

Stowe Selectboard Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting

**Thursday, January 8, 2026
5:30pm**

**Akeley Memorial Building
67 Main Street
Stowe, Vermont**



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

In-Person Attendees: Town Manager Charles Safford, Assistant Town Manager Will Fricke, Finance Director Cindy Fuller, Town Clerk Penny Davis, Leighton Detora, Jonah Rabinowitz, Kyle Nuse, Lex Arthers, Greg Farnham, Adreienne Johnson, Molly Nesselrodt, Kenzie Brunner

Zoom Attendees: Sarah Henshaw, Linda Hunter,

Call to Order

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

Approval of the Agenda

Ms. Gadbois moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Sabel Courtney seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

Consent Agenda (Items A-1 through A-2)

1. December 22, 2025 Selectboard Minutes
2. Town Meeting Article Regarding Justices of the Peace Apportionment

Mr. Carlson moved to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Gadbois seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

Mr. Aumand noted a Front Porch Forum post regarding Police Chief O'Steen and extended thanks and congrats, and that a discussion of camaraderie developed internally and between sister agencies.

FY'27 New and Increased Community, Social Services, and Economic Non-Profit Appropriation Requests (Item B-1)

Jonah Rabinowitz and Kyle Nuse from River Arts VT requested a new \$2,000 appropriation. Mr. Aumand asked how many Stowe residents were served in the past year. Mr. Rabinowitz said they have a number of Stowe residents on their staff and board, and estimated 15 to 20% of class attendees are Stowe residents. He added that many people who work in Stowe, particularly at the Mountain, but live elsewhere attend classes. Ms. Sabel Courtney recalled the camaraderie between Stowe and Morristown and said they do a great job in that aspect. Ms. Gadbois said she is on the Board of River Arts VT and will not vote on their appropriation. She said she appreciated that as a Stowe resident she could go some place and pursue an art.

Lex Arthers from the Vermont Foundation for Recover requested \$1,200, an increase of \$200 from FY26. Mr. Aumand asked if their client base has increased. Ms. Arthers said they served 135 in 2024 across the state and 160 in 2025. Ms. Sabel Courtney asked about their certifications. Mr. Donza asked how many other towns fund VTFR. Ms. Arthers said three and they are hoping to add a fourth this year.

Sarah Henshaw from the Lamoille Area Recovery Network requested a new \$1,000 appropriation.

Linda Hunter from Spruce Peak Arts requested \$1,440, an increase of \$240 from FY26.

Greg Farnham and Adreienne Johnson from Stowe Area Association requested \$23,000, an increase of \$3,000 from FY26. Mr. Aumand asked if they saw an increase in foreign visitors this year. Mr. Farnham said they saw an increase in visitors overall but a decrease in specifically Canadians. Ms. Johnson added that there was an increase

in Canadian visitors from last year when just comparing the holiday season. The Selectboard and the SAA staff discussed the visitors center bathroom and hours and SAA membership. Mr. Safford said SAA receives an additional \$33,000 from the general fund budget to operate the bathroom for the public, which mirrors the Ampersand/Depot Building agreement. Mr. Aumand asked how many eligible businesses are SAA members. Mr. Farnham said the percentage is not clear. Mr. Donza noted that any business can be a member, not just those related to tourism, and there are members in Morristown and Waterbury. Mr. Aumand asked if Morristown provides an appropriation. Mr. Farnham said only Stowe does.

Molly Nesselrodt from the Stowe Farmers Market requested \$2,000, an increase of \$800 from FY26. Ms. Gadbois asked how much the rent at Topnotch is. Ms. Nesselrodt said it is \$10,000 annually. The Selectboard discussed the location of the farmers market. Mr. Carlson said it is not ideal for local attendance. Mr. Donza said some vendors make a lot of money there and it is hard to justify an increase.

Kenzie Brunner from Stowe Trails Partnership requested \$10,800, an increase of \$1,800 from FY26. Mr. Safford said this would be in addition to the \$10,000 the Town pays them for trail maintenance which is captured in the general fund P&Z budget. The Selectboard discussed STP expenses and new trails.

Chair Aumand suggested the Board defer discussion on the appropriations until January 14. The Selectboard agreed. No action was taken.

Discussion to Prepare for Charter Change Local Option Tax Vote Public Hearings (Item B-4)

Chair Aumand asked to discuss this item prior to the budget.

He noted that he provided a draft resolution for the purpose of making a strong statement concerning the need for an increase and potentially the reasons and how the additional money could be used. Mr. Carlson said the draft says what it needs to say. Mr. Donza said they should frame it as presenting an option to the voters and they are fortunate to live in a town with a smart electorate, and they will know whether it is right for them or not.

Mr. Aumand said there is a tourism base that comes to Stowe and doesn't mind spending money; they take advantage of the infrastructure and geography. He said it is not any different from New York City in that it is a destination people want to go for a holiday. He said there is a laundry list of projects that require funding to keep up with the infrastructure and services necessary to sustain the tourism with affordable housing being an example.

Mr. Safford noted that heating fuel isn't subject to a the sales tax and the fuel tax is separate.

Ms. Sabel Courtney said it is important to show the legislature that the voters want it.

Mr. Carlson moved to approve the Resolution Supporting an Increase in the Local Option Tax. Ms. Gadbois seconded. Motion carried (5-0).

FY'27 General Fund Operating & Capital Budget Deliberations (Item B-2, B-3)

Mr. Safford said this is a continuing conversation until the budget is adopted. He noted there are no adjustments since last time but they did receive updated numbers from the Lamoille County Courthouse and Sheriff.

Mr. Donza said the budget is as stripped down as you can get. Mr. Safford said they try to meet budgetary targets and recognize the property tax stress. He said if they get FEMA reimbursements it could create capacity for one-time spending, and if Stowe gets additional LOT from the voters and legislature then this could provide future fiscal capacity.

Mr. Aumand said he isn't of mind to increase the budget further this cycle and that the school tax rate is the wild card. Mr. Safford said they need to be cognizant that things are changing at the Federal level and FEMA funding for disaster recovery may not be there in the future and which is another reason for the municipality to maintain reserves.

Mr. Aumand said that is another reason for additional LOT. Mr. Donza said it also helps that the state gets a lot of money from Stowe as well. Ms. Gadbois said they are not asking for the state to give us money, they would actually get the state more money.

Ms. Gadbois said staff did a great job on the budget and that no one likes to spend money, but they have to spend money.

Manager's Report (Item C-1)

The Selectboard discussed the new CLA released by the state. They also discussed the Planning Commission and noted a seat may open soon, and they should get ahead of filling it as the Town Plan renewal process is coming to a close.

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

Paul Sakash asked about the CLA and Cemetery Road Bridge.

Adrienne Johnson said that as a resident she appreciates the work the Selectboard and Town staff put in to make the Town what it is.

Adjournment

The Selectboard adjourned at 6:58pm.

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>