

WAITSFIELD SELECTBOARD 2012 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/sg/agenda.cfm. Most of our meetings are filmed for broadcast by Mad River Valley TV on channel 45.

Joslin Memorial Library and Town Office

The Waitsfield Town Office and the Joslin Memorial Library have a long and shared history and much focus was spent this past year on the future needs of both. It is ironic that, as the Library enters its 100th year in 2013, which is the theme of this Town Report, the Library and Town Office will begin a journey toward new and separate spaces.

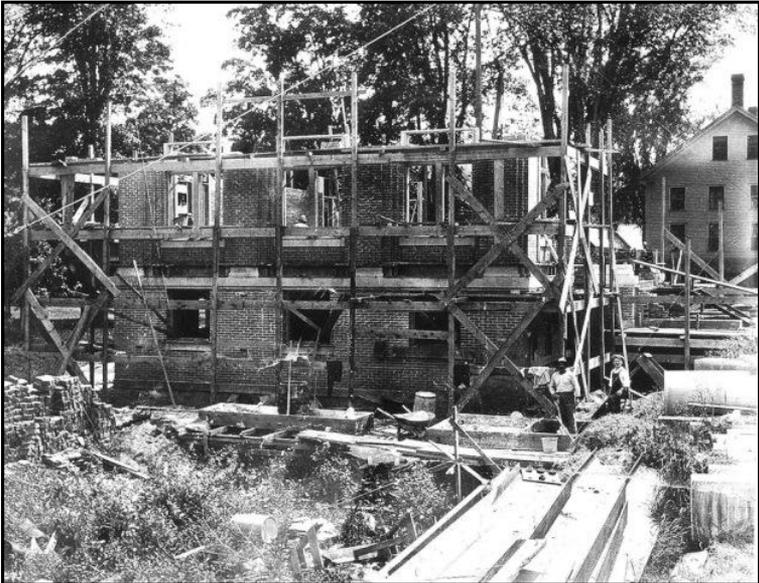
Town Office Relocation. The Town Office Task Force continued its efforts to study suitable locations for a new Town Office. Following considerable study and public input, and after the Library was eliminated as an option, the Farm Stand site was selected as the preferred option and Maclay Architects was hired after another competitive bid process to develop the next level of site and building design to bring to voters for a bond vote. Citizens urged that the Old Methodist Church building be reconsidered, so the Selectboard authorized funds for a more thorough study of both sites. This past year the TOTF held public forums in September and December 2012 and in January 2013.

The majority of the Selectboard's support for the TOTF's recommendation to proceed with the Farm Stand site for a new Town Office should not be seen as disregard for the dozens of citizens who have spoken passionately in favor of renovating the Old Methodist Church/Luminosity building. The fiscal impact to taxpayers is a significant concern—not only the additional \$1 million in project cost but the increased costs of maintenance and operation over time. The displacement of the long-time residential and commercial tenants is another concern. Also, Selectboard members believe there are more resources available to the private sector than there are to the Town to achieve the renovation of the building, including the various tax credits available for properties in the Designated Village Center, which could

include the rental income from the tenants as part of the project cash flow. The strong expression of community support for renovating the OMC/Luminosity building could be a catalyst for bringing the appropriate partners together to make it happen.

Selectboard members also think a new Town Hall on the Farm Stand site has a lot of benefits, not the least of which is the opportunity to enhance the public's use of and access to the Flemer Field Community Green from Main Street. Public bathrooms and parking would be readily accessible. And it could be an opportunity for a phase 2 decentralized wastewater project that provides a much-needed wastewater management solution to many other properties in the Village. The building and site design will need to be addressed very thoughtfully to complement the neighboring uses and communicate a sense of civic pride and community. This is a great opportunity to address vital Town needs and deliver many enhancements to our historic Village.

A special bond warning at Town Meeting will ask voters by Australian ballot whether to support the borrowing of up to \$1.6 million for the new Town Office. While there will never be a best time to undertake a project of this magnitude, with interest rates so low, there might not be a better time. More information is available in several other sections within this Town Report and online at www.waitsfieldvt.us/townoffice.



Joslin Library under construction, c. 1913 (Photo: Waitsfield Historical Society)

Tropical Storm Irene Recovery. Recovery from Tropical Storm Irene continued well into 2012. While most of the infrastructure (roads, bridges, culverts) was repaired in 2011, many matters remained.

