

## WAITSFIELD SELECTBOARD 2014 Annual Report

The Selectboard typically meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 7:00pm at the Waitsfield Town Office. Citizens are encouraged to contact Town Administrator Valerie Capels to confirm meeting dates or to have a matter placed on the agenda. Meetings are open to the public and citizens are encouraged to attend. Agendas are posted at [www.waitsfieldvt.us/sb/agenda.cfm](http://www.waitsfieldvt.us/sb/agenda.cfm). Most of our meetings are filmed for broadcast by Mad River Valley TV on channel 45.

With last year's election, the Selectboard bade farewell to long-time member and Vice Chair Bill Parker and welcomed back Sal Spinosa, following a write-in campaign.

The past year has, once again, been characterized by continued investment in community infrastructure—most notably renewable energy, sidewalks, and major culvert replacements. An important element distinguishes these from recent past infrastructure investments: they were proactive or planned rather than in reaction to a disaster.

**Solar Array.** On March 24, 2014, Nils Behn of Aegis Renewable Energy, a locally-owned Waitsfield business located in the Mad River Park, made a presentation to the Selectboard about an opportunity to submit an application to the Vermont Clean Energy Development Fund (CEDF) to build a solar array on underutilized land at the Waitsfield Town Garage. A similar project was under way in the neighboring town of Warren. The application was due May 9 and voter approval to borrow up to \$355,000 would be needed. The Selectboard enthusiastically supported the initiative and a special Town Meeting was held on May 6, 2014. Voters supported the measure 197 in favor, 43 opposed.

With help from the Aegis team and Energy Committee co-chair Chris Badger, the application was submitted by the Town on May 9 for \$80,000 toward the \$306,609, 102 kW, 330 panel project. Notice of award of the fully-funded grant was received a month later in June.

The bond bank application was submitted by the May 19 deadline, \$235,000 of which was intended to cover the solar array expenses. The Certificate of Public Good (CPG) that Aegis applied for in April on behalf of the Town was issued in July by the Public Service Board.

Governor Shumlin held a press conference in Waitsfield on July 29, 2014 to announce the award of this and other CEDF grants.



Governor’s Solar Tour Press Conference.

Photo: MRVTV

The Road Dept. is commended for the extensive clean-up of the site. Construction was completed in December and the ribbon cutting occurred in January 2015. The pace at which all these pieces came together to accomplish this project was remarkable. Efforts will continue into 2015 to finalize the power purchase agreement with the Waitsfield Elementary School.

The Selectboard has been interested in renewable energy for a long time. Not only will this project save taxpayers money over time, it will be a local, sustainable source for energy for our municipal buildings and will enable the new Town Office to have the distinction of being the second net-zero Town Office in Vermont. See page 87 for more information.

**Sidewalks.** Sidewalks—existing, new, and planned—continued to be a focus of discussion, debate, and ultimately, decision. The Route 100 transportation path was finally completed in 2014. Much has been discussed about the various delays and cost overruns. The Town will be seeking additional grant funding through VTrans to help recover as much of the overruns as possible.

The Village West Phase 1 sidewalk from Old County Road to Valley Players was completed in record time with few complications once it got started and was paid for nearly 100% through Safe Routes to Schools grants.

In response to considerable public input this past year, the Selectboard accepted the 90% grant from the Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian program for the Village West Phase 2 sidewalk from Valley Players to Bridge Street. A Local Project Manager is in the process of being selected who will help oversee the process of hiring a design engineering firm, development of preliminary plans, public outreach, coordination with affected property owners, permitting, final design, and ultimately construction. This process is likely to take at least 2½ years. We will be paying particular attention to the treatment of driveways, the Village Grocery sign, and whether on-street parking should be included. See page 76 for more information about these projects.

**Maintenance of Sidewalks.** When Charlie Goodman retired at the end of 2013 after plowing Waitsfield's sidewalks from Irasville to the Elementary School for over 25 years, a new era of sidewalk maintenance was ushered in along with the new sidewalk. We took last year's experience and put it out bid with more detailed specifications and offered multi-year contract options. Offering a multi-year contract had several benefits: it would save everyone some effort, guarantee the contractor work, and result in a predictable budget figure for the Town. Kingsbury Construction was selected and the budget figure on page 54 reflects a 5-year contract.

**Covered Bridge and Bridge Street Improvement Projects.** This initiative began with a VTrans enhancement grant in 2008 to rehabilitate the Covered Bridge, followed by a VTrans stormwater grant in 2010 to develop a design for the failing stormwater system under Bridge Street. Tropical Storm Irene added repair of the destroyed retaining wall in 2011. In the meantime, the scope of the project expanded to include complete repaving from Route 100 to the Covered Bridge, replacing the asphalt sidewalks with concrete sidewalks, and improved curbing.

