

Stowe Selectboard Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting

Wednesday, June 25, 2025

5:30pm

Akeley Memorial Building

67 Main Street

Stowe, Vermont



Selectboard Members: Paco Aumand, Jo Sabel Courtney, Nick Donza, Beth Gadbois

Absent: Ethan Carlson

In-Person Attendees: Town Manager Charles Safford, Assistant Town Manager Will Fricke, Public Works Director Harry Shepard, Finance Director Cindy Fuller, Fire & Rescue Chief Ed Webster, Technology Manager David Martin, Brett Loomis, Paul Sakash, Sawyer Smith, Jason MacDonough, Chip Dillon, Tiffany Donza, Chris Weaver, Brenna Galdenzi, Karin Moro (16)

Zoom Attendees: Susan Romans, Lyn Goldsmith, Skip Lisle, Missy Merrill Burgess, Kathy Elkins, Barbara Puddicombe (6)

Call to Order

Selectboard Chair Aumand called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Approval of the Agenda

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the agenda as amended. Ms. Gadbois seconded.

Paul Sakash asked how the consent agenda is put together. Mr. Safford explained the Selectboard meeting policy, noting that some items that are not expected to elicit discussion are put on the consent agenda for time management purposes.

Paul Sakash asked about the additional Mountain Rescue radios. Mr. Martin said their existing radios are incompatible with the new communications system, and one is needed for each team member and they are also acquiring new radios for vehicles. Mr. Safford added that it is a safety issue, and all members need their own radio in the field.

Motion carried (4-0).

Consent Agenda (Items A-1 through A-10)

1. June 11, 2025 Selectboard Minutes
2. Warn Special Meeting to set FY26 Property Tax Rate
3. VCDP Sub-Grant Agreement with Downstreet Housing & Adoption of Required VCDP Municipal Policies
4. Capital Projects Closeouts
5. Constable Appointment
6. Additional Capital Appropriation – Mountain Rescue Radios
7. Organizational Chart Adoption
8. Revised July Selectboard Meeting Schedule
9. Special Event Application – Music in the Meadow
10. Liquor Items

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Gadbois seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

Introduce Ed Webster – Stowe Fire & Rescue Chief (Item B-1)

The Board welcomed Stowe's new Fire & Rescue Chief Edwin Webster Jr. Ms. Safford noted a planned "Meet the Chiefs" event on July 14 from 10 to 11 and from 5 to 6 for the public to meet Chief Webster and Chief O'Steen.

The Board discussed plans for the July 4 parade. Mr. Safford reported that the Elementary School touch-a-truck event with public safety agencies and the highway department went well.

FY'26 Water & Sewer Budgets & Fee Schedule Public Hearing and Potential Adoption (Item B-2)

Mr. Safford provided an overview of the proposed FY'26 Water & Wastewater Budgets, Capital Projects, and Rate Schedule. He noted it is essentially a status quo budget from an operational budget standpoint, with significant capital investments on the horizon.

Chair Aumand opened the public hearing.

Paul Sakash asked if capital projects are only funded by water and wastewater users. Mr. Safford said they are.

There being no other public comment, Chair Aumand closed the public hearing.

Ms. Sabel Courtney moved to adopt the proposed FY'26 Water & Wastewater Budgets and Rate Schedule. Ms. Gadbois seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

Potential Recission Vote Regarding Authorizing the Trapping of Beavers in and Around Memorial Park (Item B-3)

Chair Aumand reviewed the motion from May 28 and noted that two members of the Board requested to revisit the discussion. Ms. Gadbois said the wetlands will keep growing in that area year after year. Trapping beavers won't solve the school flooding issues by itself, but it could help the ballfields and managing the size of the wetlands. She added for that reason she is in favor of keeping the motion as passed.

Mr. Aumand said flooding is larger problem, with culverts, beaver management, etc. He said he voted no on the motion because he did not want to give carte blanche authority to trap beavers and wants to do more to keep culverts and beaver deceivers clear. Mr. Safford noted they brought Skip Lisle back to maintain the beaver deceivers in October 2024, and they can always do more, but the screens became clogged during flood events and staff cannot unclog them in those conditions. Ms. Gadbois said the place where the beaver deceiver was previously was not a good spot and it was prudent to remove it.

Chair Aumand asked for public comment.

Jason MacDonough said the beavers seem to be main issue and not doing anything about beavers now is a risk and the Town should go back to what they were doing originally.

Ms. Sabel Courtney asked about the Depot Street project. Mr. Safford that that is one of two projects that may help with park conditions. They are looking to engage an engineer about Depot Street and watermain replacement, and hook up Park Place to the drainage system, but it is not a given because of grades. It will be a significant capital project. The other project is executing the Memorial Park Master Plan if it can be permitted. All of those take staff time and community desire to advance them. He added that they cannot promise there will never be flood conditions, and can only attempt to reduce risk. Ms. Sabel Courtney asked about the Memorial Park timeline. Mr. Safford said they are hoping to permit and complete Depot Street within the next couple of years and Memorial Park within five years. Ms. Sabel Courtney added that trapping wouldn't necessarily be permanent.

Mr. Donza asked for a timeline of when trapping was discontinued in and around Memorial Park. Mr. Shepard estimated trapping stopped after the Jackson Arena was demolished in 2013.

Susan Romans asked if trapping previously controlled the water level. Mr. Safford said it is hard to say, but they do not recall the challenges being faced today and did not have an issue with beaver dams when trapping. Susan Romans asked what other things changed which caused water levels to rise. Mr. Safford said more development in the area is a factor despite efforts to mitigate runoff, saturated soils which impact the ability to absorb water, etc. He noted that

trapping is not a cure-all and is only a management strategy that is not the beginning or the end of managing water in Memorial Park.

Brenna Galdenzi said beavers are a small part of challenges Memorial Park faces. It is surrounded by sloping hills, and the Master plan had a lot of recommendations including moving baseball fields to higher ground. She said she does not think trapping will make difference. She added that she looked at the properties with the Public Works Director in the past and there was a lack of interest in beaver deceivers. She also said she feels the last flood was mischaracterized in terms of beaver deceivers failing, and it was the dam breach which caused flooding with undersized culverts. She said the beavers are scapegoat, and trapping is not a long term solution. Mr. Safford noted that Public Works does not maintain parks; it is the Parks & Recreation department which does so, they did have Skip Lisle come back to maintain the beaver deceivers, which only seemed to clog during the flood event. Mr. Shepard added that during normal conditions the beaver deceiver work fine but it is not safe for staff to clear them of debris during a flood event.

Chris Weaver said beavers are of value to tourism and the Town should figure out a way to manage them without trapping.

Tiffany Donza said beavers everywhere in this town; they are cool but they cause damage. She added that in the past the Selectboard has prioritized the interest of tourists, businesses, and the resort, but decisions are rarely made in the interest of the community, and kids are neglected. Memorial Park has the elementary school, playground, summer programming, sports and recreation. Everything gets flooded there, and the elementary school now also floods and the sump pump no longer works due to the additional water. She added the Selectboard needs to do everything in its power to fix the issues of flooding in Memorial Park.

Brett Loomis said he supports targeted beaver trapping in problem areas. Infrastructure must take priority and the Selectboard needs to make hard decisions in the Town's best interest proactively and stand up to special interest groups. Brenna Galdenzi said she resents the special interest group label as Protect our Wildlife members from Stowe are the ones reaching out.

Ms. Gadbois and Ms. Sabel Courtney said they will not be making a motion to rescind the May 28 motion. Chair Aumand said the motion would stand as passed. Ms. Sabel Courtney added that if there is not a need to trap the should not do so.

Jason McDonough asked what the plan is for the future. Mr. Aumand said it is in staff's hands, and they will keep an eye on flooding, monitor water flow, keep infrastructure clear, etc.

Brenna Galdenzi asked if trapping was for the legal trapping season and for how long. Mr. Aumand said he understood the motion to be for the trapping season for the future as well. Mr. Safford added that it is not to say a future Board could change that. He also noted that staff conceptually looked at upsizing the twin 18" culverts and if it could be permitted it would cost \$100,000 - \$200,000. If the Memorial Parks Master Plan is advanced as conceptually planned, the road and therefore the culverts would not be located there, so they would be removed. Staff efforts may be better spent advancing Depot Street and the Master Plan rather than focusing on the upsizing the culverts temporarily, so they will not spend more time on upsizing culverts at this time unless otherwise instructed by the Selectboard.

Mr. Donza said hopefully trapping is one and done and the screening put in by Skip Lisle will prevent additional beavers from moving in.

Manager's Report (Item C-1)

Mr. Safford noted the Water Treatment Plan did very well on a cybersecurity readiness review. Mr. Shepard added that cybersecurity is a big issue in the water/wastewater world and one of the capital projects advanced is related to cybersecurity.

Public to be Heard - Non-Binding (Item C-2)

No public comment.

Ms. Gadbois asked about the Mayo Farm pole barn and why they are not building storage there. Mr. Donza said his feeling is it is not a good place for storage and there are better options, as well as better options for the Parks garage, such as the garage on the Transfer Station property, the Moscow bus barn, and the gravel pit.

The Board discussed storage options but noted they do not plan to further discuss replacing the Mayo Farm pole barn.

Adjournment

Ms. Gadbois motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Donza seconded. Motion carried (4-0).

The meeting adjourned at 7:03pm.

Notes

Minutes submitted by Will Fricke.

The Selectboard of the Town of Stowe meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm.

A recording of this public meeting is available at: <https://www.stowevt.gov/Government/Selectboard>