

# Stowe Selectboard Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

Akeley Memorial Building  
67 Main Street  
Stowe, Vermont



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

**In-Person Attendees:** Town Manager Charles Safford, Assistant Town Manager Will Fricke, Public Works Director Harry Shepard, Tasha Wallis, Sarah Henshaw, Aiden Pichette, Barbara Puddicombe, Lauren Soelch, Steven LaRosa, Christopher Roy, Pall Spera, Ed Lacroy (12)

**Zoom Attendees:** Monica Wallis, Chris Damiani, Mike Elliott, Heather Snyder, Fabian Alenius, Rich Scott, Blake Blundell, Thea Shive, Sean Horgan, and 4 others (13)

## Call to Order

Selectboard Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

## Approval of the Agenda

Chair Adams noted the addition of one liquor application for The Butchery on the consent agenda.

Mr. Donza moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

## Consent Agenda (Items A-1 through A-10)

1. Selectboard Minutes September 11, 2024
2. Deputy Health Officer Appointment
3. Energy Building Improvement Grant Application
4. Rec Path to Events Field Bridge
5. Police Special Event Fees
6. Halloween Road Closures
7. Amend Flood Capital Appropriation
8. Mountain Road Townhomes Consecutive Water and Sewer System Agreements
9. State Use of Moscow Garage for Bridge Projects
10. Liquor Items
11. *Liquor Item – Application 48845*

Mr. Aumand moved to approve the consent agenda with the addition of the application for The Butchery. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

## Mountain Road Shuttle Route (Item B-1)

Monica White and Chris Damiani of Green Mountain Transit (GMT) were in attendance to give a seasonal update on GMT and to discuss an alternate route for the winter shuttle. They explained that GMT desires to eliminate the left turn from School Street onto Main Street, and that they have discussed alternative routes. One alternative was a route that takes Weeks Hill Road and West Hill Road, but would eliminate the Mountain Road stops between Main Street and Weeks Hill Road. Another alternative was using Shaw's market on West Hill Road as a turnaround, but it would not work logistically with their deliveries. A third alternative was to avoid Main Street and have stops near the Dewey Bridge and/or Von Bargen's Jewelry Store. It was noted that the Stowe route had 100,000 riders last year

with 9,000 pickups and 7,000 drop-offs at Town Hall, 7,000 drop-offs at the 100/108 stop near the Village Inn, and 2,000 drop-offs at Mac's.

Mr. Carlson asked about the safety concerns turning left off of School Street. Ms. White said they have had a fair number of near misses, but they are not tracked. An accident would risk injury and damage to buses. Ms. Sabel Courtney said there is no good answer and voiced her concern with stopping near Von Bargen's and the Dewey Bridge. She said it is important to stop at the West Branch Apartments.

Mr. Adams said the safety concerns are unfortunate at School Street, but Von Bargen's and Dewey Bridge are awful locations to stop a bus, and that traffic flow would be made worse by a bus stop near the intersection. He noted that Akeley has shelter and wide sidewalks, while Von Bargen's and the Dewey Bridge have narrow sidewalks, and safety issues would be worse at those locations. The bus would likely need to cross traffic in order to stop near Von Bargen's and then turn left onto Mountain Road. He said he is not in favor of those locations and the village is essential to be part of bus service.

Mr. Carlson said the West Branch stop is important and agreed that a Dewey Bridge stop would be problematic.

Mr. Aumand said the ridership numbers at Akeley are not insignificant, and he would only support altering the village stop if another viable stop at Von Bargen's and Dewey Bridge was possible, but it does not seem that way. He said he is not in support of changing the route, and more time is needed to figure out the issue in the long term.

Mr. Adams asked if sightlines are the issue or traffic. Ms. White said the issue is more so traffic not allowing the bus through, rather than sightlines. Mr. Damiani said the smaller buses that previously served the route had less of an issue. Ms. White noted they have too many riders to go back to the short buses.

Mr. Aumand said they do not have enough information on the exact problem, and the issues are more complex than the Board is prepared to solve this evening.

