

TOWN OF WHEELLOCK
SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 5th, 2025 6PM

At Wheelock Town Hall upstairs and via Zoom

Present: Wheelock Selectboard Ann Lawless, Mike Richardson and Chuck Dill. Town Clerk Erin Swigart, Recorder Meaghan Rinehart. Residents Theresa Stimpson, Kim Hathaway, Curt Perry, Vanessa Perry, their minor child, Mark Roy, Pete Boyle, Joseph Yu, Bryan Plust. With Enid Ellis and Phil (for a time) on Zoom

6:00pm Call to Order. Changes\additions to Agenda;

Kim Hathaway's address to assembly will be added before Delinquent Taxes.

Approving grants procedure, policies and contract agreement amendments will be removed and tabled.

Internal Finance Controls will be added to Clerk/Treasurer section

Theresa's question about Sheriff patrols will be added under Old Business.

ADOPT MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING(S)

Selectboard 7/15/2025; Emergency Meeting of Selectboard 7/23/2025. Joint Selectboard Meeting Transfer Station 7/23/25. Mike motions, seconded by Chuck, to adopt the minutes of 7/15/25, 7/23/25, 7/23/25 All in favor, so voted.

OLD BUSINESS

Kim Hathaway proclaims it has been 13 months since the last flood and wants to know if there has been progress on the bridge on Welch Road. The Selectboard informed her that there is not a plan as of now because other projects that affect more people take precedence and pose a larger public safety issue. Kim states that she has no access, and won't for a second winter and town officials have not approved an engineer for the project. Ann explains the FEMA process for A&E. FEMA will allocate \$14k for engineering but we would have to put up the money first, accept the engineering design, and not be reimbursed if we do not use that engineer's plan for repairs. Kim states that that is not her problem, mentions taxes are coming and she is behind on her preparations for winter and thinks she is not getting a bridge before winter. Kim tells the assembly that she cannot get her chimney cleaned, that it is affecting her health and wellness and guests are struggling to visit and believes this is equal to senior abuse and that Vermont laws are not being met. Kim says she has been working with Curt as her advocate and will be contacting engineers who will do it for less. Mike suggests that it is a good idea for her to seek out her own bridge engineer and that the Selectboard could deem Welch road and bridge a trail so that she can proceed on her own. Kim said she does not want that. At this time conversation among residents ensued and a call to restore order was had.

There was discussion about previous repairs Kim said were reimbursed by FEMA. Ann made it clear they were not and that the town paid for those in 2023. More discussion ensued.

Delinquent Taxes

The delinquent tax collector was not present and there was no discussion or action taken.

Sheriff Request

Mike makes the assembly aware that he contacted the Sheriff's office and that it would be thousands of dollars that has not been budgeted and noted there are ATVs operating in an unsafe manner on Rte 122.

At this time Mike reminds the assembly of the hours town officials and volunteers have put in trying to organize FEMA projects to repair flood damage. He states selectboard members understand the tough situation residents are in and although it may seem like no one cares, that is not the case. If we want FEMA funding we have to play by their rules.

NEW BUSINESS

Loss Control Reports – Plan to address deficiencies

Ann explains the town has liability insurance with PACIF. The PACIF loss control officer visits the town's properties (Town Hall, garage, transfer station, fire station) annually and sends written reports listing deficiencies and suggestions for compliance. Ann reports that the St. Johnsbury Academy electrical instructor is likely available to be hired to fix town office electrical issues near the panel after school starts. Erin reports she spoke with Jonathon Potter to resolve electrical cord issues and is teaming up with Luke to address safety data sheets (SDS) issues.

Recommend Peter Miller as Health Officer for a three-year term

Mike motions, seconded by Ann to recommend Peter Miller as Health Officer to be approved by the VT Health Dept. for a three-year term. All in favor, so voted.

CLERK/TREASURER'S REPORT

Set tax rate

Erin explained the process and how we determine the tax rate with the exception of education tax that the State determines. The grand list is divided by what the town votes to raise in taxes at Town Meeting. Mike motions, seconded by Chuck the tax rates be

set as follows:

0.3788 for general fund
0.6935 for highway
fund 0.0054 for local
Education tax rate (as determined by the State)
1.7554 for homestead
1.8665 for non-homestead
3% late fee for late homestead
declaration. All in favor, so voted.

Lister request to add an insert about reappraisal to tax bills

The item was positively received.

Internal Controls checklist

Erin noted this is an annual process to keep the selectboard aware of procedures. Chuck motioned, seconded by Mike to accept checklist. All in favor, so voted.

Review of budget to actuals reports

Erin presented the report year-to-date ending June 30 and requests Selectboard members to sign indicating receipt of their own copy. She asks that members read it carefully and send her questions by 8\14\25 for discussion at a future meeting.

