

## SELECTBOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The [Selectboard](#) typically meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Waitsfield Town Office, though some of the start times varied this year. 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 invited to attend. We are also pleased that most of our meetings are filmed for broadcast on Mad River TV on channel 60. Some of the Selectboard's major work is discussed below.

**Municipal Water and Wastewater Projects Update.** Significant progress was made through 2007 to advance both water and wastewater projects to the point where they are now on the ballot this year for bond funding. Phelps Engineering continued to refine design plans and project costs for both the water and wastewater systems and began preparing permit applications. The well was drilled in the Reed Road, tests were concluded, and a wellhead management plan was produced. The Town began efforts to acquire the necessary wellhead protection area and an easement across private property. A public meeting was held on June 14 to provide citizens with a wide range of information about both projects. The Town received a municipal planning grant to help fund public information efforts. Draft connection policies have been drafted that will need to be refined as the project moves forward. In an effort to get a more firm sense of the number of property owners interested in connecting to either system, the Selectboard offered an incentive of a reduced connection fee if people responded by a certain date. The project plans have been coordinated with the Irasville and Village sidewalk improvement project and the Route 100 paving project and construction is slated to begin in 2008.

**Route 100 Transportation Path Project Update.** Final designs for the Route 100 Transportation Path, a sidewalk and bike lanes project along Main Street from Bragg Hill Road to the Waitsfield Elementary School, are nearing completion and are now wending their way through the VTrans Right-of-Way Division for review and ultimately approval. Selectman Charlie Hosford continued to work closely with Municipal Project Manager Kevin Russell, engineering consultant Mark Bannon, and State officials to keep the project moving forward. Construction of the project is planned for 2009, followed by the Route 100 repaving in 2010. The Town is making a concerted effort to coordinate the sidewalk project with the water and wastewater projects and repaving of Main Street. It is our goal to do these projects in a logical sequence to be most cost effective and the least disruptive to citizens.

### **Village Center Designation Approved.**

Waitsfield's Village Center Designation application was approved in September by the Vermont Downtown Board, which means that the following benefits will be available to owners of historic properties in Waitsfield Village for at least the next three years:

- 10% tax credit for substantial rehabilitation of a historic building;
- 25% tax credit for façade improvements; and/or
- 50% tax credit for code improvements.

Additional benefits to the Town include priority consideration for all future municipal planning and CDBG grants, consideration and priority by the State Building Department when leasing or constructing

buildings, and special assessment benefits. For more info, visit [www.waitsfieldvt.us/about/villagecenter.cfm](http://www.waitsfieldvt.us/about/villagecenter.cfm).

**Growth Center Designation and TIF District Applications Moving Forward.** Village Center Designation is also an important step toward our Growth Center Designation and TIF district applications. The Town hired PlaceSense and the Vermont Forum on Sprawl (now Smart Growth Vermont) this year to work with the Planning Commission and other community leaders to develop 20-year projections, build-out analyses, financial projections, and the other elements required for the applications. If successful, a tax increment finance (TIF) district would allow the Town to redirect that proportion-or increment-of property tax revenue generated from new development in the designated area to help fund infrastructure improvements that support the growth center, such as the water and wastewater projects. The state legislature has limited the number of municipalities to ten statewide that may obtain approval to establish a TIF district, so time is of the essence to ensure our place in line. Waitsfield's Town Plans have identified Irasville and Waitsfield Village as a "growth center" long before Vermont's Growth Center program was established to reward communities with financial incentives, policy priorities, and regulatory tools that plan for compact smart growth in designated areas.

**Gravel Pit.** A request for proposals was released in the fall and as 2007 was drawing to a close, two consultant firms were being considered to work with the Town to develop a site design and assist with permitting of the gravel pit. Phelps Engineering was selected and site analysis work will begin in spring 2008. The Selectboard will be very interested to meet with neighbors about any issues or concerns that might arise.