Mr. Carlson asked if the problem was worse on peak weekends. Ms. White said the severity changes with the traffic volume. Mr. Carlson said they do not have enough data on the challenge, which Mr. Aumand voiced agreement with. Mr. Safford said they can gather data this winter to zero in on the issue, which would help with analysis on what can be done.

Mr. Aumand asked whose decision this was. Mr. Safford said the Selectboard controls the Town right-of-way in terms of stops/signage but cannot force GMT to stop in a particular location.

Mr. Safford said they can re-engage the traffic consultant on the issue which Mr. Aumand and Ms. Sabel Courtney voiced agreement with.

Mr. Carlson said he has no desire to drop the Akeley stop. Ms. White suggested utilizing the Lamoille County Sheriff or Stowe Police for traffic control at the School Street intersection. Mr. Safford indicated it may not be practical to have an officer there to control traffic at the intersection for an occurrence every 15 minutes. Mr. Adams suggested looking into mechanical systems for traffic control like electronic signs.

Mr. Carlson said they should look at the flow of traffic in the downtown. Ms. Sabel Courtney said her concern is people popping out and not using the crosswalk, and she would like a crossing signal to regulate pedestrian crossings. Mr. Donza voiced agreement.

GMT noted they need a decision on the routing in the next two weeks. Ms. White said they are fine with keeping the current route contingent on the Town's commitment to improving intersection safety and engaging a consultant. Mr. Adams said they will give a good-faith commitment to improve safety and enhance ridership in the village.

Chair Adams asked for public comment. Beth Gadbois suggested using Mac's as a turnaround. Mr. Adams noted it would have the same issue as Shaw's with delivery trucks. Aiden Pichette asked for information on the number of pickups going uphill.

**Tasha Wallis - LCPC (Item B-2)**

Tasha Wallis, Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission Executive Director, was in attendance to provide updates on LCPC's work. She noted that she is on the GMT Board, and that the routing decision is a partnership. The Town provides local match funds that are a funding requirement for GMT's federal grant. She added that the legislature has requested an evaluation of rural routes, and will be conducting a study to see which provider should be providing rural service. There could be another provider next year. They do not know the position of VTrans or the legislature but will keep the Town informed.

Ms. Wallis explained the HOME Act and noted the housing targets for communities. Mr. Safford noted limitations on infrastructure and asked if the legislature included funding to improve infrastructure to help meet the targets. Ms. Wallis said they did not include funding, but they included various Act 250 exemptions, including a new tier system. They also changed how regional plans are approved. Mr. Adams noted that smaller communities will struggle to meet housing targets due to a lack of staff and infrastructure, and that Stowe would benefit from them meeting those targets. Mr. Donza said the legislature's upzoning density within water and sewer districts will have a big impact on Stowe; they are looking for people to live in housing year-round, but a lot of new housing will be second homes. Ms. Wallis said they anticipate housing growth in Morristown.

Mr. Adams asked for an update on a traffic study for the Route 100 corridor. Mr. Safford said they have not heard anything on that or the Moscow Road intersection improvements, but they were given a target date of 2027 for the Luce Hill traffic light. Mr. Donza said there is a lot of frustration that state intersections are not being improved to facilitate the housing that the state has ordered up. Ms. Wallis said that VTrans has paused their system to accept new projects because they are so far behind on existing projects. Mr. Safford said the Selectboard should have this as a topic at a legislative night.

Mr. Aumand said that Selectboards tend to operate in political silos, but housing and traffic in Waterbury, Morristown, and Stowe are regional issues. He asked how they can break down those silos and develop a more collaborate approach to work together politically. Ms. Wallis said there is a regional group with the towns along the Lamoille River to discuss flooding issues. She suggested having the Chairs and staff meet to discuss potential agendas. Ms. Sabel Courtney noted connections with the Morristown Selectboard. Mr. Carlson said Stowe is willing to be an active part of the Lamoille community; there is a mixed history, but this Board wants to be active. Mr. Aumand said this discussion should continue after budget season.

