

# Stowe Selectboard Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting

Wednesday, September 25, 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, David Rugh, Dave Brown, Mila Lonetto, Beth Gadbois, Terry Wehse, Mary Skelton, Lynn Altadonna, Gannon Osborn, Gunnar Nurme, Nancy Krakowe, Heather Snyder, Scott Snyder, McKee Macdonald (15)

**Zoom Attendees:** Parks and Recreation Director Matt Frazee, Rich Scott, Dustin Reilich, Lisa Hagerty, Tori Hellwig, Deb Drinkwater, Tif Donza, Marina Meerburg, Blake Blundell, and 2 others (11)

## Call to Order

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

## Approval of the Agenda

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Carlson 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

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

## Short-Term Rental Registration Platform Contact Award (Item B-1)

Mr. Safford said staff and the Town Attorney incorporated the Selectboard's changes from August 28 into the agreement, and the changes were agreed to by Deckard. He said the major changes were removing reference to advertising in the scope of work, clarification that Deckard would be identifying "potential" violations, appending the privacy policies and adding language to support them, and clarifying how letters are sent and authorized. David Rugh from the Town Attorney's Office and Dave Brown from Deckard were attendance to answer questions.

Mr. Aumand said that phone numbers are not referenced in the scope of work and it was not clear that Deckard was required to collect them. Mr. Rugh said that it is articulated by the ordinance and it is referenced elsewhere in the MSA. Mr. Carlson suggested adding language to the scope of work referencing information required by the ordinance. The Selectboard agreed to this change.

Mr. Carlson asked how the different pieces of the platform – registration, outreach, etc. – interact. Mr. Brown said it is all in one interface for staff and users. Mr. Adams asked who would be responsible for creating the registration form. Mr. Fricke said staff and Deckard would work together on creating it and bring it to the Selectboard for approval. Mr. Adams asked if testing is involved. Mr. Brown replied in the affirmative and explained how registration works on the platform. Mr. Carlson asked if STRs can be registered in bulk. Mr. Brown said yes. Ms. Sabel Courtney asked where customer service inquiries would be directed. Mr. Brown said Town staff would likely handle the bulk of questions but Deckard would be available as well via a client success manager.

Mr. Adams noted the reporting period started in December 2025. Mr. Safford said they would correct it to December 2024.

Chair Adams asked for public comment. Terry Wehse asked who would own the data. Mr. Safford said the Town would. Lynn Altadonna asked how the fire department would get the contact information. Mr. Safford said they would be able to access it from iPads and computers in the firetrucks. Mr. Brown said they can use the mobile app; they type in the address and it comes up with contact information, if it is registered.

Mr. Aumand moved to award the enclosed contract for the Short-Term Rental Registration Platform to Deckard, with changes made tonight. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

### **Housing Task Force Report (Item B-2)**

McKee Macdonald, Housing Task Force Chair, was in attendance to provide a quarterly report and answer questions. He noted that the Task Force opted to include percentages on RFP tasks to denote the time expectations for the consultant and to clarify that they do not expect the consultant to create new datasets but rather compile and utilize already-existing data in order to save time.

Mr. Macdonald said the general consensus is that whatever comes from HTF will result in hard decisions by the Selectboard and the community, and they will not sugarcoat anything. Mr. Adams asked Mr. Macdonald about the representation on the Task Force. Mr. Macdonald said that there is good representation and perspectives on the Task Force.

The Board discussed the merger between the Lamoille Housing Partnership and Downstreet Housing. It was noted that water and sewer infrastructure would be a limiting factor to housing development.

Mr. Donza suggested the Task Force invite Kevin Chu of the Vermont Futures Project to speak. He asked Mr. Macdonald why he thinks housing is a discussion now and not in the past, and how much is responding to a national narrative and how much is responding to the community. Mr. Macdonald said the community's goal in the past was to stop the development of strip malls and the state has a big issue with how it handles development. He noted that cost is a significant issue and a risk to developers, which is not unique to Stowe. He said that Stowe has a unique geography problem with housing. Mr. Macdonald added that they are not necessarily going to figure out where the problem came from but will try to find a way forward.

Mr. Aumand asked for clarification on the Task Force view on the need to collect data and identify the problem. Mr. McKee said that the Task Force does not feel that re-created pre-existing data is a good use of time by a consultant, but they will task the consultant with getting more data if they feel there are areas without sufficient data.

Chair Adams asked for public comment. Beth Gadbois said short-term rentals should be a part of the conversation. Mr. Macdonald said they will have data through the registry. Lynn Altadonna said that party of the housing study should be to examine which subgroups need housing, and added that creating senior housing would open up homes as seniors downsized. He also said there is a need for smaller housing units for recent high school graduates. Mr. Macdonald said HomeShare Vermont could a part of that solution.

### **State Land Conservation Project Letter of Support (Item B-3)**

Gunnar Nurme, Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation Land Acquisition Coordinator was in attendance to

explain the request. He said FPR was seeking a letter of support from the Selectboard for their potential acquisition of a 15-acre inholding within Mount Mansfield State Forest, located near Nebraska Valley Road. He further explained that acquiring inholdings is a top priority for FPR to prevent forest fragmentation. In addition, there are fewer boundaries to monitor and lower chances for state land encroachment, among other reasons. He said that the land would be rolled into Mount Mansfield State Forest with public access.

