

## WAITSFIELD SELECTBOARD 2011 Annual Report

The Selectboard typically meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. 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. Our meetings are open to the public and citizens are encouraged to attend. We are also pleased that most of our meetings are filmed for broadcast by Mad River Valley TV on channel 45.

This past year was defined in many ways by water: too much of it, not enough of it, how to manage it, how to protect it, how to supply it.

At the same time, it was defined by emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience.

"Water, water every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water every where,  
Nor any drop to drink."  
~ *"The Rime of the Ancient  
Mariner"* by Samuel Coleridge

**May 20 Flash Flood.** Friday, May 20, 2011 began as a beautiful, warm, sunny, blue sky day. Angry clouds moved in quickly late in the afternoon and unleashed a powerful hail and rain storm that dropped about four inches in less than an hour. This microburst storm overtook many culverts, carried debris that plugged others, and caused extensive damage to numerous driveways and roads. Hardest hit was the northeast



Brook Road, 05/21/2011

(Photo: V. Capels)

area of town and some pockets in Fayston. Long Road, East Road, Brook Road, Common Road, North Road, Tremblay Road, Palmer Hill Road, Old Center Fayston Road, and others, suffered extensive damage. None of these areas are in the floodplain. The Selectboard convened the Incident Command Structure of our Rapid Response/Emergency Operation Plan and declared a state of emergency on Sunday, May 22. The Road Department and others worked tirelessly and had driveways and roads restored to

passable form within days. The storms in Chittenden and Washington counties from April/early May and those of May 26-28 became

federally-declared disasters and eligible for FEMA reimbursement. Our storm received its federal declaration in November and efforts to obtain FEMA and State reimbursement will continue into 2012.

**August 28 Tropical Storm Irene.** Although we were given plenty of warning of a storm headed our way, the impact of Tropical Storm Irene exceeded most of Vermont's expectations. When waterways continued to rise and gain energy, many people were not prepared for its destructive forces. The Waitsfield-Fayston Volunteer Fire Department did see it coming and mobilized earlier in the day to haul the entire contents of the Town vault and other vulnerable records upstairs into the Joslin Library and out of harm's way. The Fire and Road Departments also worked quickly to close roads and minimize hazards to citizens throughout the town.

Losses. Much has been reported about the extensive losses suffered in Waitsfield, neighboring towns, and elsewhere in Vermont. Many individuals suffered severe losses and continue to wrestle with hardship. Among the hardest hit were the entire Bridge Street business district, Fiddlers Green, American Flatbread, and a group of homes on Shepard Brook. Many residences adjacent to the Mad River and feeder streams were also severely damaged.

Agricultural Impacts. Impact on Waitsfield's agricultural lands was significant. Several farms lost dozens of acres of prime crops and arable soils; baled hay was spoiled or swept away; productive fields were gouged into new configurations; greenhouses and their contents were ruined; loads of debris was deposited. In addition to the direct impacts on the farmers, these losses will be felt in many ways by everyone in the Valley.

Town Office. The Town Office flooded. Thanks to the quick action of the Fire Department and many volunteers, records were removed from the vault and carried up to the Library; file cabinet drawers were removed; and equipment was elevated prior to the high water. About 3 inches



Waitsfield Town Office, 09/01/2011.

(Photo: V. Capels)

of flood water came into the Town Office through the side and front doors. Efforts to dry out the floor led to the replacement of the carpet. Despite being upheaved well into October until the office could be put back in order, the Town Office remained open every business day.

Covered Bridge. The Covered Bridge took a beating but held its ground. A resident was overheard to say, “It must have been built well.” Work was initiated immediately to assess the damages and develop a plan for repair. Because the Selectboard opted for the short-term repair option, the bridge opened by mid-November in time for the holidays. The more permanent repairs will be included in the rehabilitation project that was underway before the storm. Construction is expected to begin in late summer and will require the bridge and Bridge Street be closed again. Every effort will be made to provide ample advance notice and to minimize the inconvenience.