In response to community interest, considerable effort was also made to explore the relocation of the overhead utilities to below ground conduits to take advantage of the street being excavated. After many configurations, cost estimates, and much deliberation, the Selectboard ultimately decided to abandon that component because it seemed clear

that the original plan of installing just the conduits and relocating the utilities at some future date was not going to be practical—that it should be done all at once. The costs were going to be too high, even for just the conduit installation, particularly in relation to Waitsfield’s many other, higher priority infrastructure needs and budget constraints.

Voters approved various levels of additional funding in 2013 and 2014 to complete this project and cover anticipated increased costs associated with the various elements. The projects were put out to bid for construction in July 2014. Efforts were made to design the schedule to have the least impact on the business community and everyone else affected by having Bridge Street closed for weeks. This included making sure there was no construction disruption from August through Columbus Day in early October. Three bids were received and the low bid was substantially higher than the package of funds we had available, even with an additional \$147,000 grant offered by VTrans for the stormwater component. We had no choice but to reject all the bids and try again.

The projects were re-bid in early January 2015, this time using the Covered Bridge rehabilitation as the base bid with the bridge re-decking, bridge concrete repair, retaining wall repair, and stormwater projects as add/alternates with separate bid prices. Three qualifying bids were submitted by the January 22 deadline. The Selectboard voted to accept the base bid from Alpine Construction, contingent upon voter approval of **ARTICLE 8** and Australian ballot **ARTICLE II**. If approved, we would be able to proceed with all the projects.

The borrowing authority in Australian ballot **ARTICLE II** is place of, not in addition to, the previously authorized borrowing, which are believed to have expired at the end of 2014. We expect it to be in the form a 15-year bond.

The project is expected to begin in spring 2015 and must be completed by July 31, 2015. Bridge Street will need to be closed for several weeks and efforts will be made to minimize disruption to residents and businesses as much as possible. See page 80 for more information about these projects.

**Covered Bridge Pocket Park.** With the help of the Vermont Downtown Assistance Team (V-DAT) consultants and Town Administrator Valerie Capels, Joshua Schwartz and Dara Torre at the

Mad River Valley Planning District have been working on a grant application to the Vermont Community Development Program Disaster Recovery 2 grant program to develop the pocket park. If funded, the Town will need to meet a 20% match and take over the project management. See page 79 for more information.

**Culvert Replacements.** Two major culvert replacements were accomplished in 2014. The metal culvert on lower Brook Road was replaced with an appropriately sized pre-cast concrete culvert in August 2014. A VTrans culvert grant covered 90% of that cost.

The concrete and metal culverts on Tremblay Road across from the Town Garage were replaced with an appropriately sized and aligned metal culvert with concrete headwalls also in August 2014.

Thank you to Charlie Goodman, Valerie Capels, and Road Dept. for all the work they did to get those projects designed, bid, funded, and built.

**Joslin Hill Road.** There has been much discussion and debate about how best to address the reconstruction of the 1.2 miles of Joslin Hill Road and what it should look like. The Town received a VTrans grant to hire an engineer to explore including provision for pedestrians and bicyclists in a reconstruction plan. The Selectboard ultimately chose instead to take advantage of local talent to develop a plan and cost estimates for reconstruction of the road and hosted public forums to solicit community input. Residents expressed concerns about widening the road and the current high rates of speed. They also urged that reconstruction not be delayed.

Mike Kingsbury and Road Commissioner Charlie Goodman worked up separate estimates that suggest reconstruction costs could range from as little as \$600,000 to \$1 million or more. Details included some tree removal, relocation of some mailboxes and utility poles, ditching, and improving shoulders in key areas of the road.

**ARTICLE 7**, which asks voters whether to borrow up to \$75,000 to shim Joslin Hill Road as an interim measure, will be an opportunity to have more discussion on this topic. See page 85 for more information.

The large culvert at the bottom of Joslin Hill Road and Brook Road damaged during Tropical Storm Irene is slated to be repaired by the end

of August 2015. FEMA funds are expected to pay for a significant portion of this project. See page 77 for more information.