Folsom Brook Stabilization. Waitsfield was awarded a grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Protection program for the stabilization of Folsom Brook. The work was completed in the fall to the satisfaction of the residents of the River House Condominiums.

Joslin Hill Culvert Engineering Analysis. After multiple rejections, FEMA funds were ultimately awarded to have an engineering analysis done for repair or replacement of the 130-foot long 12-foot high culvert on Joslin Hill at the bottom of Brook Road that was damaged from Tropical Storm Irene. The study got underway late in the fall by DuBois & King, who recommended a repair of the culvert, headwall, slopes, and pavement for a total of \$165,000.

Tremblay Road Culvert. The Tremblay Road culvert remains a serious concern. Exceptionally large volumes of water overtook it twice in one year (May and August 2011 floods), causing extensive damage to Tremblay Road. FEMA funds are not available toward its replacement because the culvert itself was not damaged in either case and we were not able to meet the thresholds for a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant. The cost to replace the culvert is estimated to be between \$150,000 and \$200,000. Vehicular height and weight restrictions on Pine Brook Bridge on North Road and the Covered Bridge on Bridge Street leave Tremblay Road as Waitsfield's only truck route. It is also a vital route for emergency responders from one side of the river to the other. Replacement of this culvert is a high priority. We will apply to the VTrans Structures Grant Program in 2013, which could provide up to \$175,000 for a culvert project. However, if that does not come through, ARTICLE 8 on the warning is seeking voter approval to borrow necessary funds up to \$200,000 to help ensure the project happens. In the event of further delays, this authorization would apply into 2014.

Bridge Street Marketplace Revival. The Bridge Street area was among the hardest hit by Tropical Storm Irene in Waitsfield. Some businesses did not return. But by all accounts, an unexpected outcome has been an exciting transformation, thanks to the hard work, determination, investment, commitment, and resources from many people and organizations. Even the drenching rain storm on September 9 could not

dampen the 2nd annual block party to celebrate the Mad River Valley's resilience, its volunteers, and community.

Bridge Street Retaining Wall. The storm not only destroyed the Birke Photo studio but also buckled the retaining wall along Bridge Street. FEMA funded part of the engineering plans to repair it, but uncertainty about whether a building was going back in that location delayed the finalization of the plans. We will apply to FEMA for construction funds in 2013.

Relocation of the Town Office Out of the Flood Zone. The State of Vermont secured more than \$21.6 million in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist Vermont with the long-term recovery from Tropical Storm Irene, with 80% of this resources targeted to Washington and Windsor Counties. Applications became available in August and are being awarded on a first come first served basis. Relocation of municipal facilities out of the flood zone is among the eligible uses for the funds. These funds have the potential to reduce costs of the Town Office relocation. Application could not be made until a site had been selected and efforts are underway to initiate the process.

The 1833 Covered Bridge Rehabilitation. When it became clear that the Covered Bridge rehab was not going out to be completed in 2012, the Selectboard tried to accomplish the replacement of the deck since that would not require any work in the river. DuBois & King prepared separate bid documents for that component and we obtained approval from the funding agencies to bid it separately. The low bid had to be disqualified and all the other bids were much higher than expected, so all bids were rejected. The goal now is to combine the Covered Bridge rehab and Bridge Street stormwater project into one bid package in 2013 in an effort to achieve efficiencies and reduce costs. Preliminary cost estimates exceeded grant and reserve funds available. ARTICLE 9 is carried over from last year to seek voter authorization to borrow up to \$50,000 for up to five years to address a possible funding shortfall.

Bridge Street Culvert and Stormwater Project. DuBois & King completed plans for the replacement of the culverts and catch basins under Bridge Street, which included measures to improve stormwater treatment and replacement of the sidewalk on the north side. Next steps include getting VTrans right-of-way sign-off, seeking grant funds, and

putting it out to bid for construction. 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 6 asks voters to authorize the Selectboard to borrow up to \$250,000 over five years to get this done. This was approved by voters last year. In the event of further delay, we are seeking voter authorization into 2014.

