

Westfield Selectboard Meeting with NVDA

April 21, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Location: ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84815429258?pwd=K2tIU3NSQ1FQT2lCZ1hXbIVQd3VoQT09>

Meeting ID: 848 1542 9258 Passcode: 427569

1. Call Meeting to Order

Jacques called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm

In attendance: Jacques Couture (chair,) Ellen Fox, Alison Low, Pat Sagui, David Snedeker, Dennis Vincent

2. Additions/Changes to the Agenda

None

3. NVDA's role in Bylaw adoption process

Alison offered to review the proposed revisions to the Zoning Bylaw to assess how the revisions support our approved Town Plan and also fit with regional and state concerns, including regulatory requirements for special flood hazard areas (SFHA) noting that the FEMA regulations will be changing in the next few years. Alison also noted the changes likely coming with S100 and the need to support increased housing density and affordability. Pat and Ellen explained that the Westfield Planning Commission (PC) used the State recommended template to update SFHA and river corridor sections of the Bylaw and that Sacha Peeler is reviewing the Bylaw for fulfillment of National Flood Insurance Program requirements. Regarding housing, the PC has decreased the lot size in the Village to .25 acres. Additionally, it is proposed to allow two single family dwellings on a parcel and each would be permitted an accessory dwelling as well. Ellen will send Alison a copy of the proposed revisions for review.

In addition to advising on substantive proposed changes, Alison commented on the adoption process and recommended Westfield use the existing template to guide the timeline and adoption process and highlight how the proposed revisions support the Town Plan.

4. Funding options for village sewer hook up planning and implementation

Jacques reported that there is capacity for Westfield village to potentially connect to the Jay Troy wastewater system based on a positive and friendly response from the Jay-Troy Joint Sewer Board at a recent meeting. Alison outlined the Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund as an option to support planning, logistics, and engineering for a system. Funding is structured as a loan to pay for project development funds. Up to \$125K loan forgiveness is possible. The administrators of the loan fund will also help

identify other potential funding options including USDA, VCP, VT Community Development Program, Economic Development Administration, Northern Border Regional Commission.

Alison recommended forming a Village Wastewater Committee

Dave raised the possibility of joining the existing water district. Pat and Jacques described potential participation scenarios and that more planning work is necessary to resolve usage, ownership, and maintenance of a system.

There was discussion of how to gather community feedback on the proposal with a community survey. Alison mentioned that other towns have had success by sending out paper copies of the survey and by going door to door to collect survey responses along with an online option like google forms to complete the survey. To spread the word about the survey, PC members will attend recycling on Saturday mornings, maybe send survey to current water district users, and post to front porch forum.

If the survey demonstrates support, then Clean Water Revolving Funds could be used to develop a plan for the project. Then the town would potentially need a bond for implementation and a town vote to approve the bond.

The group discussed having an exploratory meeting of the Selectboard with Tom Brown from the Clean Water Fund and Dave suggested to include Eric Law from USDA Environmental Programs as well.

5. Funding options for assessing town costs/benefits for ownership of village church

The congregation has offered the church building to the Town, and there seems to be enough interest to form a study committee and there is a need for some resources to fund planning. Jacques noted that there has been some interest from individuals to purchase the church and the congregation is exploring this option. If there is a private purchase, the congregation has expressed interest in donating the proceeds to the Town earmarked for community owned building maintenance.

Alison suggested a municipal planning grant to support the planning, and that it would be helpful to reach out to Ben Doyle at the VT Preservation Trust. All discussed the deferred maintenance issues of the building and the lack of infrastructure such as septic, driveway and parking. Alison described a Sincerbeaux grant to offset the cost of hiring an historic preservation consultant or architect to evaluate the condition of the structure and provide a report.

Dave mentioned a project in Coventry with a similar building. Peter Fairweather worked as consultant on that project to conduct fruitful community meetings about repurposing the structure. Dave will send information about that project.

Alison will reach out to Tom Brown and Ben Doyle about the project and possible support.

Dennis discussed the potential for the Town to be taking on liabilities that come with the deferred maintenance of the building. He pointed out the need to bring it up to fire code and provide ADA access. Jacques mentioned that there is a subcommittee that would examine these issues. Alison confirmed that if the Town wanted to own the building there are grants to upgrade the building. She explained that it would be possible to set up a community trust to maintain the building. Pat raised a

question about applying for a municipal planning grant and if the Town needed site control to apply for funding. Alison does not think full site control is necessary at the application and planning stage.

6. Other business

NVDA wants Towns to know about the Energy Resilience Grant for \$4000. Jacques stated that the Town is applying for this grant. Alison and Dave added that if we proceed to level 2, then \$500K is available to achieve energy resilience for town buildings.

Dave checked in about ARPA funds to see if the Town has allocated this funding. Jacques explained that the Town has not spent or allocated the funds. One potential project is digitizing the Town land records and we are awaiting an estimate to that work. As an amendment, Jacques clarified that the town has used a small amount to replace the fire escape door and insulate the bulkhead at the Community Center.

Dave also discussed that the NVDA Board is moving back to in person meetings and encouraged representation of Westfield as they transition from zoom to in person meetings.

7. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:11 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ellen Fox

Jacques Couture
Richard Pepe
Helen Vint