**Town Office Relocation.** In late 2013, the Selectboard appointed a Town Office Design Committee to work with the Maclay Architects design team to develop final plans and cost estimates for the new Town Office. Members include Tom Buzkowski, Charlie Goodman, Peter Reynells, Corinthia Richards, Brian Shupe, and Selectboard members Chris Pierson and Scott Kingsbury. They met regularly through 2014 and hosted at least two public forums to solicit public input on final design details and estimated costs. It was through collaboration with the design team and Aegis Renewables that the idea for the Waitsfield solar array came about. See page 86 for more information.

**Decentralized Wastewater Management.** The Community Wastewater Loan Fund Program team worked hard this past year to continue to put the pieces in place through the Agency of Natural Resources state revolving loan fund program and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to secure the remaining \$906,100 in STAG funds for the improvement of on-site wastewater systems. This included executing several planning and engineering contracts, development of loan and security agreements, environmental studies, public hearings, and outreach to prospective borrowers. See page 72 for more information.

Amy Sheldon was hired as a municipal project manager with funding through a municipal planning grant to work directly with property owners and prospective participants.

Because of the multiple property owners and other unique considerations, the Winter Park pilot project was especially complex. The Selectboard granted an easement on the Town Pond property to accommodate a new pretreatment system.

**Proposed Charter.** The idea of changing the Treasurer's position from elected by voters to appointed by the Selectboard was brought to Selectboard by the Budget Task Force a few years ago but took some time for the ball to get rolling. It became clear that Waitsfield's financial systems were becoming increasingly complex with the various capital projects under way, a new water system, a new wastewater loan program, state requirements, and more. If the Treasurer is appointed rather than elected, the Selectboard would have the ability to seek and appoint the most qualified candidate for the job in the event of a vacancy. It would

also allow for more oversight over job performance and coordination with overall Town governmental operations. Currently an elected position for a three-year term, the Treasurer is independent of Selectboard oversight. Including the Town Clerk position in the proposal was seen as a benefit to both in terms of job security and would also allow for annual performance evaluations.

**Route 100 Paving.** The long-awaited repaving of Route 100 from Fiddlers Green northward beyond the Village was substantially completed by VTrans this fall, though some finishing touches remain into 2015.

**Lareau Swim Hole Park.** The Lareau Swim Hole Park never quite recovered from the August 28, 2011 flood and the grounds remained difficult to maintain. Trash and vandalism also continued to be a problem. The port-o-let enclosure, which was built by Yestermorrow many years ago, became a hazard due to chronic accumulations of trash and garbage. It was dismantled with the plan to replace it with an improved structure. The Selectboard resumed working with Robert White, the original landscape architect for the project in 2000, to develop a plan for the renovation of the mounds and site plan for DRB review. We hope to see this completed in 2015.

**Law Enforcement.** Law enforcement services continued to be provided through the Washington County Sheriff's Department (WCSD) on a contract basis for 16 hours per week. Waitsfield has been fortunate for the many years Peter Laskowski has served--and continues to serve--as Constable. Finding other qualified and motivated citizens to serve as Constable as he transitions toward retirement has not been easy. Funds are included in the proposed FY2016 budget for training of prospective Constable recruits. Meanwhile, crime continues to be a serious concern. The provision of reliable and cost-effective law enforcement in Waitsfield and the Mad River Valley will require on-going discussion.

**Emergency Operations Planning.** We wish to express our thanks to Fred Messer and Carla Straight-Messer for their diligent efforts to strengthen Waitsfield's ability to prepare for and respond to a range of disasters. They continue to remain up to date on state and regional emergency preparedness initiatives and have been instrumental in keeping our Local Emergency Operations Plan up to date. This coming year our All Hazards Emergency Plan will need to be updated.

This past year Waitsfield signed on to participate in the VT-Alert emergency notification system. Citizens will be able to subscribe to receive alerts about pending disasters, weather conditions, traffic and road issues, public health notifications, and countless other issues or events. The system allows the public to receive notifications through a number of delivery systems such as text, e-mail, or telephone. Town officials will receive training in 2015 to set up and maintain the system.

**Waitsfield on the Web.** Though keeping the Web site updated has been a challenge with so much going on, Waitsfield's official Web site continued to be a source for information about Waitsfield, works in progress, departments, boards and committees, up-coming and past meetings, and more. Selectboard agendas, for example, are posted at [www.waitsfieldvt.us/sb/agenda.cfm](http://www.waitsfieldvt.us/sb/agenda.cfm) and often include links to the documents the Selectboard will be discussing. It is also used to promote Waitsfield businesses through the comprehensive listings of *Services, Shopping, Foods & Eateries, Lodging, Arts & Entertainment, Recreation*, and more.

