



TOWN OF TOWNSHEND

Selectboard
PO Box 121 Townshend, Vermont 05353

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

July 5, 2023 6:00 PM

Townshend Town Hall

Approved: 7/25/23

Present: Sherwood Lake, Rob Wright, Rob Swiger, Phoebe Connolly, Katie Marrow (via ZOOM)

In Attendance: Galen Robinson - BCTV, Connie Holt - SB Assistant

1. **Meeting Call to Order:** Lake calls the meeting to order at 6:00pm
2. **Old Business:** Lake begins the discussion of the gazebo by stating that everyone who wants to speak will need to identify themselves. Lake gives a brief history of the events leading up to this meeting special Select Board meeting. He states that last Thursday he received a call from John Evans and Jim Crozier about the poor condition of the gazebo. That led to an emergency meeting of the Select Board. At that emergency meeting the public wanted more discussion which led to this meeting being scheduled.

Ken Hoffman, town resident, begins the discussion with describing all the work he has done to keep up the gazebo over the past 40 years. He states that he feels strongly that it should not be torn down. He also adds that his biggest grip is that the Select Board did not let people know about their intent tear it down. Wright responds that the gazebo was built with inferior materials. He believes that repairing it is putting good money into something bad. He concludes that he understands it is quick, but the Board needs to act quickly for liability reasons. Hoffman asks for a timeline on getting a new gazebo. Lake suggests that a commission be appointed to explore design and materials of a new gazebo.

Town resident, Liza Martin asks where the funds will come from to replace the gazebo. Lake replies that the whole thing would have to go through a town meeting but there are currently some funds in reserve type accounts that handle it. He adds that if the momentum got going we do not have to stop.

Allie Evans, town resident, states that she thinks a commission is a good idea. She adds that the fence should be left up while someone works on it. She also asks who owns the gazebo and the land. She adds that when she was a select board member

she had to represent the people no matter her opinion. She hopes that this Select Board will do the same. Wright raises that the longer the gazebo is standing the longer the liability and the cost of renting the fence.

Liza Martin, town resident, requests that the select board call a special town meeting to address the next steps on the gazebo.

Rick Matchkey, town resident, suggests first hiring a structural engineer to assess if the structure is worth sinking money into. If he thinks it is worth fixing then have a discussion of design. The town's insurance company will require a structural engineer to sign off on it since it is a public building.

Kathy Greve, town resident, asks if both the base and the top structure bad. Lake replies , "yes".

Laura Richardson, town resident, agrees with Rick. She thought coming out of the last meeting that someone was going to look at it. Do not believe that has been done. She thinks that damage is being exaggerated. We need a professional carpenter to look at it, or a civil engineer.

Allie Evans asks if the decision to tear it down has already been made. Lake replies that we are here to tonight to hear from residents.

Ken Hoffman states that he agrees with Rick Latchkey. Wright suggests that we go through the entire group and hear what people think should happen;

Liza Martin: it needs to be rebuilt or replaced. There needs to be a commitment from the Selectboard to repair or replace.

Linda Sperry: need to hire a structural/civil engineer to do an assessment and then report back to the town and then go from there.

Allie Evans: I think we should leave the gazebo up and find to who owns the land and the gazebo. Find out what it would cost to fix it. Get all our facts before we make reactive decisions.

Maggie Bills: agree with Rick to hire a civil engineer to assess where we are at with the structure before making any decisions.

Russ Bills: I agree with Maggie.

Ken Hoffman: agree that we should hire a civil engineer.

Rick Matchkey: hire civil engineer.

Jeff Russ: I believe that we have enough in house people with experience to come to a conclusion on the gazebo. I think we should take it down and rebuild.

Jim Crozier: It is in bad shape. Restoring it would be a long complex process. I would like to see a really nice slightly larger gazebo.

Laura Richardson: I agree that we should get more facts before we tear it down by hiring a civil engineer.

Mary Merrill-Gould: hire an engineer. If he recommends tearing it down I would like to see it rebuilt as it is now.

Helen Holt; Go with the engineer and get the cost.

Ellenka Wilson: I want to also speak for Jean McIntyre who is not here. She wants to know the costs to repair and if the town is going to fund it before tearing it down. I agree with Jean that we need more facts before we can make an educated decision. It should be a town wide decision, not a Select Board decision.

Paula Newton: Hire a civil engineer. Building materials have skyrocketed right now so find out if it is cheaper to repair.

Emily Newton: Agree that we should hire a civil engineer so that we can trust what is going on.

John Evans: believe it is time for this community to consider putting up a properly built structure.