**Emergency Generator.** In 2006, voters authorized the Selectboard to "... purchase a generator for emergency shelter use at the Waitsfield Elementary School at a cost not to exceed \$35,000; to appropriate \$5,000 for such purpose and to approve placement of said funds into a reserve account if not expended in 2006; and to authorize financing an amount not to exceed \$30,000 to fund the balance of said purchase to be repaid over a period not to exceed 5 years and on such other terms as the Selectboard shall negotiate." After considerable discussion and consideration of alternatives, the Selectboard supported the installation of a 100 KW Kohler generator located behind the General Wait House, where it serves not only the Elementary School, but also the Wait House and possibly Mad River Valley Community Health Center. The Town received a \$15,000 grant from the Vermont Department of Emergency Management (VEM), which brought the total cost of the project to the Town to \$27,723. A proposal was submitted to VEM in November seeking an additional \$7,000 in 50/50 matching grant funds to connect the Health Center to the third switch of the generator. If awarded, the Health Center will pay the required 50% match.

**Paving and Road Projects.** It was a maintenance year with no major paving projects in 2007 and the Road crew continued to do an excellent job at general maintenance, including road rebuilding, grading, culvert replacement, wood bridge reconstruction, and brush cutting. The Department was kept especially busy this past winter, one of the top snowiest winters ever, particularly in the aftermath of the Valentine's Day storm that dumped 39 inches. Several freeze-thaws extended our mud season more than usual. Parsonage Lane was repaved and restriped and Joslin Hill Road was shimmed to help smooth out the ruts. The Road Department began its replacement of the wooden road name signs with E-911 compliant green reflective signs, focusing first on intersections along Route 100. Replacement of the remaining signs will continue in 2008, starting along the East Warren Road and then on to other

intersections. Although Rodney Jones' mechanical skills have helped keep the equipment running and repair costs down, two vehicles did need to be replaced. The 16-year old backhoe was replaced with a more efficient machine that will provide better roadside ditch and culvert maintenance. And one of the dump trucks was replaced with not only the latest in green technology but a larger size that will enable the Department to move more material with fewer trips.

**Tree Project.** As part of our Scenic Road Management Plan, we undertook removal of numerous dead trees within the public right of way. In several instances, private land owners have made contributions to the Town to help defray the cost of tree removal and we greatly appreciate this cooperative effort. Special thanks to Charlie Hosford and Paul Hartshorn for their collaboration on this project.

**The 1833 Covered Bridge.** In response to the growing concern about the well-being of the Waitsfield 1833 Covered Bridge, the Town submitted an application to the VTrans Enhancement Grant program seeking almost \$273,000 in federal funds to address the cantilevered sidewalk on the north side of the Covered Bridge and repair the bridge's abutments. We learned in January 2008 that the application has been fully funded. The Town will need to provide approximately \$70,000 in matching funds, which has been reflected in the Capital Budget and Plan. The Covered Bridge Repairs Reserve Fund is proposed to be resurrected in 2008 to begin setting aside monies for this work. Even if the grant had not been funded, the funds would be necessary to address the bridge's structural issues. The 1833 Village Covered Bridge is confirmed to be the oldest covered bridge in Vermont still in everyday use and the Town is committed to preserving this historic Vermont landmark.

**Law Enforcement.** The Town continues to have a great working relationship with the Washington County Sheriff's Department. We contract for 40 hours of coverage per week and our local constable, Peter Laskowski, provides 2/3 of this with 24 hours of patrolling per week. The patrols provide effective deterrent to traffic violations and a community law enforcement presence that works as a first responder in cooperation with the Vermont State Police. This allows quicker law enforcement response to serious complaints. Deputy Sheriff Laskowski works closely with the Neighborhood Watch Programs in the MRV towns, which provide a very valuable source of information and deterrent to local crime activities.

**Garage Lighting Replacement.** In spring 2007, the Town took the initiative to replace the outdated and ineffective lighting fixtures in the Town Garage with Super T8 energy efficient fixtures. Even with the rebate of \$1,400 from Efficiency Vermont, the \$4,700 project exceeded our \$2,500 budget for energy efficiency projects by \$800.

