

- Draft only, not yet approved by the Selectboard -

Greensboro Selectboard

January 8, 2025 - Minutes

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eric Hanson, David Kelley, MacNeil, Ellen Celnik, Bobbie Nisbet

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT (in person): Michael Cloutier, Diane Cloutier, Jane Johns, Erika Karp, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, Liz Steel, Karl Stein, Judy Carpenter, Janice Dinsdale, Mateo Kehler, Lise Armstrong, Andy Kehler, Davis Barnett, Lily McMurtrie, Janet Long, Anne Stevens, Dede Stabler, Peggy Lipscomb, Mike Metcalf, Mary Metcalf, Skip Hoblin, Mimi Benedict, Linda Ely, Tom Guare, Meaghan Meachem, Beth Meachem, John Loeb, AnnaBelle Loeb, BJ Gray, Tim Brennan, Sarah Lammert, Elizabeth Baum, Carolyn Kehler, Tom Camarra, Sheriff Jennifer Harlow, Tim Nisbet, Jan Terwiesch, Kim Greaves, Josh Karp

OTHERS PRESENT (remote): Jennifer Lucas, John Cannon, Bill Berman, Bill Rogers, Bonnie Cleveland, Day Patterson, Diane Irish, Elaine Cole-Kerr, Rod Kerr, Gary Circosta, Glenn Olds, Gwen Bueckendorf, Janet Patterson, John Stone, Kristen Leahy, Lisa Sartorius, Melissa Moffatt, Michael Porrazzo, Mike Lammert, Nancy Lammert, Miriam Rogers, Missy Cook, M. Lambert, Peter Romans, Vince Cabbage, Aileen Gebbie, Dan Predpall, Brendan Beer, Lindsay Beer, Mary Parker, June Bascom, Ila Hunt, Lisa Yokana, Rob Brigham, Sheila Dillon

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Move discussion of budget & warning to earlier in the meeting.

MINUTES

1. Minutes unanimously approved as written for 12/4/24, 12/12/24, 12/16/24 budget meetings.
2. Minutes unanimously approved as amended for 12/11/24 regular meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT & CONCERNS

Judy Carpenter. There's been a lot of recent controversy, we may not all agree on everything but we're admiring of all the work done by the selectboard and town employees, thank you for your service.

Anne Stevens. As a former selectboard member, I want to thank current board members for all the work they've done on contentious issues. Thanks to Kim also.

Lise Armstrong. While I disagree with some of the animosity towards the selectboard, there's been some frustration, the selectboard seems to have their own mandate and doesn't care how others feel. The town hall housing project should have come to a public vote long ago. Also, I would like town meeting to be held at Lakeview School.

Bridget Collier. I too would like to see Greensboro stay as it was long ago. There were a hundred kids running around, most from poor families I would note, and the Town Hall was a school. The rhetoric that's been used towards the board and Kim has been shameful and should stop. To those who say the process has not been open enough, the open meeting law includes legitimate reasons to enter executive session. At this meeting I see a turnout of people who support what the selectboard is doing.

Mateo Kehler. Since I saw the 'Save Town Hall' signs I've been in mourning, as someone who moved here full of ideas and wanting to build community. It's not obvious that a small town can continue and thrive with such a lack of decorum and civility. My kids don't want to live here, they want to live in a community with a different kind of discourse. We live together in this small town and we can't ignore each other, I want to encourage a different tone, a different energy, to invite the collaboration we need to solve our problems. Yes Greensboro is changing, but the shouting, allegations, and lawyering is not going to help things get better. We all need to breathe, please bring the love you have for this place and put that up front.

Karl Stein. Selectboard members, I'm sorry you've be dealing with months of abuse. Greensboro has gone through a lot of changes in the 44 years we've been here, we weren't supportive of all of them but the discourse has been civil over the years. The selectboard is not perfect, everyone makes mistakes and we learn from them. If you find yourself opposing everything, raise your hand when there's an opportunity to contribute.

Kent Hansen. The Planning Commission is hosting an event at Fellowship Hall on Wednesday January 15 at 5:30 PM. We're trying to lure you out with a chili dinner, bring a dessert and beverage. We'll be discussing the recent community survey and want to learn what the survey might have missed.

