

Stowe Selectboard Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

Akeley Memorial Building
67 Main Street
Stowe, Vermont



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

Absent: Ethan Carlson

In-Person Attendees: Town Manager Charles Safford, Assistant Town Manager Will Fricke, Catherine Crawley, Michael Lazorchak, Marina Meerburg (5)

Zoom Attendees: Public Works Director Harry Shepard, Angie Harbin, Abigail Bourgeois, Mila Lonetto, and 6 others (10)

Call to Order

Selectboard Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. He asked for a moment of silence and noted the significance of the Memorial Hall.

Approval of the Agenda

The Selectboard added one item to the consent agenda as item A-4, a request from the Cemetery Commission to spend \$1,000 for the planting of trees and shrubs in cemeteries.

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Donza seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

Consent Agenda (Items A-1 through A-4)

1. August 28, 2024 Selectboard Minutes
2. Management of Excess Funds
3. Liquor Items
4. Cemetery Commission – \$1,000 from Remembrance Fund for the planting of trees and shrubs.

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Donza seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

VCDP Grant Application Public Hearing (Item B-1)

Angie Harbin, Executive Director of Downstreet Housing and Community Development, was in attendance to explain the grant application and answer questions. She said they are seeking the grant to pay for the cost of merging Downstreet with Lamoille Housing Partnership (LHP). They need a municipality to partner with in order to receive funding.

Mr. Adams asked if the name of LHP will change. Ms. Harbin said it would not.

Mr. Donza asked what would happen to the current LHP board. Ms. Harbin said Downstreet will assume LHP assets, the LHP board will disband, and three members of the LHP board will join the Downstreet board.

Mr. Donza asked what Downstreet currently represents. Ms. Harbin said they represent Washington County and part of Orange County. She noted that due to the cost of affordable housing construction, there are lots of mergers in the state such as this one.

Mr. Aumand asked why they need Stowe to be an applicant. Ms. Harbin said they need a municipality in Lamoille County to be the grant pass-through organization. Mr. Safford said that the Town has the capacity to manage this grant.

Mr. Adams said he is concerned about watering down Lamoille County representation as organizations merge. Ms. Harbin said they share the concern and housing funders will continue to view Lamoille as a separate entity. They will be keeping a physical office presence in Lamoille County.

Ms. Sabel Courtney asked how many people on the LHP board are Stowe residents and how many would move to the Downstreet board. Ms. Harbin said a third of the Downstreet board are residents or former residents of Downstreet housing. The Downstreet board would determine which LHP board members would join the Downstreet board.

Mr. Aumand asked if there is language in Downstreet's bylaws concerning geographical representation for projects. Ms. Harbin said there is not, but it is a naturally occurring result of funding prioritization. Funders do not want to go back-to-back in the same location.

Mr. Donza asked about the number of board seats and if the three seats from LHP will be held in perpetuity by Lamoille residents. Ms. Harbin said they currently have 15 seats and are adding 2, with 1 vacancy, for a total of 17 seats with 3 new members coming from LHP. The resolution for funding requires Lamoille representation on the board.

Chair Adams opened the public hearing. No public comment was received.

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to authorize applying for a VCDP Planning Grant to advance a merger between Lamoille Housing Partnership and Downstreet Housing & Community Development to and adopt the enclosed Resolution for VCDP Grant Application Authority. Mr. Donza seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

Energy Committee – EV Charging Station (Item B-2)

Mr. Safford said that the Electric Department with the support of the Energy Committee is requesting the Selectboard approve the installation of a Level 3 Fast Charger at Thompson Park. The charging station would be owned and operated by SED. He said the cost of relocation and installation of infrastructure will be covered by SED. Other than the signage that would be provided by the Town, SED would be responsible for all associated expenses and receive all revenues.

Crawley, Energy Committee Chair, and Michael Lazorchak, SED Regulatory Affairs Manager, were in attendance to answer questions.

Mr. Adams asked if the chargers are used more by residents or visitors. Mr. Lazorchak said his recollection of the data was that residents use them more than visitors. Mr. Adams noted that Town Plan language on chargers should be updated to include "residents and visitors." Mr. Adams asked if Thompson Park was the best spot for the charger, or if there was a location in the village that was suitable. Ms. Crawley said they looked at multiple locations and determined Thompson Park was the best site at this time, but there could be opportunities in the future to add chargers in the village.

Mr. Aumand asked if the cell coverage was truly better at Thompson Park than at the Alchemist. Mr. Lazorchak said it was. Mr. Donza asked why the Alchemist requested the removal of the charger. Mr. Lazorchak said he is aware of the reason but believed it to be a private matter.

The Selectboard discussed the merits of charger locations and the long-term implications of EVs and the need for chargers, as well as the role of the Town. It was noted that many town-owned properties are in the floodplain or do not have the necessary infrastructure to support the fast charger.

Mr. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the relocation of the Level 3 Fast Charger to Thompson Park with the understanding that it will be owned and operated by the Stowe Electric Department. Mr. Aumand seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

Ski/Bike Rack Donation (Item B-3)

Mr. Safford said Stowe Vibrancy is offering to donate two ski/bike racks to be located in the village, in front of Akeley and possibly in Lintilhac Park (rec path parking lot). He noted that ski/bike racks were identified in the Stowe Transportation Study as something that could promote alternative transportation.

Abigail Bourgeois, Executive Director of Stowe Vibrancy, was in attendance to answer questions.

Mr. Aumand said he is concerned about the optics of gifting money back to the Town. Mr. Donza said it is similar to funding the flags for the cemeteries on Memorial Day. Mr. Safford said it is Stowe Vibrancy's mission to partner with the municipality and invest in the downtown. Ms. Bourgeois said the funding comes from a state grant and the racks were included in their application for that grant.

Mr. Donza moved to accept Stowe Vibrancy's donation of two ski/bike racks for the downtown area as outlined in their offer letter. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

Municipal Property Discussion (Item B-4)

Mr. Safford said that the Selectboard previously indicated a desire to learn what property the town owns and its current use in order to consider whether any should be sold or used for other purposes. Staff prepared a list of town-owned properties for discussion purposes. Mr. Fricke noted that the Moscow Field has a conservation easement that was not included in the list.

Mr. Donza said his view is looking to make the Town operate better and use land in the full potential they can. He suggested relocating the transfer station to a location outside of the downtown area as one example. Ms. Sabel Courtney said they should think about the transfer station being relocated to a place that is more utilitarian. Mr. Donza said he likes the Moscow Garage location for that purpose, and it could be operated more efficiently in a different location. Mr. Safford said he will discuss with LRSWMD what they would think about the idea of relocating the transfer station.

Mr. Aumand asked about Sterling Valley. Mr. Safford said it is conserved land used for recreation trails, hunting, bird habitat, etc. He said it was a town conservation effort a number of years back.

Mr. Adams asked about the Cobb lot on Brush Hill Road. Mr. Safford said there are potential complications with it being a former village water supply and the springs going through it, and it is not in the utility core so it would not be usable for housing. Mr. Shepard added it is a very wet lot.

Mr. Safford noted that someday the lower part of the gravel pit will be reclaimed and potentially available for use for a different purpose.

Mr. Safford noted that there is demand for playing fields and that Memorial Park is challenged. They are looking at the Polo Fields and assessing whether there is a possibility to accommodate things that may not as viable in Memorial Park. He also said there is a demand for storage and operating space.

Mila Lonetto said that the house the Town owns on the gravel pit could be a candidate for the shared equity model for affordable housing run by Downstreet. Mr. Adams asked about the solar farm on the gravel pit and noted that it would be a good property if it became available.

Mr. Donza noted the challenges at Memorial Park and asked if they could ask the Stowe Land Trust if they would accept adding recreation fields and courts at the polo fields before the process for examining the conservation easement begins. Mr. Safford explained the process for the Mayo Farm conservation easement. He said the polo fields' primary use in the management plan are for recreation and are not fully utilized for recreation at this time.

Staff has retained a wetlands consultant to delineate the wetlands on Field K and review other permit conditions to more fully understand what may be permissible on this parcel. Mr. Donza said he thinks the days of wanting to conserve everything in Stowe are dwindling and the community is looking to use property for recreation. Mr. Adams said he thinks there are people who will want housing at that location. Mr. Safford said the Mayo Farm will be the principle focus of planning staff after the Town Plan update.

Manager's Report (Item C-1)

Mr. Safford provided the Selectboard with information on upcoming renovations at the transfer station. Mr. Safford asked if the Selectboard would be amenable to a transfer station sign on the Dump Road street sign. The Selectboard indicated they were.

Ms. Sabel Courtney asked about the Topnotch field entrance improvements. Mr. Safford said the improvements were not made by the property owner.

Mr. Safford provided the Selectboard with Act 250 notices and board and commission minutes.

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

No public comment.

Executive Session

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel. Mr. Donza seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

The Selectboard entered executive session at 7:05pm. The Selectboard left executive session at 8:15pm.

Motions

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to appoint Brooke Hailey to the Arts & Culture Council as a student representative. Mr. Donza seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

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.townofstowevt.org/selectboardrecordings>