**Sarah Henshaw - LeARN (Item B-3)**

Sarah Henshaw, Coordinator for the Lamoille Area Recovery Network (LeARN), was in attendance to explain the program and talk about their work. She said that LeARN is a FEMA-designated long-term recovery group which helps people recover from natural disasters who have unmet needs, generally by linking them with financial assistance and helping with applications. They were formed after the July 2023 floods. Mr. Safford noted Sarah's assistance with helping an individual with FEMA buyout paperwork.

Ms. Sabel Courtney asked where LeARN gets its funding. Ms. Henshaw said they are funded by the Vermont Community Foundation, as well as private individuals and organizations. Mr. Aumand asked if there are plans to sunset the organization. Ms. Henshaw said they are figuring out how to best operate in the future, as they would be needed for future disaster recovery.

**Manager's Report (Item C-1)**

Mr. Safford presented a Site Management Activities Completed Letter for the Stowe Electric Garage stating in part, that SMS is "not requesting any additional work in response to the reported contamination from the AST release at this time," and "Any residual contamination remaining at the site does not pose an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment providing it remains undisturbed and the garage remains unoccupied."

Mr. Safford reported that staff are nearing completion on a new Town of Stowe website that will combine the current Town website, library, public safety, and recreation.

Mr. Safford presented a table comparing statistics between Stowe and the Town of Vail, Colorado, noting it is a similarly situated municipality. He said that while they collect similar amount of property taxes, Vail has significantly higher non-property tax revenue. They have greater flexibility in how revenue is raised is due to Vail being a home rule municipality.

Mr. Carlson requested clarification on the September 10 Recreation Commission minutes and plans for Moscow Recreation Fields going forward. He said they should consider adding a playground and picnic tables. Mr. Safford said they will ask staff what they can do at that field.

Ms. Sabel Courtney asked about the entrance to Topnotch Field and whether work to improve the entrance was completed. Mr. Shepard said they added gravel to soften the approach but is not sure if it will be effective in improving the flow of traffic.

Mr. Adams asked for clarification on the plans for the Luce Hill intersection. Mr. Safford said it will be T'd up and a light will be added. Mr. Adams asked if the Cape Cod Road development would change the assessment for the intersection. Mr. Shepard said the state is not including that in their consideration for the intersection design but is not sure whether or not it would change the outlook. He said the state has taken a lot of what Town staff have offered into consideration. He noted that 2027 is an optimistic estimate for completion.

Mr. Aumand asked how far up Rt 100 the Town plows and if the Town has any responsibility beyond that. Mr. Safford said they plow to the former village limits, approximately where the flashing speed sign is. He said beyond that it is a state responsibility, and the state is responsible for paving and painting class 1 highways. Mr. Aumand asked if the Town of Waterbury has responsibility for Rt 100 between the interstate exit and Cold Hollow Cider Mill. He noted the traffic was significant from the highway into Stowe. Mr. Shepard said that is a state highway. Mr. Donza said from his observation it is the Cider Mill backing up traffic, and in previous years there was a police officer directing traffic. Mr. Shepard said the Town of Waterbury has tried to get the state to look into that intersection, but they are in the same situation as Stowe is with the Moscow Road intersection where they are having difficulties getting it on the radar. Beth Gadbois noted the paving was in poor condition between the village and Weeks Hill Road. Mr. Safford said the state is responsible for paving it. Mr. Shepard said the state contracted for it five years ago but there was a problem with the materials which has caused poor performance.

#### **Public to be Heard - Non-Binding (Item C-2)**

No public comment.

#### **Executive Session**

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to enter executive session to discuss real estate. Mr. Carlson seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

The Selectboard entered executive session at 7:37pm. The Selectboard left executive session at 8:20pm.

#### **Adjournment**

Chair Adams adjourned the meeting at 8:20pm.

#### **Notes**

Minutes submitted by Will Fricke.

The Selectboard of the Town of Stowe meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm.

A recording of this public meeting is available at: <https://www.stowevt.gov/Government/Selectboard>