners.

Ms. Sandra Kuhl stated that she fully supports a registry to gather information on STR marketplace in Stowe, and to assure compliance with safety standards. She also asked that the Selectboard members disclose if they have any ownership in STRs or LTRs. Ms. Courtney and Mr. Aumand responded that

they do not own any STR or LTRs. Mr. Adams stated that he has rented his homes. Ms. Hagerty stated that she has rented her homes in the past and is looking to possibly do so in the future. Mr. Donza stated that he does not have any STRs but does own and build LTR units in Morrisville.

Ms. Kelly Shaw stated that she lives in Stowe and also works for STR management company with about 50 homes, and that while she does support data collection, and making STRs safe and responsible, she does not support a restrictive ordinance.

Ms. Mary Curtis Skelton Altadonna stated that she utilizes STR of her home to afford to live in Stowe, and that she supports a registry that would give both renters and owners a sense of protection. She stated that she would support a registry for both STR and LTR.

Ms. Susan Romans spoke to concerns that STRs may be making it more difficult for workers to live in Stowe, and that it can be difficult to find volunteers in the community when they often cannot afford to live in the town. She stated that she would support a registry for both STR and LTR.

Ms. Catherine Gott stated that she has been renting in Stowe for 15+ years and supports a registry to gather more information, but feels that housing overall is a much bigger issue that needs to be looked at. She also spoke to the lack of volunteers for Town Boards & Commissions due to lack of housing in Stowe.

Mr. Mike Buonano voiced concerns about the financial burden some may face to get their STR up to safety codes. He did state that he was not opposed to a registry for data collection.

Mr. Brian Hamor cautioned that those renting STRs not up to safety standards are putting both themselves and renters at risk. He also stated that he felt STRs were best located in areas zoned for lodging. It was previously noted that STRs in residential areas has been legally established as an acceptable use.

Mr. AJ Shinnars stated that he does property management, including STRs and that most renters are following the rules and want a registry, as they are already doing everything it would require. He stated that the small number of renters who are not following the rules makes it tough for everyone renting STRs.

The Selectboard thanked the community for voicing their thoughts and concerns with them, and this feedback would be utilized in future discussions related to STR policy.

There was no action taken at this time.

#### Green Mountain Transit Banner Request

Green Mountain Transit, who operated the Mountain Road Shuttle in the winter, has expressed that they are having difficulty hiring drivers. They have requested to hang a banner in Stowe that would state “Drive for GMT & Ski for Free” as an incentive to obtain employees. Mr. Safford stated that it is not an event, so the only way it could be considered is as Governmental Speech by the Selectboard, allowing it to be hung for 21 days per the Town of Stowe Banner Policy. Mr. Aumand stated that he did not feel this banner met the requirements for Government Speech per the policy. In the past the Town has allowed GMT to hang banners supporting the Mountain Road Shuttle, which was considered promotion of public transit and for the public good. The Board discussed that allowing for hiring promotions may not fit the definition of “public good” and would also set a precedent if other non-profit organizations were looking to hire staff.

Ms. Courtney made a motion to authorize the GMT banner for up to 21 days subject to availability of space. There was no second and the motion was not carried.

#### **Manager’s Report**

Mr. Safford noted that the Stowe Police Department was recognized for their “dedication to public safety education excellence” for their on-line and in-person training programs.

## Selectboard Meeting 9/13/23

Mr. Safford provided a memo from Police Chief Hull indicating that the new detective starting on 9/3/23 will be assigned a vehicle to take home, but not for personal use. They have also requested to authorize supervisors to take home a vehicle when on-call due to staffing shortages. Mr. Aumand questioned if this would expand the fleet, possibly as an unintended consequence of adding a new officer in the FY'24 police budget. It was discussed that the vehicle to be assigned to the new detective was one that was scheduled to be traded in and was kept due to the lack of trade in value, however it may end up being added to the equipment fund during the budgeting process.

Mr. Safford provided the Board with the FY'24 YTD financial reports.

Mr. Safford provided the Board with an update from Stephen Friedman, Stowe Representative to the Lamoille Fibernet CUD, as well as a press release from Lamoille Fibernet indicating that they have received grant funding for some of their work.

Mr. Safford provided the Board with the Stowe Arts & Culture Council Action Plan for 2023-2024.

Mr. Safford provided the Board with an infographic detailing the number of visits and activities for the year at the Stowe Free Library.

Mr. Safford provided the Board an update from the Cemetery Commission.

Mr. Safford provided the Board with a number of DRB notices and Act 250 Land Use Permit notices.

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board went into Executive Session to discuss Legal, Real Estate and Personnel at 8:39pm.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:12pm.

There being no further business, Chair Hagerty adjourned the meeting at 9:12pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Bourgeois.

\*Note: The video recording of the meeting is available on the town's website [www.townofstowe.org](http://www.townofstowe.org)