



**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting  
Wednesday, May 8, 2024**

**Present:**

Selectboard Members: Billy Adams, Paco Aumand, Nick Donza, Jo Sabel Courtney, Ethan Carlson

**Attendees:**

Town Manager Charles Safford, Assistant Town Manager Will Fricke, Finance Director Cindy Fuller, Public Works Director Harry Shepard, David Wilkins, Molly Pindell, Paul Sakash, Mila Lonetto, Rachel Moore, John Walsh, Barb Puddicombe, Beth Gadbois

23 attended via Zoom

**Call to Order**

Selectboard Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. He noted that Selectboard Member Nick Donza is dealing with an emergency and is not present.

**Approval of the Agenda**

On a motion by Ms. Sabel Courtney, seconded by Mr. Carlson, the Selectboard approved an amended agenda, with the Consideration of the Friends of Waterbury Reservoir Letter of Support as Item 6 in Business. All were in favor (4-0, Mr. Donza absent).

**Consent Agenda**

1. April 10 2024 Selectboard Minutes
2. April 24 2024 Selectboard Minutes
3. Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP) Annual Adoption
4. Special Event Application - Art on Park
5. Event Application - British Invasion Block Party
6. Special Event Application - Traditional Christmas in Stowe
7. Special Event Application - 4th of July Celebration Parade
8. LCPC Brownfields Committee Appointment

9. Arts & Culture Council Charge Statement
10. Liquor Items

On a motion by Mr. Aumand, seconded by Ms. Sabel Courtney, the Selectboard approved the consent agenda. All were in favor (4-0, Mr. Donza absent).

*Note by Selectboard Clerk: Mr. Donza arrived after approval of the consent agenda.*

### **Exposed Exhibit**

Mr. Aumand moved to approve the 2024 Exposed Exhibit for pieces on Town property, subject to the notes/comments provided by the Public Works Director and standards stipulated in the Selectboard Art in Public Places Policy. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded.

Rachel Moore, Executive Director of The Current, was present to answer questions about the exhibit. Mr. Adams asked if a bench located where one exhibit is located will be moved or relocated. Ms. Moore said it will be temporarily relocated.

The Selectboard voted to approve the Exposed Exhibit. All were in favor.

### **Alchemist 20th Anniversary Celebration**

John Walsh of the Alchemist was present to answer questions about the event. Ms. Sabel Courtney thanked Mr. Walsh for their efforts to improve their parking plan.

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the special event application as submitted, with the condition that there will be no on-street parking. Mr. Carlson seconded the motion. All were in favor.

### **Strawberry Hill Summer Stage**

Molly Pindell and David Wilkins of Strawberry Hill were present to answer questions about the event. Ms. Pindell said they have done a number of fundraisers and weddings on the property in the past, and are looking to hold a concert this summer. She said they are planning to hire private security, and have a lineup of bluegrass bands for the event. Parking will be on-site at the farm in a field off-street. Ms. Sabel Courtney asked about porta potty's; Ms. Pindell said they did not put them on the site map, but they plan to have them. Ms. Sabel Courtney asked which company they plan to hire for security; Ms. Pindell said they currently have two bids out to private security companies. Mr. Aumand asked about the music amplification; Ms. Pindell said it will be acoustic instruments, but amplified. Mr. Aumand said he was concerned about the noise and asked about the stage orientation; Mr. Pindell said it will face northwest and they will end music at 9:30pm. Mr. Donza said that he is generally critical of special events, and as far as places for events this is a low impact location. Ms. Pindell said they picked this weekend because it is typically not a busy as other times. Mr. Adams asked if they had contacted Waterbury Ambulance for EMS coverage; Ms. Pindell said they plan to have an EMT tent on-site. Ms. Sabel Courtney said her concern is traffic coming out onto Mountain Road; Ms. Pindell said they were not instructed to have a traffic control officer but they can station a parking attendant at the end of the road for the end of the concert.

Mr. Carlson moved to approve the special event application subject to the organizers providing private security for the event, no parking on the public roadway, and capping the number of tickets sold at 1,000. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded.

Mr. Aumand noted the application said ZenBarn will be the permit holder to serve alcohol, and added that they need a local permit. He asked if they did not get in the application if the organizers were fine with not serving alcohol. Ms. Pindell said they are, but they would find another vendor in that was the case.

On the motion to approve, all were in favor.

### **FY24 Budget Status Report**

Mr. Safford said that they have a higher-than-anticipated surplus of about \$1.1 million. He explained that it is an anomaly stemming from unique circumstances, not because they are overbudgeting. Those circumstances are the mild winter, staffing shortages, higher-than anticipated interest income, local option sales tax revenue, and zoning application fees.

Mr. Safford provided some options for the Selectboard to consider with the surplus, and noted that if the budget is underspent it automatically goes into the undesignated surplus for future allocation by the Selectboard and the voters to decide what to do with any surplus monies in a future year. Options for spending it down this fiscal year include a one-time transfer allocation or designation in the future budgets that would not have a net impact on the budget, reducing the equipment fund deficit which is projected to be \$580,000 in FY28, adding to the paving allocation to help meet demand, or other ideas that the Selectboard or the public may have. He added that the auditors recommend 2 months of cash flow to be in the undesignated surplus, which is about \$1.7 million. The undesignated surplus is anticipated to be about \$2.5 million, over that amount by \$841,000. Mr. Adams asked when final sales tax numbers will be available. Ms. Fuller said the fourth quarter numbers will be available in August. Mr. Safford added that these numbers are to bring the Selectboard up to speed, and unless they have something that they feel can be reasonably accommodated this year, and want something advanced with the anticipated surplus sooner rather than later, the undesignated surplus will be a subject of discussion during the upcoming budget session.

Mr. Aumand asked about the status of Sunset Street. Ms. Sabel Courtney concurred with the question. Mr. Safford said Sunset Street requires considerable engineering work that would come out of the capital fund. The Selectboard can anticipate a proposed engineering project for consideration as part of the FY'26 Capital Budget. Mr. Aumand commented that it seems Sunset Street paving issue is less about money than it is about time. Mr. Safford said that it is not just a simple paving overlay; there are issues with the sidewalk, curbing, drainage, and the retaining wall that need to be figured out, and they realized they did not have the time internally to take it on, so it needs to be budgeted as a capital project for the engineering in one year and the implementation in the future. We budgeted money in the paving program for an overlay to hold it and make it more bearable until that can happen. He added that we are seeing much higher costs for our capital projects, and the Selectboard can anticipate having to come back and revisit those previously approved projects and potentially increasing the capital allocation.

Mr. Donza noted that the local option sales tax is tracking higher than budgeted, and how that will be approached in the next budget. Mr. Safford said it can give the Selectboard greater confidence to potentially increase the budgeted revenue in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Donza asked about the savings from being short-staffed, and while he doesn't want to see added pressure on the staff that we do have, he wasn't hearing an uproar from the community that there is not things being done. Mr. Safford said they did hear it last year for Parks as they had a new team and weren't able to fill the rosters, but they increased the pay this year and were able to fill the team. Zoning was overrun and it took them a while to get out of the gate and hire someone. Police is having a challenge time filling their roster, but it is a challenge for other police agencies as well.

Mr. Donza said that with Act 127, we have these reappraisals, and as a municipality we are only in control of 25% of our budget and the other side of that budget is going up, so as much as we can do as a municipality to keep our budget in check is going to help people that are watching their property taxes explode. Mr. Safford said that we will look at those needs along with the Board and unless the Board tells us otherwise, we're assuming a status quo rate of inflation type of budget. There are things that may help us such as grand list growth and the sales tax. On the other side we are in the process of merging the Fire Department and EMS and need to budget money in FY'26 to hire a unified Chief and we have heavy demand in Public Works that need to be taking into consideration regarding adding staffing.

Mr. Carlson asked about zoning fees and what is driving the higher-than-anticipated revenues. Mr. Safford said Stowe continues to see strong development pressure, and the FY25 budget anticipated zoning revenues were increased, so that surplus is not necessarily going to carry over to the same degree. Mr. Donza commented that those revenues should be an indicator for future local option tax revenue as those projects get built.

Mr. Aumand commented that the Town Manager has cautioned against trying to develop vacancy savings by cutting your budget to the staffing level that you are realistically going to fill during the year, like the state does. At our small staffing level that is probably not a good idea. He would propose at budget time that we budget for the positions they hope to fill. He added that they need to show some recognition for the surplus, so perhaps increasing the anticipated revenues would be appropriate given the context of this year's surplus. Mr. Carlson added that you want to budget accurately, not overly conservatively or aggressively.

Chair Adams called for public comment. Paul Sakash asked about the growth of the undesignated surplus, and why the surplus is not used to reduce taxes. Mr. Safford said it was a specific goal of the Selectboard to increase the undesignated surplus to the amount recommended by the auditors, and once it exceeds that it is up to the Selectboard and the voters how to use it. Mr. Sakash also asked about police staffing and the budget for a unified Fire/EMS chief. Beth Gadbois asked if the Town has had to dip into the surplus recently. Mr. Safford said no other than what was planned budgetarily, which has historically been \$365,000 per year to offset taxes. Ms. Gadbois also commented that the Town should attempt to educate people on what to call the police for, and what not to, as a way to reduce their burden. She also commented that the Selectboard should consider affordable housing in their goals. David Wilkins asked how the Town gets the interest rates that make up their interest income.

### **Selectboard Goals**

Chair Adams introduced the Selectboard's annual goal-setting session. Mr. Safford summarized the items that the Town is already committed to, items that Selectboard member(s) have expressed a desire to further discuss, and items that he recommends they be aware of and may want to consider. Mr. Safford emphasized the need to undertake a water/sewer capacity analysis. The Town used to feel more comfortable with the capacity, but we are seeing increased occupancy of what were historically second

homes, development pressure, and the state mandate to increase density within a municipal sewer core. Chair Adams asked for each Selectboard member to provide their priorities.

Paco Aumand – Housing, including affordable housing and housing stock analysis. STR implementation and analysis. Forming a housing committee or commission made up of local experts covering all aspects of the issues that can help advise us and the community on how to move forward. Traffic and impacts on road infrastructure and maintenance. Developmental impact of projects on road infrastructure.

Jo Sabel Courtney – Housing, a housing working group. Part-time administrative assistant to assist with communications [Mr. Aumand concurred with the idea of the staff position]. PFAS. Water/Sewer infrastructure. Public transportation. Prepare for the reappraisal coming out. Traffic, revisit the traffic study.

Ethan Carlson – Housing, housing committee – make it broader so that people who don't typically get involved get involved. Shared services for schools, have the superintendent present and come in to discuss collaboration opportunities with the Selectboard. PFAS. Water/Sewer infrastructure, tied with the housing study or committee. Study the impact of large developments on water/sewer capacity. Traffic. Communications and a Stowe PR/Outreach campaign, have a voice within the state in collaboration with other Lamoille County towns.

Nick Donza – Housing, affordable housing, keeping Stowe affordable for people who want to live and work here. Tax reduction, Act 127, school shared services and re-entering the MOU with schools. Traffic, there are lots of intersections that worked because of lower volume, Stowe relies on growth and we need to get ahead of it by increasing capacity. Act 47, capacity, understanding what we can do to control growth if necessary, understanding responsibilities and plan to increase capacity, potentially adding another staffer in public works to alleviate pressure.

Billy Adams – Reappraisal and where that will come in at, a concern that a lot of people won't be able to handle the burden. Water/sewer capacity study, be proactive about capacity. Fire/EMS merger, a report or analysis from the Fire Department on their calls on regular basis, track violations of ordinances. Look at increasing staffing in Public Works and Planning/Zoning. Housing, a housing work group, comprehensive residential housing utilization study and potentially hire a consultant. Open meeting law/ethics policy review, new state requirements. Zoning amendments, legal review of zoning prior to Selectboard approval. Look at the school MOU and see what we can do. Public communication. Traffic.

The Selectboard also discussed the Moscow Road/Rt 100 intersection and methods to prevent unsafe turning.

### **Friends of Waterbury Reservoir Petition**

Mr. Aumand moved to support the Friends of Waterbury Reservoir Petition to prohibit wakesports on the Waterbury Reservoir and direct the Chair to sign the letter of support. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. Mr. Safford noted that they provided the ANR definition of wakesports, and the Selectboard discussed the merits of the petition. Mr. Adams, Mr. Aumand, Mr. Donza, and Ms. Courtney voted in support of the motion. Mr. Carlson abstained.

### **Manager's Report**

Mr. Safford and Public Works Director Harry Shepard discussed the Water Source Protection Plan 2024 update. Public Works/Water has received VTDEC approval for the required 2024 update of our Water Source Protection Plans. This is a compliance requirement for Water System Operating Permits every 4 years. Enclosed please find the maps depicting both our Village Green and Edson Hill Source Protection Areas. Also enclosed is required Notices to both affected property owners and Water Commissioners associated with this update. It is noted that the Snowflake oil tank leak, which recently detected hydrocarbons in one their on-site monitoring wells, initiating a new round of sampling and testing of our sentinel wells on our Village Green site, is within the Village Green Source Protection Area. This remains a sensitive risk and concern for our Village Green supply that was a topic of discussion during our renewal application. It is also noted that the proposed development at the Stowe Country Club is within the wellhead protection area. Public Works provided comments regarding these particulars, amongst others, to the DRB with the preliminary subdivision application for this project. This also requires diligence regarding potential undue adverse impacts going forward.

Mr. Safford said that the Vermont Downtown Development Board approved Stowe's designated downtown renewals.

Mr. Safford provided an update on the sewer construction at Lintilhac Park, and said they are looking to reopen the rec path parking lot by the end of the week.

Mr. Safford provided the Selectboard with Act 250 notices.

### **Public to be Heard Non-Binding**

Paul Sakash asked for information regarding the Town of Stowe/Stowe Mountain Resort settlement. Mr. Safford said it was a non-monetary settlement regarding the development of a parking lot.

### **Executive Session**

Mr. Aumand moved to find that premature public knowledge would clearly place the public body, or a person involved, at a substantial disadvantage. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mr. Aumand moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel and real estate. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded the motion. All were in favor. The Selectboard entered executive session at 8:00pm.

On a motion by Ms. Sabel Courtney, seconded by Mr. Carlson, the Selectboard left executive session at 8:45pm.

### **Appointments**

Mr. Donza moved to appoint Bill Scudder to the Recreation Committee. Mr. Carlson seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Adams moved to appoint Lynn Altadonna and Scot Baraw as Development Review Board alternates. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Adams moved to appoint Sara Opel to the Arts & Culture Council. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. All were in favor.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Adams adjourned the meeting at 8:47pm.