

**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting
Wednesday October 25, 2023**

Present:

Selectboard Members: Lisa Hagerty, William Adams, Nick Donza, Jo Sabel Courtney, Paco Aumand

In Person attendees: Kenzie Bruner, Mila Lonetto, Heather Snyder, Mary Black, Ethan C

There were 7 participants on Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Ms. Lisa Hagerty called the meeting to order at 5:03pm.

Approve the Agenda

On a motion by Mr. Nick Donza, seconded by Ms. Jo Sabel Courtney, the Board approved the Agenda as presented.

Executive Session

On a motion by Mr. Donza, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board went into Executive Session at 5:04pm to discuss Personnel, Real Estate and Contracts.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 5:30pm.

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Mr. Donza, the Board appointed Zach Lewis as a Student Representative to the Conservation Commission for a three-year term. The Board also appointed John Muldoon to fill a vacant seat on the Planning Commission for the duration of the term.

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes of 10/11/23
2. SED Line of Credit
3. Resolution of Support for Municipal Planning Grant
4. Water/Sewer Allocation – 166 S. Main Street
5. Declaration of Location of Easement: 59B Mountain Road
6. Grand List Errors & Omissions
7. Liquor Consent Items

On a motion by Mr. William Adams, seconded by Mr. Paco Aumand, the Board approved the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motor Vehicle Ordinance Amendments Public Hearing

The Public Hearing was opened at 5:31pm.

Mr. Safford reviewed a number of proposed amendments to the Motor Vehicle Ordinance that were first read at the October 11, 2023 meeting.

Nebraska Valley and Old Country Road No Parking – In recent years there has been increased recreational traffic in the wintertime near the Catamount Trail crossing on Nebraska Valley which has resulted in cars blocking the ability of highway department vehicles to plow the road. There is also concern that emergency vehicles such as fire trucks would not be able to pass the parked vehicles. The Town has proposed no parking from November 15 to April 15 each year. Ms. Kenzie Bruner, a resident of Nebraska Valley Road, spoke to concerns about where people will park if the No Parking was in effect. It was noted that the Town will work with the Catamount Trail to put up information directing visitors to the designated parking lots and install a kiosk with public information.

School Street Three Hour Parking – There are currently six parking spaces not included with the three hour parking limit in the Ordinance, which most other on-street parking in the village area is limited to. The Town has proposed to include these spaces in the Three Hour Parking limit.

Moscow Road Speed Limit Reduction from 30mph to 25mph – Based on warrant analysis indicating it meets the criteria, Public Works has recommended to reduce the speed limit on the paved portion of River Road, between Moscow Road and Shaw Hill road from 30mph to 25mph.

Meadow Lane Speed Limit Reduction from 35mph to 25mph – A citizen on Meadow Lane has requested that the Town consider reducing the speed limit on that road, noting that the current speed limit on Mountain Road at the intersection of Meadow Lane is only 30mph. Public Works conducted a warrant analysis and indicates that it meets the criteria to lower the speed limit.

There was no further comment from the public.

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Mr. Aumand, the Board approved the Motor Vehicle Ordinance Amendments as presented.

Proposed Zoning Amendments Work Session

Ms. Sarah McShane, Director of Planning and Zoning, and Ms. Mila Lonetto, chair of the Planning Commission, presented to the Board the first round of proposed amendments to the Town of Stowe Zoning Ordinance. This round of proposed amendments included incorporating the State Act 47 Zoning regulations, miscellaneous Zoning amendments based on Departmental, Board and Public input, changes recommended as a result of the Bylaws Modernization Grant focused on increasing affordable housing, and incorporating Interim Zoning related to Cannabis. This is the first of two planned work sessions, which focused on the Act 47 and miscellaneous amendments. Further proposed amendments will be discussed at the next work session.

Ms. McShane explained that the process for developing these proposed amendments included working with a planning consultant, as well as discussions and decision making from the Planning Commission, who held many public meetings to discuss the proposed amendments. It was noted that the amendments as presented are recommendations from the Planning Commission but that the Selectboard can make changes and give the Planning Commission a period to provide comments before advancing to the amendments to a Public Hearing process.

Ms. McShane introduced the incorporation of State Act 47, noting that the changes are currently in effect state-wide. Ms. Lonetto noted that while there are some challenges for Stowe in the Act 47 changes, its aim is to encourage housing, which is also a goal of the Planning Commission. She noted that the Planning Commission used the tools available to ensure what makes Stowe remains as much as possible while recognizing the State Law. It was noted that the State defines a Growth Zone as anywhere with Municipal Water & Sewer infrastructure available, which differs from the current Stowe defined Growth Zones. The Proposed Amendments includes a new section defining Areas Served by Municipal Water & Sewer. The Board discussed that while the State definition allows for anywhere serviced by Municipal Water and Sewer is a Growth Zone, the Town of Stowe currently is restricted by State Act 250 Permits. The Board discussed looking at maps to analyze the areas that are currently restricted to see the impact this could have on potential growth. One of the main changes in Act 47 is to increase density, or the number of housing units per acre, in Growth Zones. Those changes are reflected in the proposed amendments.

Act 47 also reduces required parking, allows Departmental approval of up to 4-unit developments, increased density to 5+ dwellings per acre in residential zones, and allows affordable housing developments to exceed density limitations. It was noted that duplexes are now assessed by the same standards of a single-family home in any residential zones. The definition section of the bylaws was also updated to reflect Act 47 definitions.

Other proposed amendments discussed included allowing for trail surface structures and features up to 14' wide to be built without a permit. It was discussed that permitting those structures would allow the Town to be aware of what is being built, however Ms. McShane noted that many structures are currently built without permits at this time. The Board discussed clarifications to the Conditional Uses section of the Bylaws, which will give further guidance to the Development Review Board regarding the assessment of "Undo Adverse Effect" of proposed projects.

Also noted was a change to the Protected Public Uses section to include Emergency Shelters and the inclusion of drive-through allowances at pharmacies.

No action was taken at this time. A second Work Session is scheduled for November 8, 2023.

FY'25 General Fund Budget Discussion

At the Selectboards request, time was set aside to discuss the upcoming FY'25 Budget and the expectations of the Selectboard prior to the Town Manager submitting it. Town Manager Mr. Charles Safford provided a number of macro-level budget issues to the Board, noting that labor shortage is creating wage pressures, particularly with upcoming union negotiations and unbudgeted Selectboard--approved hiring bonuses for Certified Police Officers as well as A police budget error in FY'24 that will result in an increase in expenditures of approximately \$150,000. He noted that while the Grand List has not yet been finalized, the Town Assessor anticipates it to be higher than average. He also noted that the Town instituted a Local Option Sales Tax effective 7/1/24, but not enough receipt history has been collected to give an updated estimate from the \$700,000 in anticipated revenue for FY'24. He also outlined a number of Capital projects that are on the horizon, including Rec Path maintenance improvements; Memorial Park Master Plan permitting and preliminary design; Moscow Village improvements; and replacement of the failed Akeley Memorial Building Theatre HVAC system. He noted the Town may also consider replacement of the Akeley Memorial Building boilers at the same time, switching from oil to propane. In regard to the Moscow Village improvements, he indicated the intent is to propose a scaled down project (e.g. welcome signs, lighted speed signs) until the town is in position to advance a larger project due to fiscal and human resource limitations.

Mr. Aumand stated that he would like to keep any cost increases within the Consumer Price Index, and encouraged exploring personnel cost savings through unfilled vacancies. Mr. Safford indicated that staff would strive to keep the proposed net budget within the CPI-U for the Northeast Region. He also noted that there are some planned retirements coming up and with the difficulty in recruitment, it may be beneficial to overlap staffing when a vacancy is anticipated particularly with police due to the time to train them. Also, if you don't budget for a full year it puts pressure to infill in future years. Mr. Donza asked Mr. Safford where he would pull back in the budget if he had to, which Mr. Safford responded would be very difficult due in part that the Town has never had a lot of staff to meet the demands being placed on them. It would require the Selectboard making tough decisions on the scope of services the Town is able to provide. Mr. Adams noted that the Town has historically had a good track record for lean budgets, and for many years the any increases were within the Grand List Growth, and the community needs to understand the financial pressures the Town is facing. Ms. Hagerty acknowledged that there are many moving pieces including the unknown impacts of the School Bond vote and School tax rate, and that some things are outside the Selectboards control.

The Board requested a better understanding of the long-term debt schedule for the Town, to assess when some debt may be paid off.

No action was taken at this time.

Arena Donation Offer

Mr. Nick Donza abstained from this discussion.

Mr. Safford informed the Board that the town has received an offer of donation from Donza Construction to donate labor and construction costs to build locker cubbies at the Stowe Arena in rooms #5 & #6. This will be used by the student athletes with no equipment stored in the locker rooms when not in use. There are no conditions or restrictions on the gift.

The Board thanked Mr. Donza for his offered donation.

On a motion by Mr. Aumand, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board accepted the donation as outlined with the understating that a Certificate of Insurance will be provided and the Town reserves the right to remove without compensation to the donor the lockers in the future at its sole discretion and to instruct the Town Manager to extend the Selectboard's appreciation to the donor. Mr. Donza abstained from the vote.

Manager's Report

Mr. Safford stated that there was nothing to report at this time, and there was no public comment.

On a motion by Aumand, seconded by Ms. Courtney the Board went into Executive Session at 8:55pm to discuss contracts.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:48pm.

There being no further business, Chair Hagerty adjourned the meeting at 9:48pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Bourgeois.

*Note: The video recording of the meeting is available on the town's website www.townofstowe.org