Loans

Erin is looking into loan products from Bond Bank. There may be funds available in October, however we need funds now. Our current loan from Community Bank will not be extended. A line of credit was an option at a rate over 5%. Two years of floods have depleted the coffers.

ROADS

Fall Brook Road improvement project

Chuck explains the state's closure of Fall Brook Bridge after July 11, 2025 damage for public safety reasons. The selectboard's plan for this emergency is to improve a half mile section of the Class 4 Fall Brook Rd. coming from the Lyndon side. This is the quickest and least expensive way for residents to gain access to their homes. When asked if there was an engineer assigned, Chuck explains we don't need one and that the road is not to be reclassified just made passable to get access for residents. Alternatives were explored but without right of way they were not pursued.

Mark asks how this will affect EMS and Fire services. Ann explains that access will improve considering the bridge has not been rated for fire trucks for several years anyway. Discussion about state bridge inspections reports and fire access continued.

Bryan asks if options to support the current bridge were explored. Ann replies she explored renting a temporary bridge from the state but it can only be rented for a max of 2 years and it is expensive. She later learned since they no longer put temporary bridges on top of damaged bridges, it could only happen if the current bridge were removed. Mike states he looked into that with a bridge contractor and it would be expensive. Chuck says they looked into other routes but they are trails not roads and getting right of way would take time. Bryan reminds that the bridge still hasn't been fixed from last year. Ann explains we have been working with FEMA on that. Until a federal disaster is declared for July 11, 2025 by the president (if the governor requests it, and if the president declares it – which seems unlikely), it is unknown at this time if FEMA will continue with the existing plan for the 2024 damage and/or help with the emergency work on Fall Brook Rd or with the bridge repair/replacement. Everyone agrees that FEMA is a lengthy process and residents were assured the selectboard is doing all they can to address this emergency. Pete asks how Fall Brook residents can be updated. Erin explained the clerk and selectboard do not have access to phone numbers not given to them personally as it's a breach of privacy to hold them in public record. Ann encouraged people to attend Selectboard meetings and review agendas and minutes on the town website or at the town posting places. She requests people provide their email addresses and offered to send updates so everyone can receive news quickly and at the same time, vs. phone calls that take more time and are more subject to developing rumors. Ann lists the uncompleted 2024 disaster projects: Stannard Mountain Rd (completed last week); South Wheelock Rd (bid requests out); Town Hall Parking lot final surfacing; Minister Hill bridge and embankments (taken out of FEMA process because they won't pay very much because of prior damage – plan is to apply for a state structures grant in the spring; Boulay Rd embankment (bid requests out); and Welch Rd bridge.

FEMA update

Ann states there's a good chance we will have FEMA reimbursements in the bank by the end of the month for 3 batches representing completed work:

\$147,000

\$104,378.50

\$211,247.44 **(Note on 8/7 after the meeting – all funds arrived)**

She reminds all that FEMA reimburses 75%, the State picks up 7.5% and the town is responsible for 17.5% of project cost. Half the funds received need to go back to the Bond Bank.

Bids: RFQs for Fall Brook, for project manager; bids for S Wheelock, Boulay

Bids received from P&L Riendeau for Boulay Rd \$24,900 and South Wheelock Rd \$27,900. Because of administrative issues with FEMA, contracts will not be issued until

after the next meeting with FEMA Aug 12.

Project manager Requests for Qualifications came in from On Point, AuraQuest, Inc, Seam Solutions, Mindspring, and Assent.

Fall Brook Rd bridge Requests for Qualifications came in from Hoyle Tanner and VHB. These were for work prior to most recent damage.

Ann mentions the meeting she and Erin had earlier with the state Dept. of Public Service regarding financial monitoring and 2023 disaster details.

Ann motioned, seconded by Chuck to authorize Erin to update our standard contract form according to the financial monitoring recommendations. All in favor, so voted.

Chuck makes the Selectboard aware that an ATG rep visited and offered a deal on DEF for trucks that could save money. By purchasing through them we can save. We are also very low on chloride. DEF purchasing change was discussed. Erin inquired about when truck auction funds will hit accounts. Mike will follow up.

Driveway permits

Mike met with one resident and will come up with a plan and do a site inspection.

Chuck mentioned he saw a new driveway on Vertical Mile Rd. and asked if Mike would follow up.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Review and sign warrants

Chuck motions, seconded by Mike to review and sign warrants. All in favor, so voted.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ann plans to attend a Floodplain Administration Zoom Aug 6.

VISITOR COMMENTS

Theresa inquired if anyone knew why the delinquent tax collector was not present. Erin said she wasn't sure but a recent deposit was made into the delinquent tax account.

ADJOURNMENT

Mike motions, seconded by Chuck to adjourn. All in favor, so voted. Meeting adjourned 8:23pm.

Submitted by Meaghan Rinehart

Ann Lawless, chair

Mike Richardson

Chuck Dill