**Environmental and Safety Audits.** Also this spring, the Town invited Vermont League of Cities and Towns' Loss Control Consultant to conduct a safety audit of the Town buildings. Overall, the Town Garage, Town Office, Fire Station, and Wait House scored high marks and opportunities for improvement were quickly addressed. One improvement was the purchase of a flame-proof metal cabinet for storage of flammable materials. The only recommendation we are unable to comply with in the immediate future is the separation of the Town Garage staff's eating area from the work area. Their refrigerator and lounge/break area is located on a mezzanine floor above the shop. The way to address that would be to somehow build a separate room. John Daly, Compliance Specialist from the Agency of Natural Resources also conducted an environmental audit of the Town Garage. No infractions were found, and it was an opportunity for staff to be refreshed on proper procedures for handling hazardous materials.

**Energy Coordinator and Committee.** Waitsfield resident Dennis Derryberry was appointed to be Waitsfield's first Energy Coordinator in May, which was followed soon after by the formation of the new Waitsfield Energy Committee. Members so far include Selectmen Sal Spinosa, who was elected Chair, Charlie Hosford, and Paul Hartshorn. The focus of the committee has been to improve the energy efficiency of our town-owned facilities, specifically the Town Garage and the General Wait House. Future efforts are likely to include public outreach about town-wide energy efficiency issues, updating the Energy section of the Town Plan, and exploring cost-effective ways Town facilities might even produce energy.

**Better Back Roads Grants.** With help from the Friends of the Mad River, Waitsfield was awarded a \$4,000 grant from the Better Back Roads program to inventory road-related erosion locations and develop a five year capital plan to prioritize and fund needed improvements. The final product will be a map identifying problem locations, a report, and a proposed five year capital plan to address improvements. The Town's 25% required match will be in the form of Town staff's time. The Town was also awarded \$6,946 through the BBR program to address drainage and erosion issues on Dana Hill that are causing sediment to cross Route 17 and go into the Mill Brook. Both of these projects will not get underway, however, until spring 2008, so these grant awards are shown in the 2008 budget as Road Department revenue. The Selectboard wishes to thank the Friends of the Mad River and Miranda Lescaze, former FOMR Director, for her initiative in tracking down these resources on behalf of the Town.

**Town Office Space Improvements.** Changes in Town Office personnel last year prompted the need to re-evaluate and reconfigure how some space is used. The Selectboard wishes to acknowledge and thank Selectman Charles Hosford for the considerable time and expertise he donated to the Town in building shelving and other accoutrements to improve office operations. Thanks are due also to the Road Department for their help in moving the permit files to where part of the front counter used to be, which greatly improved workflow and the public's access to records.

**New Planning & Zoning Administrator.** Zoning Administrator David Jescavage moved on to become the Town Administrator in Highgate in June 2007. Following an extensive recruitment process, the Selectboard was pleased to appoint Waitsfield's own Blaine Laskowski to serve as Waitsfield's new Planning and Zoning Administrator. The position was restructured to part-time and e-mail address changed to [pza@madriver.com](mailto:pza@madriver.com).

**Move to a Development Review Board (DRB).** The formation of the DRB was accomplished in March and all indications are that the transition was a success. The DRB replaced the Zoning Board of Adjustment and assumed the development review duties of the Planning Commission, which in Waitsfield was limited to subdivision review. With the exception of one remaining subdivision application in its pipeline, the PC will no longer be reviewing subdivisions, allowing it to focus attention on long-range planning, the development of regulatory amendments, and policy creation on a range of subjects. The Selectboard met jointly with members of the Planning Commission and the DRB in November and discussed such matters as the proposed subdivision regulations, litigation, and the need to cultivate additional volunteers willing to serve on the boards.

**Web Site.** Waitsfield's official Web site [www.waitsfieldvt.us](http://www.waitsfieldvt.us) was launched in April 2007, with new content added on a regular basis. Meeting agendas are posted, often with links to documents that will

be discussed that citizens can conveniently access. Various ordinances, Town policies, and permit application forms can be found in the [Rules and Regs section](#); the Town Plan, reports, archives, and other documents can be found in the [Document Library](#); and soon the Town Report and budget information will be available there in electronic form. Though it is still a work in progress, our goal is for the Web site to become a reliable resource where citizens can find the information they need about the community, goings-on, Town operations, and opportunities to become involved.

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

Elwin Neill, Jr., Chair

Charles Hosford

J. Leroy Hadden, D.V.M.

Paul Hartshorn

Sal Spinosa