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the enclosed letter of support. Mr. Carlson seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

#### **Mayo Farm Pole Barn Replacement and Capital Allocation (Item B-4)**

Mr. Safford said that the Mayo Farm Barn collapsed during a December 2023 storm event, and was valuable cold storage for Town equipment. They are requesting \$70,000 from unallocated capital reserves to supplement the existing \$142,732 of unspent funds from insurance settlements and previous allocations in order to complete the reconstruction of the barn with the addition of ship lap siding and doors to improve the aesthetics of the barn and to prevent storm winds from catching the inside of the building.

Mr. Donza said he questions whether the location is the best for storage, and asked for the reasoning behind the location and if there are other locations that could be utilized. Mr. Safford said people are used to having something there, and they would essentially replicate what was there. Mr. Carlson noted that it is a prime space to build something and there is an opportunity cost to build there rather than somewhere else.

Mr. Adams asked if the well was still active nearby and if there was an opportunity to have bathrooms at that location rather than a portalet. Mr. Adams said he is concerned about opportunity cost of building the barn at that location and the possibility of wanting that location for something else later, and needing to tear it down. Mr. Safford said they will look into other possibilities.

Mr. Aumand asked about the value of that location for storage. Harry Shepard said it gave a spot for winter sand storage, and they do not need to go back to the highway garage for sanding the Mountain Road sidewalks. Mr. Safford said they do not have a trailer for grooming the rec path and they stage the equipment there. Mr. Aumand asked what a better use of the space would be. Mr. Adams said the community would need to decide that, and they could decide to keep as current use. Ms. Sabel Courtney said that during the process to re-examine the Mayo Farm easement people will come forward to ask for something at that location. Mr. Carlson noted the central location.

Mr. Safford asked if the Selectboard would like to close out the capital project and reallocate the funds into unallocated reserves. Mr. Adams noted the reserves stand at about \$1 million and since there is not an immediate need for it, they should keep the funds in the project in case there is further discussion so as to not flip back and forth.

Chair Adams asked for public comment. Ms. Gadbois asked about the ownership of the surrounding parcels and the potential to add a second floor. She said that since it would be a few years until anything else was built at that location, it seems the Town needs the storage space in the meantime.

Mr. Aumand moved to table discussion on the Mayo Barn. Mr. Donza seconded.

Terry Wehse asked where the equipment goes if not in the barn. Mr. Safford said they will need to look into locations, and may have to rent temporary storage sheds.

Motion carried (5-0).

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

Mr. Safford presented the Selectboard with information on the total property taxes collected and how it gets distributed. He noted that of the \$71 million of property taxes collected in FY24, \$11.6 million went to the municipality, \$16.4 million went to the Stowe School District, and \$41.6 million went to the Vermont Education Fund for redistribution around the state. He also noted that income sensitivity payments have declined from \$1.6 million to \$1 million over the past ten years, a result of changes in eligibility.

Mr. Carlson noted that the state keeps about 70% of property taxes collected in Stowe, more than the entirety of taxes collected a decade ago. Mr. Donza said that \$141,000 leaves the community every day, and asked if there was anything they could do about it. Ms. Sabel Courtney said it is a communications issue and most people do not understand they are not a home rule state. Mr. Adams said he is concerned about income sensitivity, as it should have increased not decreased. He said they need to put pressure on the state, and they can't keep pulling this amount of money out of this community. Mr. Aumand said it is not just a Stowe problem, as Vermont residents have a significant tax burden. Mr. Donza disagreed and said he believes the funding formula is set up to extract money from communities like Stowe. Mr. Aumand said Stowe's voice alone is going to carry the day in Montpelier, and that the dynamics have changed.

The Selectboard discussed the viability of bringing suit. Mr. Safford said they would need to show harm in suing the State and the municipality is a sub-division of the State. They could work collectively with VLTC, in the past the Town contributed to a lobbying effort. Mr. Carlson asked if the goal was to win a lawsuit or forcing political change. Mr. Safford said there is theoretically a state legislative committee working on this, and in the past towns have invited state legislators to their meetings.

Mr. Donza said the MOU between the Town and the School District needs to come back. He asked if there were ways to reduce property values, like deed restrictions. He said he sees STRs as increasing property values and hopes the housing study can sort through that and give suggestions.

Mr. Carlson said he feels Stowe got the short end of the stick in redistricting, and they should invite legislators periodically to meetings. Mr. Safford said they can invite them annual to talk about what is important to them and hear their perspective.

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

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

Chair Adams asked for public comment. Ms. Gadbois said that until the makeup of the legislator changes they are not forced to compromise. She suggested not sending tax payments to the State. Mr. Safford said they have calculated the level of penalties the State could assess for late payments and it is significant. He added VLCT fought for home rule to no avail. Ms. Sabel Courtney asked how Vermont could be come a home rule state. Mr. Safford said it may be a Vermont Constitutional change, but they can attempt to nibble at the edges, for example by increasing taxing authority through charter changes.

### **Executive Session**

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

The Selectboard entered executive session at 7:20pm. The Selectboard left executive session at 7:34pm.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Adams adjourned the meeting at 7:34pm.

### **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>