

Stowe Selectboard Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting

Wednesday, July 24, 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, Planning and Zoning Director Sarah McShane, Public Works Director Harry Shepard, SED General Manager Jackie Pratt, Sarah Henshaw, Beth Gadbois, Sara Teachout, Brad James, Ken Braverman, Amie Collins, Richard Adler, Walter Frame, Jeff Jackson, Jay Wallace, Sam Scofield, Stephan Grundmann, McKee MacDonald, Josi Kytile, Sarah Sterner, Terrie Wehse, Chip Dillon, Jeffrey Elbaum, Scott Coggins (25)

Zoom Attendees: 13 attended via Zoom

Call to Order

Selectboard Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

Approval of the Agenda

The Selectboard amended the agenda to move consent item A-2 to business as item B-4.

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

Executive Session

Mr. Donza moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel. Mr. Carlson seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

The Selectboard entered executive session at 3:35pm. The Selectboard left executive session at 5:47pm.

Consent Agenda (Items A-1 and A-3 through A-6)

1. July 10, 2024 Selectboard Minutes
2. ~~Housing Task Force Charge Statement~~ [Moved to item B-4]
3. VTDEC Grant and Sub Grant Agreements – Stowe Cider Pretreatment
4. VCDP Grant Application to Advance Merger of Lamoille County Housing Partnership and Downstreet Housing & Community Development.
5. Water/Sewer Allocation – 1613 Mountain Road
6. Liquor Items

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

SED USDA Loan/Grant GO Bond Informational Meeting (Item B-1)

Mr. Safford indicated that the Stowe Electric Department was seeking voter approval for a \$2.8 million General Obligation bond to fund infrastructure projects. The bond would be paid through electric rates, but a general obligation bond is backed by the full faith and credit of the Town of Stowe and its Grand List.

Jackie Pratt, Stowe Electric Department General Manager, was in attendance to provide information about the General Obligation bond special town meeting vote on August 13 and answer any questions the public may have about the vote. She gave a presentation on the projects the bond would fund, which include hydroelectric upgrades

to the Smith Falls dam and an Emergency Operations Center on the SED campus in Moscow. She said that anyone interested can contact her with additional questions.

FEMA Housing Buy-Out (Item B-2)

Mr. Safford outlined the process for FEMA home buyouts and elevation grants. He noted that for each property, only a buyout or an elevation can be applied for, but not both, and that at this point it is a pre-application and there would be a period of time before a final application is submitted. He added that the funding for the elevation program runs through the Town, and the Town is expected to contract for the work like any other procurement process, but in this case the Town would be interfacing with private property.

Mr. Adams asked if the Board needs to make a decision tonight. Mr. Safford said the deadline was extended to August 30 so there is not a decision that needs to be made at this meeting. He said the Selectboard would need to decide if their intent is to potentially advance pre-applications, with the understanding they could back at any time. Mr. Adams asked if the Town had any financial liability from this program. Mr. Safford said that is likely true for buyouts but is not certain with respect to elevations. He noted that the Executive Director for the Lamoille County Planning Commission indicated that they were involved with one that took 8 years and not all money was recovered.

Sara Teachout and Brad James of 44 North Hollow Road provided their perspective on both programs and asked the Selectboard to advance them for a pre-application. Sarah Henshaw of the Lamoille Area Recovery Network provided additional context for the program. Mr. Carlson asked what the success rate for elevation program applications is. Ms. Henshaw said Vermont does not have very many, and she can't speak to a success rate.

Mr. Safford said they are comfortable with their ability to manage the process for buyouts subject to FEMA eligibility, and that it is not as involved as the elevation program. Mr. Aumand said he is concerned with homestead residents not being able to afford another home in Stowe after taking the buyout, and that he does not want to be in a position of not being able to support people living in this community. He said he would support both options based on what the homeowners want. Mr. Adams said he doesn't think a decision needs to be made tonight if it gives the homeowners an opportunity before the August 30 pre-application deadline to get more information from an engineer on whether it is feasible to elevate their home. Mr. Donza expressed concern with the Town being left on the hook for some of the payments. Mr. Safford said it potentially could be structured with the goal of transferring liability for whatever is not recoverable to the homeowner, but he cannot provide absolute surety in this regard.