Bobbie Nisbet. Thanks to all who came out on this stormy night to support our town government. We've been through a lot in the past five years, between the isolation of COVID, three floods, the conversations around the Town Hall housing project, mold in the town offices, our town treasurer being out on sick leave. Caring for our neighbors is a way to thank all the people who helped create this town that we all love. We can have disagreements but let's have civil discourse. We all deserve a break.

David Kelley. I've represented 36 small rural VT towns who want to hold on to their local schools, we worked hard to change Act 46 but unfortunately we lost at the supreme court on a 3-2 decision. Our proposal was that a school couldn't be closed unless locals voted to do so. Act 46 hasn't done our town any good, we're trying to bring together as many towns a possible through the Community School Alliance. The selectboard needs to vote to join this group, it wouldn't cost the town anything.

Eric asked David to put together a proposal for the board to consider at the February meeting. David felt this should be addressed sooner and suggested the board hold a special meeting. Ellen asked if there are any downsides to joining this group, and David said there aren't any. The Board agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss.

Liz noted there is a meeting on 1/9 about Lakeview becoming solely a pre-K school.

GREENSBORO FIRE DEPT.

Chief Brochu was on a call and not present. The board reviewed Chief Brochu's monthly GFD report.

ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

Sheriff Harlow said Greensboro's contract was unchanged for two or three years and for FY26 she is proposing a slight increase from \$195k to \$200k.

Karl said after a recent theft, he found that the OCSD's response time, follow up, and investigations were excellent.

David said there's no question the OCSD has been doing a great job, but we have a Cadillac contract that amounts to 10% of our budget, it's a lot of money. Bridget said if law enforcement is only 10% of the town's budget, we're lucky.

Ellen thanked Sheriff Harlow for her service and noted that the OCSD collaborates with the HPD and state police on investigations.

Bobbie said OCSD's response time is much shorter than the state police would be. This is especially appreciated by the rescue squad.

Eric noted how friendly all the deputies are. Bobbie made the following motion:

The board approves the FY26 contract with the Orleans County Sheriff for \$200,000.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

FY26 BUDGET AND 2025 TOWN MEETING WARNING

▪ FY26 Budget.

- 1. Swim program & Recreation budget.** Liz Baum thanked the town for supporting the swim program. While the contract with Teach America to Swim is expensive, lessons are now offered for all age groups. The swim program group is asking that swimming lessons be separated from the Recreation budget and classified as a special appropriation. The group is asking for an appropriation of \$4k in total, with \$2k coming from the existing \$4k Recreation budget and the other \$2k being new funding. Liz said this increased amount doesn't even cover half of program costs and fundraising will be necessary. Ellen thanked former Recreation Committee chair Carolyn Kehler for her work on the swim program, and Jasper Hill Farm, Hill Farmstead, Pleasants Fund and the Greensboro Association for donating funds to the program.
- 2. Planning Commission.** Chair Kent Hansen requested \$2k for expenses related to updating the town plan.
- 3. Grants Match.** Eric said the board increased the 'grants match' line item, since a number of grants the town anticipates receiving require a 20% match.
- 4. Gravel pit overburden.** Eric said Simpson Crushing, who screened sand and crushed gravel for the town last year, said overburden removal won't be necessary in 2025 so this cost was removed from the budget. Eric said this cost will need to be added back in to the FY27 budget.

Eric said the FY26 budget has a 5.9% increase in spending, and he feels the board has drafted a responsible budget. A substantial increase in the grand list will help moderate this tax rate increase. Ellen thanked Jennifer Lucas and John Schweizer for their work on the town budget and HERF. David made the following motion:

The Board approves the FY26 budget as discussed.

MacNeil seconded the motion. Further discussion. Naomi asked whether funds could be added to hire a grants administrator and/or project manager, noting that many grants include funding to cover overhead costs. Having such a person would reduce the administrative burden of grants on the town staff.

Eric said before taking this step, the board wants to take this next year to see how recent staffing changes work out. Ellen said we're in a transitional period, with a new assistant town clerk hired, and the board is hoping Josh can take on some grants administration as his FEMA work winds down. Ellen said she's been advocating for a grants person for at least three years and appreciated Naomi's comment. Christine suggested that if the town enacted the 1% local option tax, the revenue could be earmarked for a grant writer. Many were in favor of this tax in the Planning Commission's recent community survey. There is a lot of grant money to go after, she said, and a grant writer would benefit the town enormously. Christine said she hopes the local option tax can come to a vote at town meeting.

The vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

▪ **2025 Town Meeting Warning.**

1. **Articles 13 and 14.** Liz said on November 13, the selectboard approved adding two articles to the town meeting warning that were proposed by the communications working group. The articles were amended after Town moderator Tim Nisbet discussed the language with VLCT.

Article 13 asks *Shall the town change the day of its annual town meeting to the third day preceding the first Tuesday in March pursuant to 17 V.S.A §2640(b)?*

Davis said we want to attract young people to the community, yet those who have jobs can't come to Town Meeting. Liz said the hope is that participation will increase if town meeting is held on a different day that is better for more residents. Tim said the article as written includes a placeholder day that can be amended to a different day during town meeting.

Carolyn said once, Woodstock town meeting was changed to Saturday. We found out people with kids were busy with weekend sports such as ski racing, and after a few years we were back to the first Tuesday. Then we changed to Monday evening, which was great until we found ourselves arguing over the budget at 11:30 PM. Many other towns have tried to solve the problem of attendance by changing the day of town meeting, but often they end up back at the first Tuesday.

Ellen said the statewide average town meeting attendance is 10-11%, and Greensboro has one of the higher attendance rates averaging about 25%. David made the following motion:

The board approves Article 13 as amended after consultation with VLCT.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Article 14 asks *Shall the registered voters of Greensboro, Vermont, elect its town officers by Australian Ballot?*

Tim noted that even if voters choose to hold Town Meeting on a different day via Article 13, Australian Ballot votes must still be held on the first Tuesday in March.

Ellen said she's concerned that moving to Australian Ballot votes for elections will ultimately result in people not attending Town Meeting, which seems to defeat the purpose. Ellen made the following motion:

The board approves Article 14 as amended after consultation with VLCT.

David seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

- 2. Town Meeting location.** Pros and cons of the Highland Center (HCA), Fellowship Hall and Lakeview School were discussed. Eric asked for a straw poll and it appeared to be very close between the HCA and Lakeview. Some of those present expressed concern that MacNeil and David serve on the HCA board and would be making a biased decision. Eric said the HCA isn't getting any money or other benefit from hosting town meeting, and he doesn't see any conflict of interest. David made the following motion:

The 2025 Town Meeting will be held at the HCA.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried (Celnik, MacNeil, Kelley, Nisbet in favor; Hanson opposed).

ROADS & DRIVEWAYS

- 1. Road foreman's report.** Tom said the road crew has been busy maintaining winter roads, including trying to keep the sidewalk machine running. Judy noted that Town roads are better maintained than Rt. 16. Mateo said his business relies on well-maintained roads and the road crew has done a great job the past few years.
- 2. Beaver Deceivers.** David said the Beaver Deceiver below Circus Rd. that was installed a number of years ago by Skip Lisle and Peter Romans blew out during the 2024 flood. Beaver activity quickly resumed and rather than trapping the beavers, Skip was asked to install a new Deceiver. David said the board needs to figure out how to pay his \$4200 bill, perhaps a mix of fundraising and town funds. Josh will look into whether FEMA can cover this expense since it is related to the flooding event.

Josh added that beavers have been plugging the large culvert on Craftsbury Rd. just north of North Shore Rd. and the road crew spent considerable time this past summer clearing it. The board might consider installing a beaver deceiver at this location, although Josh noted that in late fall the beavers moved their dam back from the culvert.

Bridget said while we've spent a lot of time getting rid of beavers over the years, maybe we shouldn't have, we should consider beavers our first line of defense against flooding.

TOWN CLERK / INTERIM TREASURER – Kim Greaves

1. Kim said Brett remains on medical leave for a cancer diagnosis and is responding well to treatment. Eric thanked Kim for taking on much of the treasurer's work.
- 2. Town report.** Kim said all committee reports must be received by the middle of next week to be included in the town report.
- 3. Municipal code of ethics.** Eric said a municipal code of ethics was passed by the legislature in 2024 and the town is required to designate an employee or selectboard member as town Ethics Liaison. This person will serve as a point of contact for the VT Ethics Commission and receive ethics complaints. The board unanimously approved Kim to be town Ethics Liaison.
Liz noted that members of town committees should understand the state's open meeting law. Meghan said VLCT has a training video on the OML.
- 4. FEMA reimbursements.** Josh reported that he's finished filing for 2023 flood reimbursements and expects the town will be receiving \$1.2 million soon, which will allow the town to pay off its two flood loans. Josh said he's now working on filings for the 2024 flood.

