

TOWN OF PEACHAM
Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Selectboard Meeting
Hybrid meeting in the Peacham Library Community Room and via Zoom

Attendance

In-person: Alfred Dedam, Selectboard Chair, William Kempton, Selectboard, Christian Snow, Selectboard, Jeremy Withers, Road Foreman, Anna Carvalho, Selectboard Clerk, Alex MacLean, Mark Clough, Anna Rubin, Becky Jensen, Neil Monteith, Rusty Barber

Via Zoom: Molly Willard, Selectboard, Rebecca Washington, Town Clerk, Tim McKay, Janie Carle

Minutes

1. Call to order by Alfred at 06:34pm, on Wednesday, January 15, 2025
2. Additions to the agenda
 - a. Alex MacLean – After-school program funding request
 - i. School budget – the school needs to get below the excess spending threshold (every dollar over is double taxed.) In order to do that, \$150,000-200,000 dollars need to be cut, which will include the after-school program. It's essential for working parents. Several years ago, there was a similar issue. The community asked the town to cover a portion of the after-school program. The request is not to fund the whole program, but it's unaffordable for parents to pay the whole amount. They are also looking for grants and scholarships to help. Asking between \$15,000 and \$20,000. Mark Clough clarified that it would only be half for this calendar year (\$10,000 for the fall of 2025 and \$10,000 for the spring of 2026.) Alfred emphasized his mission to make this town accessible and affordable, so he supports including \$10,000 in the town budget. He would prefer to include it in the budget rather than as a separate warning. Rebecca explained we have the restricted Afternoon Childcare Fund previously used still exists. They could budget adding to that fund with the amount to be raised in taxes. Mark commented that the administration would not fall to the town. They are looking into AOE grant and fundraising with the PTF, but parents would still need to pay some, potentially on a sliding scale. Will asked if it could fall under appropriations or if that was only for non-profits. Rebecca said it's only for non-profits, but it could be in the warning as a separate article. Tim McKay weighed in that he thinks it should be its own article for clarity. Alex clarified that it is not a school board request, as the town cannot fund school budgetary items. The childcare program is a community program. Mark commented that the schoolboard scrubbed their budget, but had to decide between the music, language, and arts or bussing and the afterschool program. Christian believes that it's ok to ask parents to pitch in. Molly commented that it's a needed thing, and she agrees with Tim. She reminded them of the budget increase, and requested they be cognizant of how to be affordable and accessible moving forward, and to be prepared for pushback. Discussion about how to present it to the town and the difference between a line item and warned article. Alfred is concerned that it is a lightning rod for conversation, and those who it would benefit will not be able to be there to represent themselves. Alex and Mark encouraged them to discuss and explain it during Town Meeting even if it is added as a line item in the budget.

1. Will moved to include \$10,000 in the Afternoon Childcare restricted fund from the beginning of school 2025 through Dec 31st, 2025, seconded by Christian, all in favor, so moved.

- b. Letter from Margret MacLean –
- i. She feels there will be an imminent push to shut down schools that don't meet a minimum enrollment threshold. If that is the case, Peacham will not meet it. Within one election cycle, the State could decide to shut down our school. Our kids would be sent to Danville. Walden kids would be sent to Barnet or Waterford. Margret is trying to work with independent school districts and towns that would be facing shutdown. Most recent school consolidations have resulted in towns not having their own school board, so they lose their voice. She feels it's important to form a coalition to approach the legislature to try to stop the legislation.
 - ii. She requests the Peacham Selectboard support the coalition effort. Alfred feels Margret is an expert in this field and supports her efforts and letter. He feels having no school would be detrimental to the Peacham community. Will added that Roxbury was forced to merge with Montpelier and left with a vacant school building that the town has to pay taxes on, and the kids are on the bus for 2-3 hours a day. Alex MacLean noted that the Peacham School Board has already signed their support. Molly commented that she supports it too. Christian commented it is absolutely necessary to have a school in the community.

1. Will moved to support Margret MacLean's letter pertaining to the Peacham School, seconded by Christian, all in favor, so moved.