Underground Power on Bridge Street? The suggestion to include the burial of the overhead utilities with the stormwater project prompted much investigation into what might be possible in this window of opportunity. If it is ever going to happen, the time to do it would be when the street is opened up to replace the culverts. Two of three power poles would be eliminated. Pedestal-mounted streetlights would need to be installed. And a ground-mounted transformer would need to be located to serve all the affected properties on both sides of Bridge Street. The entire project is expected to cost more than \$75,000 for relocation of the GMP and Waitsfield Telecom utilities, but could be phased over several years. ARTICLE 7 asks voters whether funds should be borrowed to fund the installation of the necessary conduit now to allow for the burial of the lines at some future date. More up-to-date cost information will be available at Town Meeting.

Emergency Preparedness. The entire Selectboard completed a 2-day NIMS training in August. Fred Messer and Carla Straight-Messer continued to provide guidance and training opportunities for the community.

Village Streambank Stabilization. The FEMA-funded streambank stabilization project got under way this fall with DeWolfe Engineering and Bear Creek Environmental redesigning their plans for riprap and stormwater management along the riverbank at the Bridge Street Marketplace. Thanks to tireless efforts of Kari Dolan, the project was in the works before Tropical Storm Irene, but damage following the flood required that the plans be redesigned. The project is funded by 75% FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant funds and 25% Clean and Clear grant funds from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Permitting and construction is expected to proceed in 2013.

Municipal Water Project. Completion of the water project was in sight as 2012 came to a close. More information about this and other projects can be found in the Capital Projects section beginning on page 61. 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 Selectboard wishes to specifically acknowledge the contributions of Darryl Forrest, who resigned from the WTF this fall. Among his many contributions, the countless hours he spent doing the land records research, preparing easement documents, and working with landowners were especially vital to the success of the project.

The new Water Commission was formed late in the year and is comprised of the following members: Robin Morris (Chair), Charles Hosford, Ray LaRochelle, William Parker, and Peter Reynells. The Water Commission is the official entity responsible for the operation of and policy-setting for the water system.

Multiple cases of litigation before three different Vermont courts continued to occupy the Selectboard's attention. As the year came to a close, settlement discussions with Virginia Houston again resumed, this time resulting in a settlement. On Sunday, January 20, 2013, settlement was reached and all lawsuits were concluded.

Fire Protection. The subject of whether townspeople should be asked to pay for a proportion of fire protection costs associated with the new community water system was brought to the Selectboard for consideration. The point was made that inclusion of fire protection added over a million dollars to the construction cost, as well as increased operation and maintenance costs, of the water system due to the necessary increased size of the size of the storage tank, the increased size of the water mains to ensure sufficient fire flows, and the installation of almost 30 hydrants. Water customers currently pay for 100% of this cost that, arguably, provides a townwide benefit. Though there was much discussion, no determinations were made or actions taken. Discussions will likely continue into the coming year.

Town Plan Adopted. The Planning Commission presented their proposed Town Plan in June. The Selectboard held two hearings, received public input and, after thorough review, adopted the 2012 Waitsfield Town Plan on October 22, 2012.

Village Center Designation. Waitsfield's Village Center Designation expired in September 2012, but could not be renewed without an adopted Town Plan that had been approved by the Central Vermont Regional

Planning Commission. The adopted Town Plan was promptly sent the CVRPC, which was approved at their meeting in November 2012. The application for renewal was then submitted to the Vermont Department of Housing and Economic Development and the Village Center Designation was restored. Village Center Designated provides many incentives for property owners, including various tax credits for building improvements and priority consideration for grant programs. More information can be found at www.waitsfieldvt.us/about/villagecenter.cfm.

Route 100 Transportation Path Project. The final design plan continued to be refined by VTrans well into 2012 and was finally bid for construction in late summer of 2012. Kingsbury Companies of Waitsfield was the low bidder. As the contractor for the water service construction of contract 6 of the water project, they were uniquely positioned to coordinate the two projects. More information about this and other projects can be found in the Capital Project section on page 63.



Joslin Library prior to its dedication, c. 1913 (Photo: Waitsfield Historical Society)

Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Project. The Safe Routes to School team was instrumental in helping Waitsfield secure a \$141,000 infrastructure grant in 2010. The Williston engineering firm Stantec was hired by VTrans through the SRTS grant to design the following components of the 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.” The radar feedback signs could be ready for installation at any time. Town staff

members are working with Stantec, Green Mountain Power, and the MRV Health Center to address the relocation of the overhead power lines. See page 64 for more information.