Eric said the town will be receiving extra money from FEMA that wasn't borrowed to compensate the town for road crew labor, equipment use and gravel. There will be discussions this coming year about where to allocate these funds.

ONGOING BUSINESS

1. **Wake Boats on Caspian Lake.** David and others spoke at an ANR hearing on Dec. 12, asking the ANR to prohibit wake boats on Caspian Lake. He said ANR seems skeptical of their arguments, and they've begun conversations with our state legislators. David said ideally the town would hire a lobbyist but there aren't enough funds at this time. It is expected that ANR will issue a decision by springtime.

Peggy said she thought the Hardwick Electric Dept. doesn't allow large boats, such as wake boats, to use the lake access ramp.

2. **Town Hall Redevelopment / Rural Edge (RE).** David said the board is planning to put the Purchase & Sales agreement (PSA) to an Australian Ballot vote at the 2025 town meeting, preceded by an informational meeting. Due to differing appraisal values, as well as changes to the PSA including the fact that the Village Green is to remain under town ownership, a new appraisal has been ordered. This will be completed by a firm with appropriate certifications and the result will be accepted by both the town and RE.

Davis asked for clarification on how many units are being discussed during PSA negotiations. David said while RE has said 20 units are required for the project to be viable, language in the proposed conveyance will state that the project will include 'no less than 16 units'. Ellen said that since the agreement between the town and RE would be 'in perpetuity', the project has to be able to sustain itself over the long term and so a minimum number of units are required.

3. **Sign policy.** Bobbie said the sign policy is being reviewed by the town attorney and further discussion is tabled until the February board meeting.
4. **Wastewater Committee.** Eric said the board is still entertaining letters of interest for the new wastewater committee. He said the board will appoint members to the committee at its February meeting. Ellen asked that people who own larger parcels of land consider allowing an engineering firm to evaluate their property for a disposal field site.

Ellen asked whether all the work products that Hoyle Tanner produced will be given to the town. Eric said Hoyle Tanner's Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) will include all the work they've done for Greensboro. Naomi requested that the PER be posted on the website once received.

5. **Greensboro Bend water issues.** Karl attended a recent meeting of the Fire District #2. There's been an ongoing problem since the wells were drilled 30 or 40 years ago: they were drilled into clay and eventually the walls collapse and they have to drill new wells. Most recently there was a leak that took all summer to find and fix, accompanied by boil water notices and staggered shutoffs.

According to Karl, the District has determined that they could add 25-40 houses with the water they have, if all leaks were fixed. Dan said as he understands it, there is not that much extra capacity in the existing system. Karl said the District would like to have a discussion with the town about how to best approach their challenges, since the town has helped out in the past. Eric said the town will invite members of the District to a meeting.

Dan said he'll be sending the District a simple grant application that would pay for a Federal analysis of the Bend water system.

6. **Wilson St. drainage improvements.** Dan reported that the engineers have developed a few different solutions to the drainage problems, and he's finishing up a historical damage assessment. He and the engineering firm are hoping to present their findings to the selectboard in February, assuming the State approves the alternate designs and costing.

OTHER BUSINESS

Selectboard positions. David is up for reelection this year. He's decided not to run again so his three-year seat will be open. Bobbie's two-year seat is also up and she has not yet decided whether she'll be running. Eric said he'll put these openings on Front Porch Forum.

Eric has one year left on his term, and said he'll be resigning after town meeting. Eric said the new selectboard can then appoint someone to serve the remaining year of his term. Gary asked Eric to consider resigning before Town Meeting so the voters can fill the position.

Ellen thanked selectboard members for their service to the town. She said she's served on many boards over the years, and being a selectboard member has been one of the biggest challenges she's ever experienced. Ellen said she'd like to encourage people who care about the true values of this community to consider serving on the selectboard.

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

1. David made the following motion:

The board will enter executive session at 8:36 PM to discuss Real Estate.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The board left executive session at 8:39 PM and took no action.

2. Ellen made the following motion:

The board will enter executive session at 8:40 PM to discuss Personnel.

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The board left executive session at 8:55 PM. Bobbie noted that the board discussed the ongoing negotiations regarding the road crew union contract.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk