

**TOWN OF WILLISTON  
OLD BRICK CHURCH TRUSTEES  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 6, 2024**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** John Butterfield (Chair), Alice Beisiegel, Marge Butterfield, Sara Fitts-Pratt, and Lauren Koumjian  
**ADMINISTRATION:** Bruce Hoar, Director of Public Works; Erik Wells, Town Manager; and Erin Dickinson, HR Coordinator & Assistant to the Town Manager  
**ABSENT:** None  
**OTHERS PRESENT:** Phyllis Phillips, Rick McGuire, and David Yandell

---

**Call to Order**

The meeting was convened at the Beckett/McGuire Meeting Room, 7900 Williston Road, Williston, VT 05495. Chair John Butterfield called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**Public Comment**

Chair Butterfield announced that later in the meeting, the Trustees would be discussing the proposed Verizon Cell Phone Repeater Project and encouraged those who would like to comment on the project to do so following the discussion. No additional public comments were made.

**Approval of Draft January 29, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on January 29, 2024, were presented for approval. Trustee Lauren Koumjian proposed several amendments to the drafted minutes. A motion was put forward and seconded to approve the minutes with the suggested amendments. The Trustees unanimously voted in favor of approving the minutes as amended.

**Update on Handicap Access Resources**

Trustee Koumjian has been looking into resources for making the Old Brich Church ADA accessible. She reported that in her research, she discovered a grant opportunity through the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) called the Robert Sincerbeaux Fund grant. This grant can be used to hire an architect to evaluate the building for ADA compliance and make recommendations. The assessment would include rough cost estimates serving as a foundation for fundraising efforts and for hiring an architect to develop detailed plans. The typical cost for this assessment ranges from \$500 to \$750, with PTV covering half and the Town responsible for the remaining half.

Trustee Koumjian reported that she met with a PTV representative at the building. The representative acknowledged numerous possibilities and challenges in creating an

## Old Brick Church Trustees Meeting Minutes

accessible entry, emphasizing that ADA accessible buildings necessitate accessible bathrooms and public access to all areas within the structure.

In terms of next steps to explore the grant, a grant application would need to be submitted. Trustee Koumjian agreed to initiate the grant application process and will request help from others, as required. Bruce Hoar indicated that matching funds for the assessment are within the church's budget.

Trustee Alice Beisiegel made a motion to pursue the grant, seconded by Trustee Marge Butterfield, and all Trustees voted in favor.

### **Discussion Regarding the Proposed Verizon Cell Phone Repeater Project**

Trustee Beisiegel initiated discussion on the proposed Verizon project by acknowledging her sensitivity to concerns raised about preserving the building's historical nature. She also expressed concern about potential obstacles to ADA accessibility posed by the proposed equipment room, and she mentioned the community's recent failure to pass the proposed fire suppression system during yesterday's voting. Lastly, she noted health concerns outlined in the research Trustee Koumjian had circulated. Trustees Marge Butterfield and Sara Fitts-Pratt echoed these concerns.

Trustee Koumjian inquired about the proximity of similar equipment being placed near other schools. She discussed the research brought forward by Kurt Oughstun concerning the potential thermal risk of 5G radiation exposure, which her husband summarized. Additionally, Trustee Koumjian expressed concern in the lag in scientific understanding of technology's health impacts.

Chair Butterfield summarized that the majority of feedback received from the community has been opposition. He then invited comments from members of the public in attendance. Three members provided comment on the following:

- Emphasis on the health concerns raised.
- Potential impact on the future use of the church if the community remains concerned about the health effects of the equipment. It was emphasized that lack of use poses the primary risk to the building's future.
- Distrust due to Verizon's reluctance to disclose alternative locations they are considering.
- Acknowledgment that the disruption of installing the equipment to the building would be relatively minimal, particularly when compared to future installation of the fire suppression system or the already installed radon mitigation equipment.

### **Consider Recommendation to the Selectboard Regarding Proposed Verizon Cell Phone Repeater Project**

The Trustees continued their discussion and reached the conclusion that they would not recommend moving forward with the project. However, they want to ensure that Verizon understands they are not necessarily opposed to equipment being installed elsewhere, but

## Old Brick Church Trustees Meeting Minutes

specifically oppose its placement in the Old Brick Church. Trustee Koumjian motioned for this recommendation, seconded by Trustee Beisiegel, and all voted in favor. Chair Butterfield will present the recommendation to the Selectboard at a meeting to be determined in the Spring.

### **Other Business**

A member of the public suggested considering the formation of a Friends of the Old Brick Church group. Additionally, they recommended considering the placement of a keyboard-type musical instrument in the church, and streamlining the rental process. They also highlighted the lack of Wi-Fi service at the church.

### **Date for Next Meeting**

For their next meeting, the Trustees proposed Monday, May 13, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. However, they will first confirm the availability of volunteer Chapin Kaynor, as he will lead one of the topics to be covered.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Butterfield  
Chair - Old Brick Church Trustees