Flood water pummeling the Covered Bridge, 08/28/2011. (Photo: Jeff Knight)



Bridge Street cleanup, 08/30/2011. (Photo: Jeff Knight)

Volunteers. Words cannot capture the power of our broader community’s generosity of spirit. The convergence of people who came to help during and well after the waters receded has been truly remarkable. Many jumped to action doing what they do best without being directed. Others stepped into leadership positions to help identify the needs and direct people and material resources to them. Bridge Street was an obvious focal point, but similar acts were also playing out in other areas of town.

Volunteer Headquarters. Under the swift leadership of a number of people, organizational and response efforts were launched in those first days that led to formation of the MRV Hurricane Headquarters in space donated by the Masonic Lodge. A

Facebook page was developed that quickly reached hundreds of people and became a vital source for sharing late-breaking information. It was integrated into [www.mrvhurricaneirene.com](http://www.mrvhurricaneirene.com), a Web site that continues to provide valuable information. There is not enough space to list all the individuals who stepped up to continue to provide leadership and support through the HQ and beyond. To all of them we express our gratitude.



Volunteers begin to mobilize and organize. 08/29/2011.

(Photo: V. Capels)

River Gravel. The storm deposited significant amounts of sediment in the Mad River. Removal of some of this material in six locations drew much attention and mixed messages about whether it was the right thing to do. It was undertaken with the authority and direction of the ANR Stream Alteration Engineer to restore channel capacity and reduce threats to infrastructure. It has also prompted much dialogue over proper river management that will be on-going. The material that was removed will be used only for public purposes, such as base material for road reconstruction and culvert work.

Cash Flow. Following the May flood, the Selectboard authorized a one-year line of credit up to \$500,000 through Merchants Bank. Approximately \$260,000 was spent to repair roads and culverts from the May flood. Little did we know this would continue to serve us for the event in August. At the close of 2011, approximately \$188,000 had been spent on the Tropical Storm Irene recovery, bringing the total spent for the two events to over \$448,000. ARTICLE 7 on the warning for Town Meeting asks voters to approve borrowing up to \$400,000 to refinance this line of credit to a longer term loan when it comes due in May. The final amount to be refinanced is expected to be much less, as reimbursements through our insurance and FEMA will be applied against the principal.

Lessons. Tropical Storm Irene provided us a lesson about why flood regulations, hazard planning, and river management are essential for the well-being of our community. The dynamics of waterways need to be understood and respected. And the floodplains need to be able to do their job of holding and slowing high waters. The May 20 flash flood provided a lesson that the threat of flooding is not limited to the floodplains or along waterways and of the importance of properly sizing and maintaining our transportation infrastructure. We cannot prevent these events from occurring, but we can—and need to--prepare ourselves for when they do.

We also learned – and keep learning – that we are a resilient Valley. We support each other in times of need, and work hard to learn from the challenges that affect us and our neighbors. While we would never wish these hard times upon ourselves or anyone else, we cannot help but be grateful that the floodwaters receded on a town and broader Valley community that has what it takes and then some to weather hard times.



Volunteer HQ, 09/02/2011.

(Photo: V. Capels)

Thank you to the Waitsfield Planning Commission, Friends of the Mad River, and the Mad River Valley Planning District for providing valuable technical support and leadership on these issues. And thank you to Emergency Management Director Fred Messer and Emergency Management Coordinator Carla Straight-Messer for their guidance and support before, during, and after these major events. And special thank you to the MRV Flood Relief Headquarters volunteers and the Masons of Lodge #77 for their contributions to the immediate response and the ongoing recovery.

**Municipal Water Project.** Anyone who traveled through Waitsfield between May and December knows construction on the water project continued in full swing through 2011. Successes: the 400,000 gallon

water storage tank was completed; water main installation and fire hydrant installations were completed from the tank into Irasville. A water ordinance was adopted that will require the formation of a Water Commission in this coming year to oversee its implementation.