State statutes were amended effective July 1, 2014 that require all agendas to be posted to the official Web site within 48 hours of a regular meeting and 24 hours of a special meeting of any municipal board, committee, subcommittee, task force, etc. Minutes must also be posted within five days. Current agendas and minutes can be found through the Archives page [www.waitsfieldvt.us/archives/](http://www.waitsfieldvt.us/archives/).

The number of people who "like" Waitsfield's Facebook page reached 489 by the end of the year. It was launched in an effort to increase citizen outreach and promote Waitsfield events, businesses, and other activities. Waitsfield also posts information on Front Porch Forum.

**Budget Task Force.** The Budget Task Force (also referred to as the Budget Committee) was created in the summer 2009 to examine all aspects of Waitsfield's budgeting process, explore opportunities for improvements and efficiencies, and present recommendations to the Selectboard. Task Force members include Bill Parker, Darryl Forrest, Steve Shea, Charlie Goodman, and Bill Coyle.

The Selectboard wishes to extend its sincere thanks to the time and effort the Budget Task Force and Town Administrator have put in these past many months.

**Town Meeting Research Group.** In response to the level of interest about voter participation at Town Meeting and voting on the budget in particular, the Selectboard appointed Sally Kendall, Gary Kingsbury, Ted Laskaris, Deri Meier, Suzanne Peterson, Nancy Turner, Brian Shupe, Sheila Ware, and Rob Williams to a Town Meeting Research Group to explore issues affecting voter participation at Town Meeting and present recommendations to the Selectboard. A summary of their findings begins on page 39.

Town Reports and information about the Annual Meeting have been on Waitsfield's Web site at [www.waitsfieldvt.us/annualmeeting/](http://www.waitsfieldvt.us/annualmeeting/) since 2007. Information about the budget traditionally had been at the end of the Selectboard reports. Budget information can now be found in an independent section starting on page 45 along with more analysis and illustrations. The Capital Projects section beginning on page 72 provides more detail about the various projects that have direct effect on the proposed and upcoming budgets.

We thank the TMRG for their work and look forward more discussion about how participation at Town Meeting and in the budget process can be improved.

**Races, Relays, and Events.** Though the Selectboard is not responsible for initiating the many events that happen in Waitsfield throughout the year, we recognize that having roads, bridges, and facilities in good repair is important to accommodate them. The various construction projects and flood recovery efforts over the past few years and coming up present challenges for these events to work around. The Selectboard wants to recognize and express appreciation for the collaboration that exists among the organizers, businesses, sponsors, volunteers, local officials, and others that make these events a success year after year. Waitsfield, and the Valley, are fortunate that events such as the Mad Marathon, the Green Mountain Stage Race, 100 on 100 Relay, Craft Fair, Mad Dash, Music Fest, Festival of the Arts, Bridge Street block parties, Baked Beads sales, and other events bring participants, spectators, customers, and others to the community, contributing to the economy and vitality that help make this such a great place to be.

**Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Town Clerk Transitions.**

Last, but not least, we wish to acknowledge the departure of Town Clerk & Treasurer Jennifer Peterson, who submitted her resignation in

September to pursue other opportunities after serving as Town Clerk and Treasurer for almost 8 years and the retirement of Janet Smith, who served as Assistant Town Clerk for more than 23 years. Janet agreed to be appointed Town Clerk until a new appointment could be made—or until her retirement on October 31, whichever came sooner.

After a round of advertisements and interviews, Pamela Marino was appointed Town Clerk and Treasurer in September. After nearly two weeks of training, she resigned to return to her job at TD Bank. Because no one else could perform the Treasurer's duties by law, Jennifer agreed to be reappointed as Treasurer on a contract basis at the same she had another full time job at Cabot Creamery Cooperative. She managed the accounts, processed payroll, prepared warrants, and performed other duties at nights and on weekends.

In October we welcomed Renee Pierce as Town Clerk, who is now also serving as Assistant Treasurer. And we welcomed Kellee Mazer as the Town Treasurer, who is also serving as Assistant Clerk. Jennifer and Janet continued to work with Kellee and Renee at night, on weekends, and whenever else they could fit it in. We wish Janet and Jennifer well in their new pursuits.

**Staff and Volunteers.** The Selectboard wishes to acknowledge and thank the Town staff for their efforts to keep Town operations moving smoothly and delivering high levels of service. Special thanks to all the citizens who volunteer countless hours of time and other resources serving on boards, committees, commissions, and task forces.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Hartshorn, Chair  
Logan Cooke, V. Chair  
Scott Kingsbury  
Christopher Pierson  
Sal Spinosa