3. Highway Department Update

- a. New tandem axel plow truck is running. Just needs the lettering for its name "Snowbuster." Radios will be put in next week.
- b. Got the chipper back, but while towing back a tire blew, but it's been fixed. They put the wing on the grader to work on getting rid of high banks.
- c. Jeremy has been meeting with FEMA once a week with Rebecca and Jen. They are finishing up damage inventory and finalizing FHWA projects to submit for reimbursement.
- d. Met with Liam Abbate from NVDA, who did our road erosion inventory last year, to discuss Municipal Roads General Permit. We are in pretty good shape. Redo every 5 years. Provides a map showing the degree of work needed.
- e. Jeremy needs a decision about the Mill Trace Bridge and Governor Maddocks. He needs numbers for FEMA. If we are going to fix it, we will need to hire contractors early. FEMA will put back what existed regarding the bridge. Mitigation money would have to be used to fix anything further. Alfred asked about getting a state inspection of the bridge, but the advice Jeremy received was they would want to know what they planned to do with it. Alfred would like to coordinate a site visit with VTrans and a Rivers and Streams person at the same time. Will pointed out that there is another issue on Slack St too, but Jeremy thinks it will be another site visit. Alfred will try to find the right contact and reach out.
- f. Alfred would like to add updating the road policy to the to include the updates that have been approved since it was written.

4. Town Clerk/Treasurer Update with Rebecca Washington via Zoom

- a. Asked for confirmation that she could sign off on FHWA paperwork that has been coming through. Selectboard ok with this.

- b. The Selectboard has already authorized spending up to \$7000 of the restoration land records restricted fund for new copier, but the one they need is \$7500. Rebecca explained it's not tax dollars. It comes from recording fees. It's already in a fund, so it wouldn't change the budget, as money is already there.

- i. **Christian moved to authorize \$7500 for a copier, seconded by Will, all in favor, so moved.**

5. Neil Monteith – Emergency Management update

- a. Neil has encouraged FEMA to work directly with Rebecca and Jeremy and has coordinated getting individual assistance resources out to as many people as he could.
- b. Hazard Mitigation Plan in a lull because consultants otherwise occupied. He will put out an announcement and survey to then have a public meeting. He will try to get a lot of public input for the plan. Some of the previous suggestions have already been implemented but would like to make an action plan.
- c. Neil talked to Will about the school as a shelter. There is a lot of work to be done.
- d. He spoke to Christian about the ash trees. He wanted to clarify that the wood still belongs to the landowners, even though we are responsible for those trees. We will have to establish a plan for when landowners want to keep the wood and for when they do not want to keep the wood.
- e. Alfred asked about the timber in the Town Forest. There have only been a few harvests over the years. Tim McKay advised that he has spoken with the new county forester, who would like to take a look. Tim can show him around. The county forester who would be responsible for the management plan for the forest. Alfred would like to become more familiar with the forest as well.

6. Rusty Barber – Renovation Project update

- a. Needs to tidy up the bid before it's ready. He has been rethinking certain elements, which has taken time. He still hopes to put out a bid in the next 4 weeks. The scope of the gym section is expanding in order to meet the heating and air conditioning system needs.
- b. 2 proposals about the heating systems:
 - i. Thomas Engineering – Pre-construction design services then the project would go out to bid, and some monitoring during construction.
 - ii. VHV– Pre-construction design services. Meet with us, then do some design documents, and pricing, then discuss ways to reduce costs, then they would build it.

Molly asked why we aren't using VEIC engineers who work for free except for installation and explained the processes briefly. Rusty said he would look into it, but that he doesn't think they'll do bid documents and the advantage of doing the bids as he has prepared is that they get to specify the details they want. Molly commented that VEIC is careful not to take business from other engineers since they are a free service, so if we already have other engineers involved, they may not get involved. Rusty's recalls being somewhat dissatisfied with the suggestions they made, but he's also concerned about the time crunch in their process, and the ones he has presented are already aware of it. Alfred feels we should go with the VHV proposal because it includes all the moving parts, making it simpler. Christian and Will agree. Mark Clough suggested contacting ARC for a proposal. Molly would like to see the proposal.

- iii. **Christian moved to hire VHV out the Capital Building Fund, seconded by Will, all in favor, so moved.**

- c. Regarding the timber framing for the walkway area structure using fir. He was concerned about the fir rotting at the base. After seeking professional advice, Rusty suggests using a wall

underneath to get off the ground and then going back to using fir. He will pursue a price to build and install.

- d. Rusty needs to get into the attic, so Alfred and Christian will look into setting up staging and let Rusty know when they decide when to do that.
- e. Becky Jensen – provided a written request, but explained her concern about the floor considering how much it is being used. There are more dead spots than ever. She requested and advocated for changing the floor. Rusty said he'd been told it was too much to deal with. Will clarified that it had been determined the wood flooring would be too expensive, but he doesn't know if there is a structural concern. Alfred expressed his concerns about trying to install wood. Becky stated that her request is only for a good floor, not necessarily a wood floor. Alfred will look into some other potential options besides wood. Will will see what Matt Kempton and Andy Cochran remember about the last remodel.