Waitsfield has never seen an infrastructure project of this scale and disruptions were inevitable. We are grateful for people's patience through the traffic delays, dust, and noise. What helped us get through it was looking ahead to when the project is complete: yards and peace have been restored, fire hydrants are at the ready to protect us, and Waitsfield Village, Irasville, and other areas are supplied with safe, reliable, abundant drinking water.

We are not there yet. Flood recovery and legal conundrums contributed to delays that will carry construction into 2012. Final water main installation will be focused in the Bragg Hill area of Irasville. Another next step will be the installation of the service lines from the curb stop at the right-of-way to the properties that have signed up to connect to the system as well as final restoration of front yards.

The Water Task Force and Municipal Project Manager Henry Erickson continued to work with property owners, the funding agencies, the Selectboard, and others on the numerous details associated with moving the project forward.

The November 2010 Washington Superior Court determination that Reed Road was not a Town highway required the Selectboard to proceed with acquisition of the well site and access to it through a dual track of eminent domain and landowner negotiations. Agreement with Damon/Richards family was reached. Efforts to negotiate with Virginia Houston, however, have not been successful, despite significant investment of time and care on the part of the Selectboard and our attorneys.

We anticipate completion of the project by late 2012.

### **VCDP Grant for Verd-Mont Mobile Home Park**

The Town of Waitsfield and the Central Vermont Community Land Trust collaborated on a grant application this summer through the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP). A grant of \$165,000 was awarded to the Town, which will be passed through to the CVCLT to help fund infrastructure improvements to the park, including:

- Improvements to the stormwater management system;
- Installation of slabs on an as-needed basis;
- Improvements to the main driveway and landscaping; and
- Preparation of the park for hookup to the community water system.

**The 1833 Covered Bridge Rehabilitation.** As noted above, what was underway as a rehabilitation project became a repair and rehabilitation project after Tropical Storm Irene. The rehab plans were almost complete when the storm hit. The project is back on track and we remain hopeful we will receive all necessary clearances to allow for late summer construction. At a public meeting in June, there was much discussion about options for supporting the cantilevered sidewalk and the roofline of the bridge. DuBois & King provided a preliminary construction estimate of up to \$324,532. See page 65 for more information about the project costs. The actual cost of construction and any shortfall will not be known until the project is put out to bid. The Town will apply to the VTrans Construction Contingency Fund for the maximum allowable to cover costs over available funds. ARTICLE 8 seeks voter authorization to borrow up to \$50,000 for up to five years to address a potential funding shortfall.

**Bridge Street Culvert and Stormwater Project.** DuBois & King was hired to evaluate the condition of the culverts under Bridge Street. Though plans have not yet been finalized, they have recommended replacement of the culverts and the addition of measures to improve stormwater treatment. Work is expected to be coordinated with the Covered Bridge project and closure of Bridge Street. Because replacement of these culverts and the repaving of Bridge Street are a high priority, especially to the extent they can be coordinated with the Covered Bridge project, ARTICLE 9 asks voters to authorize the Selectboard to borrow up to \$200,000 over five years to get this done. More information about this project can be found on page 65.

**Route 100 Transportation Path Project.** The final design plan was completed and bid documents were under development as 2011 came to a close. The project is expected to be advertised for bid in March of 2012 for construction in the summer. Careful coordination will be necessary with the water service construction also slated for this summer. More information about this and other projects can be found on page 63.

**Waitsfield Village West Sidewalk.** With funds from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, Lamoreux & Dickinson conducted a feasibility study and conceptual alignment analysis for a sidewalk on the west side of Main Street in Waitsfield Village. They showed it is possible to balance an improved sidewalk from Bridge Street to Old County Road with green space and on-street parking. This will be included in the capital improvement plan for continued development.

**Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Project.** The Williston engineering firm Stantec was hired by VTrans through the SRTS grant to design the following components of the SRTS project: (1) four radar speed feedback signs at locations critical to the school, (2) installation of a crosswalk over Route 100/Main Street near the Old County Road, and (3) the re-alignment of southerly Old County Road/Route 100 intersection into a “T.” Implementation of these projects is expected in 2012.

**Mad Marathon, Stage Race, Special Events.** Though the Mad Marathon and other events are not Selectboard initiatives, we want to recognize the collaboration that exists between the organizers of such events and the Town. We are fortunate events such as the Mad Marathon, the Green Mountain Stage Race, 100 on 100 Relay, Craft Fair, Mad Dash, and others bring participants, spectators, and others to the community. They come here not only because of the phenomenal landscape and recreational opportunities, but because of the sense of community. The best planning could not anticipate two floods in the same year that would alter the event course. But they forged ahead. And many stayed to help.

**Wait House Energy Efficiency Improvements.** Work was completed this year on weatherizing the General Wait House. With funds from ARRA stimulus money in the form of an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG), a new Energy Star gas boiler was installed that is expected to increase efficiency from 79% to 95%. New exterior storm windows were installed, more foam insulation was added in the basement, and new programmable thermostats will further help manage energy use.

**PACE and Energy Audits.** Voters authorized the Town to participate in the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program and we received an EECBG grant to launch it, but legislative changes to the program

prevented it from going forward as planned. Instead, we used the money to provide rebates for homeowners toward an energy audit. Fourteen households received \$250 rebates. Voters will be asked to vote again on an updated version of the PACE program. Passage of ARTICLE 13 would authorize the Town of Waitsfield to contract with the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation to administer a PACE program. See the Energy Committee's report on page 35 for more information

**Law Enforcement.** Law enforcement services continued to be provided through the Washington County Sheriff's Department. Waitsfield and Warren contracted together for 40 hours of patrol coverage per week. Waitsfield Constable Peter Laskowski has provided 40% of this with 16 hours of patrol per week in Waitsfield. Constable Laskowski is also a nationally registered EMT first responder who works with the Mad River Valley Ambulance Service and the Vermont State Police. This cooperative arrangement has allowed for quicker law enforcement response for serious complaints and provides first aid in emergency situations. Deputy Sheriff/Constable Laskowski will be scaling back his hours with the WCSD and may retire altogether in 2012. As more of the patrol is expected to be provided by WCSD officers in their own vehicles, it will no longer be practical for the Town of Waitsfield to own and maintain its cruiser. The increased costs for WCSD patrol will be offset by the lack of debt service, maintenance, insurance, and fuel costs for the cruiser. Mark Walker was appointed as Constable in 2011. Funds are budgeted this year for Constable training.

**Management of Dogs.** Dogs running at large continued to draw attention and ire. Amendments were initiated to the Waitsfield Dog Ordinance to address this as well as other nuisances, and to strengthen enforcement provisions. Consideration of these amendments will continue into this coming year.

**Fire Station Roof Replacement.** As soon as weather allowed, Burrell Roofing replaced the Fire Station roof in the spring. The project included removal of asbestos and the addition of 3" ISO board insulation.

**Town Office Task Force.** The need for more Town Office space has been known for many years. Flooding of the Town Office in August punctuated the need not only to create new space for Town Office operations, but to ensure the records are protected from future disasters. Maclay Architects was hired to analyze three sites for their suitability and cost-effectiveness and Town Office options. Next steps in 2012

include soliciting public input; refining findings and cost estimates; presenting a recommendation to the Selectboard; and determining next steps for moving forward with the selected site. Regardless of which option is selected, additional design and engineering will be necessary in order to bring a project forward for a bond vote. If the preferred site is not already owned by the Town, funds may also be necessary to purchase an option for acquisition. ARTICLE 10 asks whether voters will vote to establish a Town Office reserve fund and allocate \$35,000 to it to ensure resources are available for continued progress. See page 68 for more information about the need for more Town Office space.