Charlie Merchant: Think there should be a gazebo. It is used a lot. It is time to start from the bottom up. Hire an engineer to look at it and give us a report.

Kathy Greve: in favor of getting the engineer without wasting any time.

Wright asks the group if we should figure out the cost of having a civil engineer to come and give an assessment of the gazebo or pull the trigger like Jeff and a few of the other have suggested.

Maggie Bills asks if there are funds for the gazebo. Hoffman says that there was supposed to be \$300.00 set aside every year for the gazebo. Lake responds that it was not done. Russ does not remember a \$300.00 allotment, because the business association was doing the gazebo. Allie Evans states that it was a common fund from the Warner Brothers tree money.. Lake says it does not exist. He states there is no common fund. Richardson points out that in the town report there is a common fund of over \$5,000.00. Lake states that it has been liquidated. Richardson also points out the Mosley fund which is over \$23,000.00. She states that all these funds are at the Select Board's discretion, but they have to have an open discussion with the public;

they can't just use the money. She asks where is the common fund and the mostly fund.

Lake replies that the common fund was liquidated by the treasurer and put in the general fund budget. It was used to off set taxes. He continues that the Mosley fund is there but there is a question about if we can tap into that. Reserve funds have rules. Finally, \$200.00 will not replace even one of the balusters. It was liquidated because there was nothing there.

Martin asks if the ARPA funds could be used for the gazebo. Lakes replies that the ARPA funds have already been spent.

Allie Evans asks who instructed the Treasurer to liquidate the common fund to off set taxes. Lakes replies that she can do that on her own. Wilson and Allie Evans both state that she can not do that on her own. Lake replies that she is solely responsible for the finances of the town. The Selectboard can ask her to do that, but she was able to do that on her own. Wilson and Evans disagree.

Hoffman states that he agrees with Jim Crozier to replace the gazebo. Crozier describes the extensive rot in the structure. Russ adds that it would be building from scratch anyway, because of the rot. He adds that we have enough knowledge in town that we do not need to hire an engineer..

Martin asks if we can keep the roof and move it onto a new structure. Crozier replies that could be an option.

Terry Berger, town resident, can the knowledgeable people in town put together a quote to replace the structure? Then the community members can vote to decide whether or not they want to spend the money. Wright replies that is why there was discussion of putting together a committee and then line up people to give an accurate assessment to repair or rebuild.

Wright makes a motion to appoint Laura Richardson as chair of the gazebo committee. Richardson declines, stating she does not have the connections, but she is glad to help.

Russ asks John Evans if he will be on a gazebo committee with him to try do something. John Evans replies , "yes". Allie Evans inserts that she is concerned because Russ and Evans are the taking it down guys. Russ says, "No". Martin volunteers to be on the committee.

Lake asks Russ, Crozier, and Evans if they can make a fair assessment. They all reply yes. Lake asks who else would like to be on the committee. Wilson asks if the assessment is for the condition or the cost to rebuild. Lake and Russ reply all of it.

Allie Evans volunteers to be on the committee.

Lake states that is not going to get kicked down the road for nonsense and this is beginning to sound like nonsense.

Allie Evans says she was expressing a concern and that Lake is not the king of the town. Lake asks her to stop or leave the meeting. Allie Evans states she will not and that she is entitled to her opinion. Lakes then moves to adjourn the meeting. Martin reads a description of Roberts Rules of Order, and asks that the committee be appointment before the meeting ends. Lake states that the board is not required to use Roberts Rules of Order.

Wright interjects asking if we want to put the committee together. The group agrees. Wright solicits volunteers; Jeff, Jim, Laura, Allie, John, Liza, Katie Marrow and Shaun Marrow, and Rob Wright.

Lake raises the issue of the defamatory sign that was posted on the post office. Richardson states she has acted directly and does not play games.

Phoebe reiterates that she proposed the fencing for safety and keeping the gazebo up while decisions are made. Swiger states that as a public safety and construction professional it should be torn down. He adds that as a Select Board it is our job to listen to the public. While it will cost us unnecessary money, it is obviously an emotional issue. Our health and safety officer was making a safety decision for our kids. Swiger continues that he hopes to see this level of interest in the future. Swiger continues that he would like to schedule a special town meeting and have people decide. Lake replies that the gazebo committee should meet before a special town meeting happens.

Wright makes a motion to appoint a committee of 9 members to explore the issues surrounding the gazebo. Swiger seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0-0.

Wright makes a motion to adjourn. Swiger seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

3. **Adjournment:** The meeting is adjourned at 7:08pm.

4. **Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting:** Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at 6:00pm