Waitsfield Village West Sidewalk. The conceptual alignment analysis developed by Lamoreaux & Dickinson in 2011 with funds from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, the updated Waitsfield Elementary School Travel Plan in October 2012, and many letters of support contributed toward the award of yet another Safe Routes to School infrastructure grant for a sidewalk in Waitsfield Village. Up to \$250,000 will be available and no match is required. This is a marvelous accomplishment and all involved should be congratulated. Final design and permitting will be initiated in 2013 and construction could begin as early as 2014.

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 completion of the water, sidewalk(s), Covered Bridge rehab, and paving projects will contribute all the more to the well-being of these events. 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.

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. The police cruiser was sold at the end of the year to Peter Laskowki who will be able to continue to use it in his service as Constable and Deputy Sheriff with the WCSD. WCSD officers provide the balance of patrol in their own vehicles. Waitsfield has been very 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 may not be easy. 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.

Fiscal Year Change. ARTICLE 11 asks voters if they will approve changing Waitsfield's fiscal year from January 1-December 31 to July 1-June 30. This comes at the behest of the Town's auditor, the Town Administrator, and the Town Clerk and the Selectboard supports the proposal. It is proposed to be effective in 2014 to allow time to plan ahead for the transition.

Advantages:

- The municipal budget year will coincide with the state's fiscal year for school, highway, and some other funding.
- Tax revenues will be received earlier in the fiscal year, reducing or eliminating the expense of tax anticipation borrowing.
- Expenses are currently incurred between January and Town Meeting without an approved budget. Voters will approve a budget in March that begins in July of the same year rather than two months into the budget year.
- The audit has not been available by Town Meeting for the past several years because Waitsfield's accounts have become increasingly complex and the auditor has needed more time. This results in a proposed budget without audited numbers, which are then subject to adjustment after the budget has been approved in January. The auditor will be able to complete their report in time for budget preparation and Town Meeting.
- More time will be available to prepare and proof the Town Report.
- Winter highway expenses will be in the same budget cycle.

Disadvantages:

- Confusion among tax payers during the transition period.
- It will complicate tax and payroll reporting, which will still be based on the calendar year.
- The transition period will require more work.
- Voters will likely be asked to either vote on one 18-month budget at the 2014 Town Meeting or one 6-month budget and one 12-month budget.

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 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 326 by the end of the year. It was launched in an effort to increase citizen outreach and promote Waitsfield events, businesses, and other activities.

2013 Budget. The infrastructure improvements and flood recovery that shaped 2011 carried over into 2012, with continued construction of the water project and the start of construction of the sidewalk project. Those in addition to other projects, such as the rehab of the Covered Bridge, repair of the Bridge Street retaining wall, and the Bridge Street stormwater project will continue into 2013.

Highlights of the proposed 2013 budget include:

- The legal line item is increased to cover costs associated with non-water related litigation between Virginia Houston and the Town. Though the settlement brings the matters to a close, expenses through January and final court filings need to be accommodated.
- After nearly a decade at level-funding, the Assessor’s contract has been increased to \$15,000.
- The cost for heat at the Town Garage actually *decreased*, which reflects the significant reduction in the number of heating oil gallons used since the energy efficiency improvements were made.
- The Road Dept. is seeing increased maintenance expenses on the dump trucks and grader.
- A new line item has been added with an allocation of \$500 for Emergency Preparedness. This will help cover costs of trainings and emergency shelter supplies.
- The Reimbursements to Water Project line item in the Capital and One-Time Expenses section of the budget reflects expenses the water project paid for over the course of its development that should have been paid for by the general fund.
- The Village Flood Control Project line item has been removed as a 2012 expense and as a revenue because it is actually included within the Village Streambank Stabilization project. This will change comparative numbers from last year’s report.

- The one-time item for repayment of the Fire Department FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant program is carried over from last year 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.
- Total expenses represent less than a 1% increase over 2012. However, reduced projected revenues result in an increase in net expenses by approximately 5%.
- Audited 2012 budget figures were not available at press time for this report.

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, Roy Hadden, and Steve Shea.

Composition of Selectboard. With last year’s election, the Selectboard bade Kate Williams farewell and welcomed new member Logan Cooke. Sal Spinosa was elected Chair and Charles Hosford remained Vice Chair.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Sal Spinosa, Chair
 Charlie Hosford, V. Chair
 Logan Cooke
 Paul Hartshorn
 William Parker

Did You Know?

In 1913, the Town bought Mrs. Minera Boyce’s village lot for \$800. Library construction began May 6, 1913.



(Source: Waitsfield Historical Society)