Members of the TOTF include Sandra Gallup, Charlie Hosford, Jennifer Peterson, John Reilly, Brian Shupe, Brian Voigt, and Valerie Capels.

**Emergency Preparedness.** When Waitsfield amended and readopted its Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (PDMP) and its Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in 2010, little did we know how important those documents will prove to be. Flooding is one of the many potential hazards identified in the plan and strategies for response are outlined. The EOP lays out lines of responsibility and communication to be applied in an actual emergency and establishes the Incident Command structure, which was put into action with both events. In November, after we had moved beyond response and were well into the recovery mode, Emergency Management Director Fred Messer and Emergency Management Coordinator Carla Straight-Messer walked us through an “after action” review to assess what worked well and what needs improvement. We will continue to apply these lessons as we go forward.

**Waitsfield on the Web.** Though keeping the Web site updated was a challenge this year with so much going on, Waitsfield’s official Web site continues 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. The number of people who “like” Waitsfield’s Facebook page reached 298 by the end of the year. It was launched in an effort to increase citizen outreach and promote Waitsfield events, businesses, and other activities.

**2012 Budget.** Looking back, 2011 was characterized by infrastructure improvements and flood recovery. This trend will continue into 2012 with the anticipated completion of the water project, the bid and construction of the sidewalk project, completion of the Covered Bridge rehabilitation project, replacement Bridge Street culverts, continued investment in culvert replacements, continued study of new Town Office space, evaluation of Town Garage space needs, Safe Routes to School improvements, and further exploration of renewable energy.

Highlights of the proposed 2012 budget include:

- The operating budget is increased by almost \$16,000, largely due to an increase in Road Dept. material costs and operations.
- The jump in Allocations to Reserve Funds is due to the proposed increase to the Culvert Reserve Fund from last year's \$18,000 to \$50,000. Operating and capital funds are increased to address culvert replacement and maintenance.
- Funds are allocated for repairs to the existing Town Garage facility as well as to study options for increased space.
- Because it is already within the budget on page 45 and can be discussed from the floor under ARTICLE 15, what had been traditionally considered "Special Articles" in the budget has been renamed "Contributions to Reserve Funds" and is no longer listed on the warning as a separate article. Instead, a new line item has been added on page 47 that does reflect the special articles. This line item shows what the budget affect would be if all special articles are approved.
- A new one-time item for repayment of the Fire Department FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant program is included at \$12,000. This is the result of \$56,236 AFG grant in 2002 of which only \$43,585 was spent, but the full amount was requisitioned.
- Costs for mowing the triangles at the Common have been moved from Sidewalk Mowing into the Maintenance of Parks line item.
- The Roadside Mowing line item has been moved to the Capital and One Time Expenses section because in 2011 it became an 8-year lease to own arrangement.
- The Conservation Commission budget now has its own section rather than being a line in the Miscellaneous section.
- The \$32,242 difference between the budgeted and actual 2011 Contributions to Reserve Funds reflect the payout from the closure of the Gravel Pit Reserve Fund and the TIF District Reserve Fund, which is accounted for as revenue in Other/Miscellaneous Revenues.

- \$49,000 of the Budget Stabilization Fund has been applied to reduce the impact on the tax rate—exactly as it was intended to do.

The Budget Task Force 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, Robin Morris, Roy Hadden, and Steve Shea.

**Staff and Volunteers.** The Selectboard wishes to acknowledge and thank the Town staff for their efforts to keep Town operations moving smoothly and delivering a high level 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.

The events of this summer helped bring to the fore what a remarkable community we live in, with so many people willing to give of themselves to help neighbors in need, even when they themselves had suffered losses. Through this Town Report, we take the opportunity to reflect on this significant and unique collaborative effort and express our gratitude.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Williams, Chair  
Charlie Hosford, V. Chair  
Paul Hartshorn  
William Parker  
Salvatore Spinosa



Governor Shumlin at the Volunteer HQ. 09/03/2011.

(Photo: David Garten)