



TOWN OF TOWNSHEND

Selectboard
PO Box 121 Townshend, Vermont 05353

EMERGENCY

Selectboard Meeting Agenda
June 29, 2023 6:00 PM
Townshend Town Hall
Approved: 7/11/23

Present: Sherwood Lake, Rob Wright, Katie Marrow, Rob Swiger, Phoebe Connolly

In Attendance: Brian Gurino - BCTV, Connie Holt - Assistant

Members of the Public: Helen Holt, Ellenka Wilson, Jeff Russ, Linda Sperry, Laura Richardson, Dale West, Paula Newton, Lucas Newton

1. **Meeting Call to Order:** lake calls the meeting to order at 6:01pm

2. **New Business:** The Gazebo

Lake summarizes the purpose of the emergency meeting. He reports that an emergency situation with the Gazebo was brought forward this morning and action needs to be taken. Two people who been working in the Gazebo discovered that each post at the base is rotting. This has created a situation where the whole thing quivers substantially when pushed. There is no fix for this. The only thing we can do at this point is tear it down and put our efforts into building a new one. The plan that has been put into place is that the Town Road Crew is going to take it down. We will save what we can save, and put the energy and effort into building a new one.

Connolly makes a motion to immediately expand the safety perimeter around the gazebo to prevent anyone from being within six feet of the gazebo. Marrow seconds the motion.

Member of the Public, Jeff Russ, asks why this meeting is on zoom and not in person. Lake replies it is on ZOOM because the meeting had to be convened immediately. Russ asks what guarantee is there that the Selectboard will rebuild the gazebo. He asks shouldn't there be a vote. Lake responds that people can get together to develop a plan to put a new one back with the right materials. Lake states that Russ can put an article in at Town Meeting and go from there. Russ says that there should a meeting with the Selectboard at town hall with the voters instead of just tearing it down. Connolly replies that this is a fast moving issue and she is glad that ZOOM is an option. She states that her motivation in her motion is create time so that the town can say goodbye to the original gazebo as well as future planning on that space. Russ asks what the guarantee is that the Board will rebuild a gazebo. Lake replies that it is up to you; show up at Town Meeting, introduce an article to rebuild it, and it will get rebuilt.

Wright adds that it would make sense to come to Town Meeting with the design when it is being proposed at Town Meeting.

Lake states that no one on the Board wants to see it go and not have a gazebo, but we have to act for safety reasons. We are liable as a town. He adds that he is in favor with getting people involved with what we want to replace it with. Swiger states that this is a matter of public safety and we need to move quickly for the safety of the citizens.

Member the the Public, Paula Newton, asks who deems the Gazebo unsafe and what are their credentials. Lake responds that the people that have been maintaining it brought it to his attention at noon time today. Lake states that he then went down and looked at it. He states that he saw the eight posts are rotten and when someone pushed it the whole thing quivered. He states that you do not need a credentialed person when you can see it yourself. Newton asks if there was a Fire Marshall that came and looked at it. Lake said no there was not.

Member of the Public, Linda Sperry, speaks on behalf of herself and as a member of the church. She states that since the Church owns the Commons this decision may not be made by the Town. Wright responds that if that is the case then the Church should get the liability on it and maintain the Gazebo. Lake adds that right now the town owns the Gazebo. The land that it sits on may be along to the church or the family that gave it to the church. Lake suggests that an attorney be hired to do a title search. Sperry responds that it is in the works. Kristina Wright, member of the public, states her understanding of the arraignment. She says the family gave it to the church for use. If it is not being used, and if there is no one left at the church, then it goes back to the family. Sperry states that she does not understand why the destruction of the Gazebo could not wait two weeks. K. Wright asks Sherwood to share the pictures that he took today of the Gazebo. Lake shows the pictures.

Connolly brings the discussion back to the motion she made about increasing the safety barrier around the gazebo immediately. She repeats the motion to increase the barrier is to ensure safety is happening while timely conversations are happening about the gazebo.

Member of the Public, Laura Richardson, raises that most people are not even aware that this happening. She adds that she was told repeatedly by the Board that the gazebo was fine. She continues that she was on the phone with John Evans yesterday who told her that the underpinnings are fine. She called Fire Marshall, Patrick Banks, a couple of weeks ago who said it was ok. Richardson goes on to say that for the Board to decide in a day that they need to tear this down is hard to fathom. These are things that can be fixed. Lake replies that what set off today is that the two guys who have been maintaining the gazebo found structural problems. Richardson responds that people have a right to weigh in on this. She concludes that she can see it is rotten but it can be fixed.

Member of the Public, Dale West, begins his comments calling for etiquette and respect among the people in attendance. He states that if 5% of residents call for a special town meeting then one can be held and it might be a calmer forum. He adds that we need to think of the emotional effect of just tearing it down and not having that discussion. Have it decided by the tax payers; you do not need to tear it down to protect the citizens.

Marrow recaps events back to the Tuesday, June 29th Selectboard meeting. She states that at an executive session discussion it was decided that given the VLCT's inspection there was a list of repairs to be made to the gazebo. She states that it is important to point out that the events we are in now are the result of the VLCT list of repairs that were being acted on only to discover that there is extensive rot. She states that she wants it to be clear that the Board is not just doing this over night. Marrow acknowledges that Richardson that has come before the board many times. Marrow adds that she personally encouraged Richardson to put an article in front of town meeting. Marrow adds that she also made suggestions to Richardson about other options to get the gazebo up to snuff, such as forming committees.

Member the public and town clerk, Ellenka Wilson, raises her concern that if the gazebo poses such a safety threat why is there no fencing up now. She also raises that given the Fire Inspectors comments we need a structural engineer to come in and tell us what can be done. Is it possible to repair it rather than having it torn down. She adds that she is concerned that people are not aware of this and are not able to share their views and offer services. Wright replies, at what point do we stop bandaging that structure and move to a different building that is constructed properly. Wilson replies that it may be that it needs to come down, but she has heard from people that they do not trust that a new one would be built.

Swiger brings the discussion back to the motion. Swiger states that after hearing this discussion he thinks it makes sense to put up a barrier and have time to discuss the future of the gazebo. Wright raises a concern about Fair Day. Russ asks the Board to have a meeting that everyone knows about and can discuss it. Marrow states that she is in favor of a meeting with the town people to discuss. She does not think that too much time should pass due to safety reasons. Wright seconds what Marrow says.

Swiger amends the motion to add "at the discretion of our safety officer and the officials that we get who have the credentials to make those decisions". Swiger moves to cordon of the area surrounding the gazebo as decided by our health officer and the individual we deem has the credentials to make that decision. Marrow seconds the motion. Motion carries 4-1-0.

Russ, again asks that the Board warn and hold a meeting for the towns people to come and discuss.,

3. **Adjournment:** Lake makes a motion to adjourn. Connolly seconds the motion. Meeting is adjourned at 6:58pm.