Mr. Aumand moved to submit an application for those requested for the municipal buyout and elevation program, with the understanding of the municipality and the property numbers reserve the right to pull out at a future date. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded.

Mr. Adams noted the deadline is August 30. Mr. Safford said they have another homeowner interested in the buyout program and will update the Selectboard on August 28 if there are additional requests. Mr. Donza said that he is supportive but if it comes back and there seems to be requiring a large amount of money out of municipal taxes, it would be hard. Mr. Aumand and Mr. Carlson voiced agreement. Mr. Safford said the Town would reserve the right to pull out at any time. He added that if it becomes apparent that there is a large portion of the project that is not eligible to be covered by FEMA they would expect that to be covered by the property owner if it was to continue to advance, and that agreements would be structured to transfer risk and liability.

Motion carried (5-0).

Town Plan Update and Discussion (Item B-3)

Sarah McShane, Planning and Zoning Director, gave a presentation on the Town Plan update. She noted that the current Town Plan expires in 2026 and the Planning Commission is early in the process of updating it. She said they

have cards in spots throughout Town asking people what they love most about Stowe and what their number one wish for Stowe is, to help inform the Town Plan update.

Housing Task Force Charge Statement (Item B-4)

Ms. Sabel Courtney asked for clarification on when the appendix was added to the charge statement. Mr. Safford noted it was added on June 26 and was intended to be on the July 10 version. Mr. Carlson suggested a modification to the title of the appendix, to read “data question to be considered,” and to remove attribution to a single Selectboard member. Mr. Carlson also said that he wants to emphasize the purpose of the Housing Task Force is to come up with actionable items that the Selectboard can consider, task number 5, of which data gathering is a major piece. Mr. Aumand added that task number 5 is very important, but they can’t get to it without collecting data. The Selectboard agreed and said sequence is important.

Mr. Carlson moved to approve the Housing Task Force Charge Statement with the modifications discussed. Mr. Aumand seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

Manager’s Report (Item C-1)

Mr. Safford said the storm is not over with respect to recovery and it is likely to consume the remainder of the construction season. He said they will continue to ask for patience with respect to more routine maintenance. Mr. Safford said he distributed a list of storm damage recovery projects to the Selectboard that are likely to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars; the North Hollow Road culvert, the Depot Street culvert, and the Cemetery Road bridge. Mr. Safford added that the Rec Path is open in its entirety after sustaining damage from the storms, but has gravel sections until a contractor can come in to re-pave it. He also said the Moscow Fields continue to suffer from erosion. Stowe volleyball has indicated they do not intend to try to reestablish the courts at this location and will work on exploring alternative locations. He indicated the municipality would need permits from the state to riprap the river and the state tries to limit the amount of rip rap permits as they tend to want to have the water take it’s natural course unless there is critical infrastructure involved.

Mr. Aumand moved to continue to operate under the emergency provisions and exercise purchasing authority keeping with those emergency provisions of the purchasing policy, and to understand that sole source for major projects may be necessary with an award by the Manager with notification to the Selectboard, as long as proper documentation is in place to attempt to secure FEMA funding. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded.

Mr. Safford added that no funding is guaranteed. Mr. Aumand said that he wants to make sure FEMA funding is not rejected due to lack of proper documentation. Mr. Safford said they will properly document and are familiar with FEMA requirements. Mr. Carlson asked where they are with FEMA declaration. Mr. Safford said they are 50/50 on a declaration for the first storm, and the second storm is a safer bet.

Motion carried (5-0).

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

Beth Gadbois said the Town did a magnificent job fixing the Rec Path. Mr. Adams added that they appreciate the work staff did to make repairs to town infrastructure.

Paul Sakash asked when the tax rate would be set. Mr. Safford said they are still completing the reappraisal process and hope to hold a special meeting to set the tax rate.

Executive Session

Mr. Donza moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel. Mr. Carlson seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

The Selectboard entered executive session at 7:28pm. The Selectboard left executive session at 9:34pm.

Housing Task Force Appointments

Mr. Carlson moved to appoint Sarah Henshaw, Ken Braverman, Walter Frame, Stefan Grundmann, Josi Kyle,

McKee Macdonald, and Scott Coggins to the Housing Task Force. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

Adjournment

Chair Adams adjourned the meeting at 9:35pm.

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.townofstovevt.org/selectboardrecordings>