7. Planning Commission business with Anna Rubin

- a. Anna asked for feedback and guidance for the Planning Commission about the bylaw amendment situation. She asked if the legal review had been done. Alfred admitted he didn't realize it was the Selectboard responsibility. Anna said she wasn't aware of that and needs contacts. She shared the conversation with the Selectboard with the Planning Commission regarding the definition of a "lot." The consultants determined that some language from the 2017 edits was missing, so they provided the language that the State uses. The Planning Commission objective was to address the housing issues. She can leave the "lot" definition as it is, but she doesn't want it to hold up the whole process. Alfred felt there was some grandfathering language included but could not recall where. Molly commented she agreed the issue was with Act 250 language, not the Planning Commission proposal. The issue is that the old language is not clear, but the new language was what was being objected to, so Anna wants to know whether they should try to continue without that one amendment to respect the concern that was brought up. If we don't update our bylaws, they will be considered obsolete by the State, as the laws have already been passed. Anna explained that the consultants commented that they'd be fine with another legal review as it's already been reviewed by many lawyers. She will send the final copy with the original 2017 "lot" definition to be adopted at a special meeting. After that, the Planning Commission will continue to work on the next steps, which can include working on that definition.

8. Milage Certificate

- a. Jeremy confirmed that as of now, nothing has changed as of now, so it should be correct, so it just needs to be signed.
 - i. **Will moved to approve the mileage certificate, seconded by Christian, all in favor, so moved.**

9. 2025 Town Meeting Warning

- a. Rebecca will need to update the budget based on the update to the Afternoon Care fund.
- b. Regarding the \$50,00 contributed to Fire Dept Capital Equipment fund, she can't find proof that that fund was established at Town Meeting. Rebecca explained how that would need to be processed as a result. She got advice from VLCT.
- c. She asked VLCT about needing to revote for borrowing money for the renovation project. Tim McKay commented that based on the language of last year's article, it does not need to be warned again.

- d. Rebecca asked if the Selectboard wanted the kids to name the new pickup truck again. The Selectboard agrees to continue that tradition. Rebecca will reach out to Sam Mcleod.
 - e. She's concerned about cash flow because of all the projects happening in the first half of 2025. She requested increasing the tax anticipation note to \$500,000. It would not change the budget at all, it would just make sure that cash flow is ok. We only borrow what we need and pay it back with taxes collected.
 - i. **Will moved to raise the tax anticipation note budget line from \$300,000 to \$500,000, seconded by Christian, all in favor, so moved.**
 - f. Tim McKay asked for clarification about the Selectboard terms and upcoming appointments. Everyone is on the same page.
 - i. **Will moved to approve the Town Meeting warning with our changes, seconded by Christian, all in favor, so moved.**
- Rebecca asked the Selectboard members to stop by to sign it.
10. Deputy Health Officer recommendation letter
- a. Needs to be signed to make it official with the state. Rebecca suggested including a letter with the form.
 - i. **Will moved to sign the recommendation letter to appoint Katherine Siner as deputy health officer, seconded by Christian, all in favor, so moved.**
11. Public comment - None
12. Approve minutes
- a. **Christian moved to approve minutes from Wednesday, January 1, 2025, seconded by William, all in favor, so moved.**
13. Review and approve bills
- a. **William moved to approve bills as presented, seconded Christian, all in favor, so moved.**
14. Review correspondence
- a. Ken Danielson – response to decision about Worcester Rd. Alfred concerned he may misunderstand the right-of-way as needing to be cleared of trees, rather than just the jurisdiction to manage the space as needed. Selectboard agreed there was no request for action in the letter.
 - b. Gym Coordinator – Rachael stepped down and handed it off to Justin White. Alfred reached out to Justin to explain that managing the facility is the Selectboard's responsibility, and to communicate needs and hopes he will come to a meeting to discuss it.
 - c. Transfer Station Window – the window is broken, and it needs to be fixed. Alfred will stop down and measure and look for new glass.
 - d. Ethics liaison regarding new state law – Rebecca explained that ethics are being handled at a state level. Selectboard members will need to do a training, and they will need to appoint an ethics liaison. She volunteered.
 - i. **Will moved to elect Rebecca Washington as the ethics liaison, seconded by Christian, all in favor, so moved.**
 - e. Laurie Kozar found a tree removal grant. Christian will reach out and look into it.
15. **William** moved to adjourn at **8:37pm**, seconded by **Christian**, all in favor, so moved.

Documents provided to the Selectboard and discussed at this meeting are available by request to the Town Office.